THE ELEMENTS OF A PRESIDENT (REDUX) (As David Oxtoby’s presidency winds down, Let’s rewind) p. 20

THERE OUGHT TO BE A LAW (Going home turned out to be a step forward for Cristina Gracia ’99) p. 36

HOW TO BUILD A FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH (When Osman Kibar ’92 set out to cure a range of diseases, he knew there would be skeptics) p. 40

THE POKÉMON MASTER (How Nick Johnson ’11 became the world’s foremost Pokémon GO player) p. 45
As David Oxtoby enters his final months before stepping down as president of Pomona College on June 30, 2017, he agreed to allow photographer John Lucas to follow him around over a period of two days in early October to give us a visual record of what the life of a college president is like today. Of course, missing from this 36-hour span, save for a brief roadtrip to Pasadena, is his frequent travel schedule, since we couldn’t very well ask our photographer to take a red-eye to Washington or New York, as Oxtoby has done on so many occasions over the past 13 years. But other than that, Oct. 4 and 5, a Tuesday and a Wednesday, were fairly ordinary days in the life of Pomona’s ninth president.

Day One
10:34 a.m.
Oxtoby begins his day at a meeting of the Council of Presidents of The Claremont Colleges (above) on the campus of Claremont McKenna College. With plenty of issues that cross the seven campuses to discuss, the group convenes at 8 a.m. and meets throughout the morning.

12:17 p.m.
During a working lunch, Oxtoby meets with Vice President for Advancement Pamela Besnard (right) to discuss the itinerary for an upcoming trip to South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong.

2:26 p.m.
After another meeting, this time with Vice President and Treasurer Karen Sison, Oxtoby returns to his office to prepare for the next (below).
2:43 p.m.
Having already taken part in more than five hours of meetings, Oxtoby takes a short break (above) to join his wife, Claire (background, far left), at Bridges Auditorium and to speak with a group of students as they examine a display about the College’s history of activism, part of the celebration of Founders Day 2016.

3:01 p.m.
Back at his inner office (right), Oxtoby makes a scheduled phone call to Chair of the Board of Trustees Sam Glick ’04 to discuss details of the upcoming board meeting.

4:23 p.m.
Oxtoby returns to Alexander Hall for the next thing on his schedule, a two-hour meeting of the Faculty Personnel Committee (bottom center).

5:21 p.m.
His day over, he packs his briefcase and walks two blocks down Indian Hill Boulevard to number 345, otherwise known as the President’s House (right).

5:32 p.m.
After exchanging suit and tie for plaid shirt and jeans, Oxtoby checks out the New York Times and discusses the day with his wife, Claire (center right).

5:45 p.m.
A baseball buff, he turns on the TV to catch part of a playoff game before he and Claire leave to attend a play (bottom right).
7:44 p.m.
Claire and David Oxtoby watch a dress rehearsal of a student production of Anton Chekhov’s “The Cherry Orchard” at Seaver Theatre (top and above).

Day Two
7:24 a.m.
The Oxtobys have breakfast together at the President’s House (right).

8:08 a.m.
Oxtoby starts his work day at his computer (above).

9:23 a.m.
He engages with his vice presidents in key policy discussions at a meeting of Executive Staff (bottom center).

12:06 p.m.
Oxtoby convenes a monthly meeting of the faculty (left) and shares his goals for the academic year.
2:12 p.m.
Oxtoby discusses future plans for the 7-college library (top left) with Vice President and Dean of the Faculty Audrey Bilger and Kevin Mulroy, dean of The Claremont Colleges Library.

3:10 p.m.
Kathleen Howe, director of the Pomona College Museum of Art, gives the Oxtobys a tour of the museum’s exhibit by Native American artist Rose B. Simpson, titled “Ground.”

4:14 p.m.
During his regular student office hours, arguably one of his favorite parts of the job, Oxtoby speaks with Maggie Lemons ’17 (left).

5:22 p.m.
Claire Oxtoby joins her husband to attend a women’s soccer game against the University of La Verne which ends in a 3–0 victory for the Sagehens (above).

6:21 p.m.
Evening finds the Oxtobys on Highway 210 to Pasadena (bottom left).

7:07 p.m.
In Pasadena, they join trustee Louise Bryson for dinner (below).
The End of an Era

Nearly 14 years ago I wrote a column about the imminent departure of Pomona’s eighth president. It began with these words: “A college president is remembered for a word, a deed, a gesture—something personal to each one of us. A presidency, however, is remembered for more enduring things.”

Forgetting me for falling back on old words, but I can’t think of better ones as we now prepare to say goodbye to Pomona’s ninth president.

Personally, I’m sure the first thing I will remember about David Oxtoby is his phenomenal energy—the kind of energy required to take a red-eye to the East Coast, rush from meeting to meeting at a breakneck pace till long after dark, then fly home just in time to hurl himself into another trying 12-hour day—and do it day after day, month after month. Of course, I’ll also remember a particularly humanizing moment when that brutal schedule finally caught up with him, causing his eyelids to droop during a long, boring meeting.

And there are other indelible memories—the carefully articulated Spanish in which he addressed the gathering at the annual holiday luncheon for college staff in order to ensure that everyone was included in his message. Or the refreshing honesty and quiet civility with which he faced the inevitable storms that struck his presidency.

But that’s just my list. Others will have their own—good memories and bad, but rarely indifferent. That’s a fact of life for college presidents—especially those who remain on the job for a decade or more. They tend to arouse strong feelings, one way or the other. Which brings us to the question of how history will remember the Oxtoby presidency—and the corollary question of how much of the credit should go to the president at the top.

David Oxtoby would be the first to point out that college presidents accomplish very little by themselves. In looking back at these 13-and-a-half years, he prefers to talk about the College as a whole and what we have accomplished together. However, the truth is that there’s a lot of institutional progress—a messy business, full of fits and starts that can easily devolve into a morass of conflict and well-intentioned ineptitudes. It takes a rare combination of talent, persistence and skills in order to manage it successfully.

Indeed, very little of consequence happens at a place like Pomona without the president’s fingerprints in some way or other—through an overall vision, a specific goal, a set of priorities, a mediation between warring parties, or simply a well-timed word of encouragement. In this particular case, I think some of the biggest accomplishments of the Oxtoby years—like the dramatic upturn in the diversity of the student body or the highly successful “Daring Minds” Campaign—have his fingerprints all over them.

There are still eight busy months to go in the Oxtoby era, but even as the work goes on, the institution is beginning to look forward—with sadness, nostalgia, excitement and trepidation—to the dawn of a new era. But before we turn that page, we invite you to join us for a look back at the Oxtoby years, with a focus on both a transformational presidency and the remarkable person behind it.
Focus on Faith

Thank you for the faith focus of your summer 2016 issue. It is good to know that, just as in my day, people of faith are being helped by their religious practices with which they had grown up, trying to see if they fit with their college experience. So you’re breaking some new ground there. The photos accompanying those views are beautiful.

On page 19, I glanced casually at the photo of Bryan Stevenson and then suddenly realized that I was in the middle of reading his book, Just Mercy, as an assignment for my church women’s class. If the magazine had arrived a month earlier, I wouldn’t have known who he was. What a heart and a mission that man has.

At my 50th reunion we toured the two new dorms and I was charmed by the roof garden on one of them. The magazine shows the garden as a place for meditation. I was in the middle of reading his book, and I always look forward to reading each issue of PCM. This last issue—summer 2016, “Keeping the Faith”—holds meaning for me. I thought it especially wonderful to see the Islamic student [Pomona ’16] on the cover as well as to read what she has to say in the pages inside. I have always felt that all true religions are God-bearing in the light of human hearts. There is something else which spoke to me in particular—namely, her connection to nature. She writes of giving up one’s youth in nature to the sky, to birds and clouds. Much of my work as a poet [San Angelican lyric poet] is inseparable from nature phenomena. So I am especially filled with gratitude for this issue.

—Alan Lindgren ’66
Culver City, Calif.

Correction

There was an error in my birth announcement in the most recent issue. My name is Daniel Jones, not David Jones. There was also a punctuation typo—an extraneous period between “and” and “Graeme.”

—Daniel Jones ’04
Newton, Mass.

LETTER BOX

The photo of that “youngster,” Deborah Bial, founder of the Posse Foundation—I looked her up. Since 1999 she has identified promising students from urban backgrounds using alternative standards for predicting their success in college. The students are provided with extra support, and the program has an excellent graduation rate. In 2007, she won the MacArthur “genius” grant. In 2010 Barack Obama gave her Nobel Prize money to 10 charities, and the Posse Foundation was one of the 10.

• The gorgeous two-page photo of the Posse Foundation—Rome—it bowled me over.

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• The gorgeous two-page photo of the Posse Foundation—Rome—it bowled me over.

• The interview with AkNe Vance, author of a book on Elwin Musk—I found the book on Amazon and read several pages. Mr. Vance is a somewhat casual writer, but his stories held my interest. Elwin Musk’s Tesla factory is just up the road from my San Jose house. Ordinarily, only Romona, who have purchased a Tesla car for the factory, but a friend was able to get our group in. (I’m a Prius owner.) The tour was fascinating.

• “Dreaming Ants” —What’s not to like about a title like that?

• “Molecular Origami”—I didn’t realize that protein molecules folded and unfolded, and if they don’t fold properly, they make us sick.

• Halim Dhanidina, Class of 1994, a judge on Long Beach, CA —I had to be in court, I’d want him for my judge.

• “The Meaning of Emptiness”—Added to my continuing education about Buddhism.

• “I was glad to have the complete magazine. On the Class of 1962 listserv I asked my classmates if anyone else was missing magazine pages. Those who replied said that their magazines haven’t featured students wrestling with the

PORTRAIT of the President

as a Young Boy

This is not how most of us think of Pomona’s third and perhaps best known president, James A. Blissard, but like the rest of us, he was once a child, and unlike most of us, he had his likeness recorded at the age of about six in the form of a plaster bust.

Blissard would grow up to become a minister, theologian and president of Pomona College from 1910 to 1927. Today he is perhaps best remembered as the principal founder of The Claremont Colleges consortium and the author of the quotes on Pomona’s gates.

The bust, done in the classical style that was popular at the time (including clothing the boy as a child would have been clothed in Greek or Roman times), may have been intended to be cast in bronze, but no one knows whether this was ever done. Dating from around 1873, Blissard’s childhood likeness remained in the Blissard family until it was donated to the College this year by his great-granddaughter Susan Blissard Cornett.

ITEM: Sculpture
DATE: Early 1870s
DESCRIPTION: Plaster bust, 18” x 10.5” x 8”
ORIGIN: Gift from Susan Blissard Cornett

If you have an item from Pomona’s history that you would like to see preserved in the Pomona College Archives, please call 909-621-8138.

PHOTO BY MARK WOOD
Flightless to the Bone

According to the tree database kept by Pomona’s Office of Facilities and Campus Services, the most common trees on campus, in order of frequency, are:

1. Coast live oak (Quercus agrifolia)*
2. California sycamore (Platanus racemosa)*
3. Crape myrtle (Lagerstroemia indica)
4. Coast redwood (Sequoia sempervirens)*
5. California redbud (Cercis occidentalis)*
6. Mesa oak (Quercus englemannii)*
7. Camphor tree (Cinnamomum camphora)
8. Canary Island palm (Phoenix canariensis)
9. Red ironbark (Eucalyptus sideroxylon)
10. Sweetshade (Hymenosporum flavum)

*California native

Critical Inquiries

You can always find some of Pomona’s most distinctive courses among the array of Critical Inquiry (ID1) classes offered each year to introduce first-year students to both the rigors and the pleasures of academic life at Pomona. An intellectual rite of passage, ID1 classes require new students to think, talk, and write about some interesting, often cross-disciplinary topic. They also give Pomona faculty members an opportunity to create something new based on their own interests and passions. Here are a few of this year’s new offerings.

- ECOTOPIAS (Professor Los Huertos)
- COLD PLACES (Professor Chu)
- LIVING WITH PETS AND WILDLIFE (Professor Grigsby)
- MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.: FROM MONTGOMERY TO MEMPHIS (Professor Foster)
- CHINA FROM THE INSIDE AND OUT (Professor Barr)
- ARABESQUE: THE ARTS AND AESTHETICS OF THE ISLAMIC MIDDLE EAST (Professor Shay)
- PHILOSOPHY THROUGH SCIENCE FICTION (Professor Kung)
- CRIME FICTION OF LOS ANGELES AND NEW YORK (Professor Raff)
- OUR TROUBLED WORLD IMAGINED: THEATRE & THE ENVIRONMENT (Professor Taylor)
- LANGUAGE & GENDER (Professor Divita)
- THE ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF FOOD (Professor Novarro)
- THE ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF FOOD (Professor Novarro)

In late August, the Class of 2020 continued the Pomona tradition of “chirping through the gates” to begin their first semester at the College.
Reaping What She Sews

Suzanne Schultz Reed’s classroom is not your typical seminar room. Upon entering, visitors are immediately greeted by a costume rack boasting dozens of hangers and garments in various states of completion. Long project dresses and men’s breeches; visible in the supply cabinets are buckets of buttons and thread and pincushions. The walls are covered in color sketches of period dresses and men’s breeches, visible in the supply cabinets, or building new costumes from scratch. Gesturing to the sketches that decorate the walls, Schultz Reed explains, “They’re really my blueprint.”

Those blueprints reflect the fact that the needs of each production are very different. If a production calls for a costume that looks uncommon or serves a scene-specific purpose, it will most likely need to be handmade. “That dress, the pink one,” Schultz Reed says, gesturing to one of the renderings on the wall, “has three tiers of petticoats that have to come off during the show. There’s no way we’re going to find that, and no way we’re going to borrow it. So we’re going to have to build it.”

The biggest challenge of Schultz Reed’s job is making sure all the building and borrowing gets done in time. “You have to get it done by opening night,” she stresses. “There’s just no way you can fudge that. Tickets are sold, people are coming.”

The dress rehearsals are crucial to this process. Often Schultz Reed will come away from the first dress rehearsal with pages of notes and 24 hours to address as many of them as she can before the next dress rehearsal. “In last year’s production of Dreamgirls, Amy had a fabulous quick change,” she remembers, smiling at her student. “She had to go from a dress and a wig and heels to a full-body black costume with a mask. In 30 seconds! We had to practice that.”

Schultz Reed also worked on redesigning elements of the costumes to make the transition easier, such as replacing a real belt buckle with a magnetic replica. “Those kinds of adjustments, from hemming dresses to wrapping out collars to the rare overhaul and redesign of entire costumes, ensure that the actors aren’t inhibited from giving a great performance. And while the actors are working hard onstage, Schultz Reed keeps her students working hard offstage.”

“TICKETS ARE SOLD; PEOPLE ARE COMING.”
When Amy Watt ’20 got the call that she would be traveling to Rio de Janeiro in early September, her joy in making the U.S. Paralympic track and field team was tempered by worry about missing the first two weeks or so of her first semester at Pomona. She remembers calling Pomona-Pitzer Women’s Cross-Country and Track & Field Coach Kirk Reynolds with trepidation.

“I didn’t know who I should contact or what to do about missing some school,” recalls Watt. “He just asked when I’d be gone, information about the events, and the dates for everything. He talked to several people and the dean, he took care of a lot of it for me and made it easier for me.”

Born without part of her left arm, Watt has been an athlete since discovering soccer in kindergarten. She continued playing the sport until she fell in love with track and field in junior high school. “I was encouraged by my mom and friends,” says Watt. “It was also a fun activity to do.”

Her path from there to the Paralympics involved a couple of chance encounters and an aha moment concerning the role.

One day during track practice at Gunn High School in Palo Alto, when Watt was in the 10th grade, a Gunn alumnus who is an amputee encouraged by my mom and friends, called Watt. “She is a remarkable jumper and sprinter who has had a successful high school career, and I know she can continue to improve her performance in all her events,” says Reynolds.

Although she’s not sure what she plans to major in, she is sure she’s going to continue track and field at Pomona.

“She is a remarkable jumper and sprinter who has had a successful high school career, and I know she can continue to improve her performance in all her events,” says Reynolds.

And though the next Paralympics won’t happen until her senior year is over, she can’t help thinking about it sometimes.

“Sometimes I will have a hard time grasping that I went and competed in the Paralympics,” she says. “It was such an unforgettable experience to be running with the best athletes in the world. I would love to go to Tokyo in 2020, but I’ll need to keep working hard to get better and perform well at trials.”

**Coach Kirk Reynolds with Amy Watt ’20**
**PCM:** What's an example of a policy that affects these issues of TIP and treated very well.

**MAHDAVI:** The United States Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) is one policy, kind of a large one, to the extent that the report ranks all the countries into tiers and then makes recommendations based on their rankings. And sometimes the recommendations that the TIP report makes actually exacerbate the situation instead of making it better.

For instance, the United Arab Emirates is frequently ranked Tier 2, or Tier 2 Watchlist [countries that do not comply with minimum standards for protecting victims of trafficking but are making efforts], and the recommendations made or be more protection and there should be more police. Now, the police in the U.A.E. are imported oftentimes from the Philippines to interact with migrant workers; it’s often the police who are raping sex workers and domestic workers. So you double up your current police and add more per your repertoire of. So that is a policy that's not helping anyone.

Other policies are tethered to citizenship. They don’t have soil-based or other-based citizenship. Citizenship pass through the father in the UAE and Kuwait. Citizenship also makes in the Gulf. Citizenship also citizenship passes through the father in the sending countries, for instance, up until recently Nepal and India. So that means a domestic worker or a domestic worker is sometimes an adult, sometimes five years ago, who goes to the U.A.E.; perhaps is raped by her employer or has a boyfriend and gets pregnant and has a baby, that woman is first incarcerated and then deported because as a guest worker she is contractually sterilized, and that baby is babies because of citizenship laws that are incongruent.

There is a whole generation of people that have been born into this really problematic situation.

**PCM:** You write about something you call intimate mobility. What is that?

**MAHDAVI:** Intimate mobility is kind of a trope that I’m putting forward in the book. Basically, it’s the idea that people do migrate in search of certain kinds of mobility—which is obvious to a lot of people—but people also migrate in search of intimate mobility, or to weave their intimate selves. For example, they migrate to get away from their families in search of a way to express intimacy.

Some form new intimate ties through migration. For others, their intimate strategies are challenged when one becomes more mobile, when there are more members of the family leave. My book is asking us to think about how intimacy can be both activated and challenged in migration.

**PCM:** What does it mean to mobilize one’s intimate self?

**MAHDAVI:** There was a young woman who migrated, who left India because her parents wanted her to get married in an arranged marriage. But she left because she saw herself as somebody who would not want to marry a man. She identifies as a lesbian, and so she migrated to Dubai so that she could explore that sexual side of herself. So that’s some of the intimate mobility I’m talking about.

On the flip side, I talk about intimate immobility and I talk about how people’s intimate lives, as in their intimate connections with their children or other partners back home, become immobilized when they are in the host country. Their intimate selves are immobilized because they can’t fully express their love for their children or for their partners. And also women who are guest workers or low-skilled workers. Nobody knows where they are if or it was actually true that they were being raped in the palaces or not. That was rumor until I conducted my research and I was able to confirm because if true these children is it true that some are raised in various palaces, given a lot of opportunities, and treated very well. So now many of them are adults, living and working in the Gulf but still resistant. Recently there’s been a slew of articles that have indicated that some of the Gulf countries, the U.A.E. and Kuwait included, are engaging to deals with the Comoros Islands, micro-in exchange for money to build roads and bridges, they are getting passports from the Comoros Islands. Initially it was thought that they would just give passports to these stateless individuals, but the individuals had to remain in the Gulf. However, a closer look at some of the contracts indicates that some of these stateless individuals who are being given Comoros citizenship actually will have to go to the Comoros Islands, which is a very disconcerting prospect for many stateless individuals on the Comoros Islands. If some are raised in various palaces, given a lot of opportunities, they’re stateless children who were born in the Gulf. And some of the contracts indicate that some of these stateless individuals who are being given Comoros citizenship actually will have to go to the Comoros Islands, which is a very disconcerting prospect for many stateless individuals on the Comoros Islands. So that’s some of the intimate mobility I’m talking about.

The Fog Seller

In his new book of landscape photography, Graton-Coller "We shares the eerie beauty of earth and sky in the canyon country of eastern Utah." EXCERPT: "In my dreams, I occasionally find myself standing atop impossibly large arches or bizarre, almost whimsical pillars of stone. I will wander far too close to the edge, but I have fear, as I am rapt in awe by the splendor of the scene. Only the little bit of a kaleidoscope around Moab do these dreams ever meld with reality. The scenery has the same effect on me as it seems precariously balanced on the cup of fantasy."
MEET FRED LEICHTER, THE FOUNDING DIRECTOR OF THE SONTAG CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE CREATIVITY.

Fred Leichter likes to tell the story of the 2000 election ballot from Palm Beach County, Florida. “It was so poorly designed,” he says, “that an inordinate number of votes that were meant for Gore went to a third-party candidate instead. And that swung the whole election and the presidency to Bush.”

For years, he kept a copy of that ballot on his wall with a note saying “Design matters.”

Today, as the founding director of the Rick and Susan Sontag Center for Collaborative Creativity, Leichter is bringing that message to the students of The Claremont Colleges.

Known as “the Hive,” the center was conceived as a place where students could form creative teams, be intellectually daring and work collaboratively to address complex challenges.

Bringing dynamic experience in fields ranging from higher education to technology, Leichter built his career as a design innovator and executive for Fidelity Investments. As senior vice president for design thinking and innovation at the Boston-based firm, he led teams focusing on user needs and experimenting with ways to speed up innovation.

Along with his Fidelity role, Leichter has served as a lecturer at Stanford University’s Hasso Plattner Institute of Design (commonly known as the d.school), teaching such classes as Designing with Data, Visual Thinking Strategies and Project Joy: Designing Delight into the Workplace. His founding director role at the Hive also includes a faculty appointment as clinical professor of engineering at Harvey Mudd College.

President David Oxtoby said Leichter was chosen for his leadership skills, team-building experience and track record of design innovation. “We are looking to Fred to help spark an environment where students push into new areas, look at problems in fresh ways and seek out surprising solutions.”

The following is a how-to manual in seven parts, tracing Leichter’s path from childhood to the Hive.

1 Grow up a faculty brat at Columbia University. Go to a Waldorf school that emphasizes creativity. Attend Swarthmore, spending a “study abroad” semester at Pomona College. Wish there were such a thing as a computer science major, but since there isn’t, major in math.

2 After graduating, receive two job offers—teaching high school math or becoming a programmer on Wall Street. Choose Wall Street because it cuts “against the grain” of your previous life. Take graduate courses in computer science and spend lots of nights debugging COBOL programs.

3 Meet your future wife, Jennifer, a financial analyst, and when she takes a new job in Boston, abandon Wall Street to join her. Work at a software company until it goes bankrupt, and take away an important lesson: Failure isn’t permanent, and you can learn from it.

4 Get a job at Fidelity Investments and design their first website, with a user interface that is largely unchanged decades later. Learn about human-centered design and begin to think of yourself as a designer at a time when most people think designers are people who sketch clothes.

5 Meet George Kembel and David Kelley, who are launching the d.school at Stanford. When Fidelity sponsors a class at the school, spend time there and bring new ideas back to your firm. Build a state-of-the-art design-thinking lab at Fidelity to focus on innovation from the perspective of unmet human need.

6 Return to the d.school for a full year as a fellow, taking and teaching classes and working on projects for Fidelity. Tell your wife your new dream is to build a creativity program at a small liberal arts college like the one you attended, though the chances of that seem slim.

7 Two years later, learn about the director’s position at the Hive. Though you still love your job at Fidelity, decide that this is the perfect place to pursue your dream. Consult your kids and family and negotiate with the colleges over a great space for the Hive, but ultimately say yes.

—Mark Wood

HOW TO BECOME THE CREATIVITY GURU OF THE 5Cs

[HOW TO]
PHYSICS: Professor of Physics David Tanenbaum

Organic Solar

What was once a rare sight is now becoming more common: solar panels on the roofs of homes across the country. While solar technology has improved and is seeing exponential growth as an industry, Pomona College Professor of Physics David Tanenbaum notes that there are still a few factors limiting production at a mass scale globally. Tanenbaum and his student researchers are working to improve this by focusing on one important factor: the cost of the materials used in producing solar cell panels.

Tanenbaum explains that today’s solar panels, like microchips, are made with silicon, which requires a fairly expensive production process because of factors such as the need for high temperature processing of high-purity materials. In building solar panels, he says, the difference in cost between silicon and less expensive organic materials like plastic cannot be overcome by making the materials easier to produce.

Tanenbaum has been working on this particular type of solar cell technology research for about eight years and has had students in the laboratory helping since the beginning.

Sabrina Li ’17, a physics major, and Meiy Wu ’18, an environmental analysis major, were summer lab researchers through the Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP).

Li has been working with Tanenbaum since her first year at Pomona and is planning a senior thesis. At Pomona, she has learned in the lab thus far: “I’m looking at organic solar cells. They’re organic instead of silicon, and I’m looking at trying to optimize efficiency and lifetime.” Li experimented with different materials and processing techniques to make the cells.

This was Wu Fung’ s first summer doing research at Pomona. She’s working on testing the aging of cells over time, using cells created over the past three years in the lab that are still working today. “At the end of the day, when we’re done working, it’s really gratifying to measure them and see what’s come of it.”

Tanenbaum is on sabbatical for the 2016-17 academic year, continuing his research on solar cell technology through the Catalan Institute of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

“Organic Solar panels that try, [6,6]-phenyl-C61-butyric acid methyl ester, known as PCBM. They are cells using chemicals like poly(3-hexylthiophene), P3HT for short, or to see solar technology go.

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“Organic Solar panels that try, [6,6]-phenyl-C61-butyric acid methyl ester, known as PCBM. They are cells using chemicals like poly(3-hexylthiophene), P3HT for short, or to see solar technology go. The first survey was on how different groups feel about gain ownership.

It was to be followed by surveys on issues like climate change, evolution, GMO food consumption, vaccination and gun safety. At the end of each survey, the reader has a chance to see if he or she has accurately assessed how other people feel about the same subjects. The results, says Pearson, can be very surprising.

“Many seemingly intractable social problems come down to a deceptively simple, but quite powerful truth: Social perceptions matter. As adults, we may like to think that poor quality is something that only kids are susceptible to—that we come to view the way that we do through logic and reason—but decades of research in social psychology suggest otherwise. We think we want to build consensus on issues that are important to us, we first need to accurately understand others’ views. This is especially true for building consensus on controversial and politically-charged issues, from gun safety to the first healthcare reform.

The findings will be used by Time and shared widely after the surveys are completed. Pearson and van der Linden also plan to use their findings in their research to broaden our understanding of factors that shape public opinion on these issues.

—Carlo Guerriero ’06

NEW KNOWLEDGE

PHYSICS: Professor of Physics David Tanenbaum

Organic Solar panels that try, [6,6]-phenyl-C61-butyric acid methyl ester, known as PCBM. They are cells using chemicals like poly(3-hexylthiophene), P3HT for short, or to see solar technology go. The first survey was on how different groups feel about gain ownership. It was to be followed by surveys on issues like climate change, evolution, GMO food consumption, vaccination and gun safety. At the end of each survey, the reader has a chance to see if he or she has accurately assessed how other people feel about the same subjects. The results, says Pearson, can be very surprising.

“Many seemingly intractable social problems come down to a deceptively simple, but quite powerful truth: Social perceptions matter. As adults, we may like to think that poor quality is something that only kids are susceptible to—that we come to view the way that we do through logic and reason—but decades of research in social psychology suggest otherwise. We think we want to build consensus on issues that are important to us, we first need to accurately understand others’ views. This is especially true for building consensus on controversial and politically-charged issues, from gun safety to the first healthcare reform.

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—Carlo Guerriero ’06
The Class of 2020 gathers on the steps of Carnegie Hall.

—PHOTO BY JEFF HING
THE ELEMENTS OF A PRESIDENT
(REMUX)

BY MARK WOOD

AS DAVID OXTOBY NEARS THE END OF HIS 14-YEAR TENURE AS POMONA’S NINTH PRESIDENT, LET US PAUSE TO REWIND...

My second meeting with David was an argument, but a good argument. This was during the strategic planning process. I had been leading the task force about interdisciplinary studies, and we were meeting to discuss our report. First he wanted to take me to lunch, but I was suspicious because people take you to lunch to try to disarm you before they pounce. So I said, ‘No, no, no, no, let’s just have a meeting in your office.’ And sure enough, David opened by saying he had read the report, that it was well documented and well written, but that he strongly disagreed. And we had a wonderful kind of back and forth, because he had clearly read and thought about everything we had said. I think we continued to disagree, but I was impressed because it was clear he was engaging seriously with what we were saying on an intellectual level.

— Cecilia Conrad
Former Dean of the Faculty

I was on the tennis team, and President Oxtoby would often come to weekend matches to cheer us on in his full Spandex bike gear. As a student, I appreciated the fact that he was out doing his weekend routine of getting some exercise, but he took some time out to come to the tennis courts and watch our match.

— Elizabeth Hilton Kim ’08

Very early in David’s tenure, we were at a meeting, and David had to leave the meeting early, so he got up and proceeded to walk into a closet. Everyone in the room fell silent, and a few moments later, David emerged from the closet and said, “There are so many doors around here. I love it.” At which point he plunged at a dead run, which is the way he always moves, through the correct door and off into the rest of the College. And I remember everybody chuckled, but I was just sort of beam­ ing ear to ear for having been involved in hiring him, because it kind of framed exactly why we hired him. That is, his amazing intellectual curiosity and energy. In my mind, he was a guy who thrived on opening new doors, and who didn’t shy away from difficult situations. And I think we’ve seen a great deal of that in such realms as sustainability and the art museum and diversity and creating an inviting and comfortable environment for everybody, his athletic leadership, summer internships, building the College beyond Claremont. Here’s somebody who’s always looking for new doors to open.

— Stewart Smith ’69
Former Chair of the Board of Trustees

David has had to deal with a lot of hard, hard issues. The issues change, but they don’t seem to get any easier. During the presidential search, someone asked me, ‘What are you looking for in a new president?’ And I said, ‘Well, it seems to me you need someone who has some ability to deal with these disparate issues and to work with these diverse students in a way that makes them all feel like they’re being supported or validated.’ And that’s David. He approaches these things with real concern and understand­ ing for the student experience.

— Jeanne Buckley ’65
Chair Emerita of the Board of Trustees
David is not only a renowned scientist, but a powerful advocate for the arts, believing the integration of both is essential to creating the empathy and innovation needed in the world today.

—Ishie Bryson
Trustee

I got to know President Oxtoby pretty well when I was ASPC president. I was pretty frustrated at the time because I really wanted the faculty to require a Dynamics of Difference and Power course as a graduation requirement, and I spent my presidency organizing around that issue. One of the problems was that critics kept saying that not enough students wanted the course. I invited President Oxtoby to come speak at a Senate meeting, and I remember him telling us that our job was to do what was right, not what was popular. That was a pivotal moment for me, affirming that leadership is sometimes about sticking to your principles even when you’re under attack. That message has really resonated in countries like China, where traditionally people would opt for a large research university. To me, it’s inspiring to see that more people actually know what Pomona College is and what the liberal arts entail and that more Chinese students are pursuing this experience. I really applaud David for his continuous effort to be at the forefront in conveying the importance of a liberal arts education, in both domestic and international regions.

—Xiao-Ye "MD" Mei ’11
Trustee

When I think about David and Claire, I can’t help but think of their consistent support of live performance at the College, especially performances by students. It’s very clear that David enjoys not only the music itself, but also the fact that he’s hearing students play it and sing it, and his enthusiasm for their efforts is easy to see. Several times he and Claire have been in our midst during a Glue Club tour, and we’ve sung something for them in particular. That’s one of many images I have in my mind—the joy on their faces when we’ve stood in a circle around them singing.

—Deana M. Di Grazia
Professor of Music

Some aspects of a presidency are easily quantifiable—gifts raised, buildings built, programs launched. Others, though equally important, are harder to measure. David Oxtoby’s role as an international ambassador for the liberal arts falls into the latter category.

A chemist who had spent his entire career up to that point at large research universities, Oxtoby began his inaugural address with these words: “What is a liberal arts college today, in 2003?” He went on to make the case for an education that is broad, personal, and full of opportunities to follow one’s passions.

“Growing up as he did on the Bryn Mawr College campus with a father who was a prominent faculty member,” says longtime colleague Richard Fauc, who served as Pomona’s vice president for planning until his retirement this year, “David developed and retained a firm belief in the values of a liberal arts education. He cares about the enterprise we’re all engaged with and believes deeply that there is no better way to develop educated and committed minds and hearts. David’s passion and commitment are infectious.”

That infectious passion was apparent as the years went by, and Oxtoby became a national spokesperson for the continuing importance of liberal arts colleges, writing and speaking about the future of the liberal arts and its response to such challenges as the growth of interdisciplinary study and globalization.

He even carried his message around the globe, traveling to India, Hong Kong and Singapore to offer support to local education workers looking to adopt the successful American liberal arts model to their own cultures while learning from them in exchange.

“Given the ongoing debate here at home about the value of a liberal arts education, it was good to be reminded that we’re all part of an international competition in which U.S. higher education is considered the gold standard, in large part because of its breadth and multiple pathways, including a vigorous liberal arts tradition,” he said in a letter to alumni.

While promoting the liberal arts tradition nationally and abroad, Oxtoby also focused throughout his presidency on reinforcing it here on our own campus. He worked with the faculty to restructure Pomona’s overhasty general education program to give students more freedom of choice. He led a campus-wide renewal of Pomona’s commitment to the arts, including the construction of a new Studio Art Hall that is now inspiring more students to explore the arts. In the final year of his presidency, he is continuing this work by spearheading the College’s ongoing initiative to provide the Pomona College Museum of Art with a new home suitable for a state-of-the-art teaching museum for the 21st century.

2003

The lecture is eight on the October evening of Oxtoby’s inauguration as Pomona’s ninth president. Students gathered in the Placer Gymnasium for an opening address and a tour of Pomona’s harem of hot dogs and deep-dish pizza. The next evening, Oxtoby met with faculty and students in a widely attended cybercast, including faculty, students, staff and alumni.

2004

The Richard C. Sbarro Biology Laboratory is completed, providing state-of-the-art research and teaching labs for genetics, cell biology, neurobiology, plant and animal physiology and zoology. The building receives the College’s first LEED Silver certification.

2006

The College’s Student-Athlete Academic Performance Program (SAPP) receives an official national recognition and is part of the Environmental Analysis and Sustainability Studies program.

2007

Pomona dedicates the new Lincoln and Edwards halls, housing the departments of Psychology, Linguistics and Cognitive Science, Computer Science, Geology and Environmental Analysis, as well as three interdisciplinary programs—Asian American Studies, Black Studies and Chicano & Chicana Studies. The building receives LEED gold certification.

2008

The stock market crash marks the beginning of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, and Pomona’s endowment tumbles by about 25 percent. The College freezes salaries and raises fees; other liberal arts colleges experience similar measures but actually increase funding for financial aid to assist students affected by the events. The College also reaffirms its decision, announced earlier in the year, to no longer include loans in financial aid packages.

2009

The Office of Community Programs is renamed the Dorrer Center for Community Partnerships, with plans to expand educational and community partnerships with local organizations and the Pomona College Academy for Youth Success (PYOS).
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Carbon / Sustainability

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Carbon now makes me think of sustainability, about CO₂ and carbon taxes. We think a lot these days about bad carbon, carbon that’s implicated in global warming and climate change, but it’s also the central element of life.

As a noted atmospheric chemist who taught classes in environmental chemistry throughout his presidency, Oxtoby brought an expert perspective and a degree of credibility to the topic of sustainability that few of the nation’s college leaders could match. His record in promoting sustainability as a shared, campus-wide commitment began early in his presidency with his involvement in the creation of the relatively new Environmental Analysis Program and preserving the Organic Farm as an officially sanctioned part of the campus.

Completed the year after his arrival, the Richard C. Seaver Biology Laboratory became Pomona’s first building to earn a LEED certification (silver) from the U.S. Green Building Council. That, however, was only the start. Over the following 12 years, the College would add four more LEED-certified buildings, two new residence halls, a three-building staff complex, all LEED-certified at the gold or platinum level. Even the College’s new parking structure, in a category of buildings that doesn’t qualify for certification, was built to LEED gold standards.

In 2014, when Oxtoby set an ambitious goal for the campus to reach net climate neutrality by 2020, he looked back at some of the progress that had been made: “We are working across campus in new and exciting ways to integrate sustainability into our culture. Some highlights of increased engagement include the establishment of the President’s Advisory Committee on Sustainability (PACS) to oversee campus sustainability effort and the launch of Sustainability F shovel Fellowships to fund student involvement in campus sustainability planning. New staff members are managing sustainability efforts and the Organic Farm, and our recent addition of an energy manager will help the College heat, cool and light buildings in more sustainable and efficient ways. Together, we are creating a greater level of consciousness about sustainability across the campus and showing how small and large choices add up to real results.”

Oxtoby is among 180 influential artists, scientists, scholars, and institutional leaders in the nation who are inducted into Oxtoby's work to educate and inspire. He's always done what he thought was right for the institution, even when it was hard. Sometimes, when you're serving others, you have to put your own feelings on hold. He was able to do that and to listen to people on both sides of the issues—Rick Haslett, Professor Emeritus of Geology

I majored in chemistry, so David factored into my life pretty early on because of his background as a chemist. I was always really impressed by him. I mean, he literally wrote our chemistry textbook for freshman year. I got to know him a little bit when I took the environmental chemistry course, but we really didn’t get to know each other very well until the end of my time at Pomona, when he helped me with my application to Cambridge. I think he is just such a calming influence. He really takes the time to listen and lesson, and he has a lot of wisdom to share—Mike Gormally ‘11

I think President Oxtoby is probably one of the most outspoken leaders on college campuses when it comes to sustain-ability. For instance, we went to the Climate Roundtable at the White House together last year. That was a small group of about 20 presidents who went to D.C. to speak with leaders at the White House. So I’ve seen his leadership in that setting, and then you see the emphasis on sus-tainability here on campus—the energy efficiency of the new buildings, for example—and you see him talking about carbon pricing, which is not something a lot of college presidents feel comfortable doing. But he has such a complete understanding of what’s going on, and he’s so articulate and understanding of the community. He’s a real leader and an inspiration to me—Tom Eds ’18
David is, in addition to everything else, a decent and caring person who detests injustice. It has been David’s commitment to justice that has led Pomona to the forefront in terms of recruiting, admitting and supporting a student body that is diverse in every possible respect.

—Richard Fox

President for Planning, Retired

The Halogen / Diversity

*Furorine, chlorine, bromine and iodine are all members of the halogen family but they look different and have different properties. Now that strikes me as a wonderful symbol of diversity. We’re all a single family, the Pomona family, we have lots of things in common, but we’re all distinctive as well, and we value and celebrate both our commonalities and our differences.

Numbers never tell the whole story, but sometimes they make for a good starting point. In 2003, the percentage of students of color in the Pomona student body stood at 27 percent. Today, 48 percent of Pomona students are students of color, making Pomona one of the most diverse liberal arts colleges in the nation. Over the same period, the College’s international student population has grown from two percent to 12.5 percent. Behind those numbers were determined and sustained efforts to expand the College’s outreach. “It is not enough for us simply to wait for students from different backgrounds to apply,” Oxtoby said in 2006. “We must be proactive in identifying and encouraging them.”

Among other things, that meant building strong partnerships with such organizations as the Posse Foundation and QuestBridge, which now serve as conduits for highly talented students from underprivileged backgrounds across the country. The College has also built its own program to help promising high school students from the College’s own backyard prepare themselves for success at top colleges. Today, the Pomona College Academy for Youth Success (PAYS) still holds a perfect record in gaining its graduates admission to four-year colleges and universities, including Pomona. Internationally, the College not only stepped up recruiting in Asia, it also expanded its range into South America and Africa. By extending more financial aid to international applicants, the College also succeeded in broadening the demographics of international students to align with the College’s goal of making a Pomona education affordable for talented students from all backgrounds.

In 2008, under Oxtoby’s leadership, the College also made the commitment to treat all applicants who graduate from U.S. schools the same, whether or not they are documented, thereby enabling undocumented students to compete for admission and aid on a level playing field.

However, Oxtoby also has made clear that there is still a great deal of work to be done here on campus in building a more inclusive culture in which every member of this diverse community can feel equally welcomed and invested. “I have several priorities I am focused on in my last year as Pomona College president,” he wrote out this year. “Chief among these are advancing a culture of respect and building a more inclusive environment in the classroom and on campus. These goals are essential to the bold and scholarly work we do.”

David Oxtoby’s commitment to diversity and to making the Pomona education accessible to all has been consistent, wide-ranging and effective. Because of his leadership, Pomona has partnered with GoodBridge and the Posse Foundation, made the Draper Center and its signature PAYS program an important part of the campus, opened Pomona’s doors to Dreamers, and increased the number and diversity of its international students. Each one of these initiatives is significant, but, taken together, they have formed the College. Talking to students, walking around campus, sitting in classes, you can easily see, hear and sense the effect of the changed student body on the intellectual life of the campus. Those of us who have worked with David on these issues have come to realize that we can depend on his commitment to equity and diversity. His is not a fleeting here-today-gone-tomorrow commitment; rather it comes from an inner moral compass.

Pomona is a changed and better place because of it.

—Shahriar Shahriari

Professor of Mathematics

There’s another Oxtoby who has had a Pomona presence for the last 33-plus years. Claire Oxtoby has a view of the College and every­thing else, a daughter of the college president’s role unique to that of a life partner. But she has been a participant at Pomona, not just an observer.

Envisioning the somewhat archaic title of first lady—too cer­emonial, she says—Claire prefers to think of herself as a doc­tor. She is a familiar face in the community, whether meeting with stu­dents, talking to staff, attending College events like concerts in Little Bridges or a luncheon talk in Oldenborg, traveling with the president on Pomona-related trips or auditing a history of photography class.

Claire has felt like part of the fabric of the College, with all the challenges and triumphs woven through what she calls an existing and dynamic place. Literally living and breathing Pomona 24/7 has meant the occasional awkward moment. Like the student who rang the Oxtobys’ doorbell, showered in hand and towel slung over his shoulder, asking if he could shower at their place, because Wig Hall was flooded, and there was no hot water. Claire invited him to stay, cooked him dinner, and put in a call to facilities.

Sometime back, Claire read an Inside Higher Ed article that talked about how not to be a toxic asset as a college president’s spouse. Laughing, she says she didn’t find the don’ts all that useful, but the do’s were. Simple things, she says, like being friendly, approachable and helpful. She has played the role of a bridge builder, she says.

“David has a contract with various expectations, and how the College does as a whole is the metric that he is measured by. But for me my job there are no metrics, so it’s really about just fitting in and trying to be helpful or make connections in different places,” Claire says.

Stories she’s heard from students have sometimes led to her connecting them with alumni or a job. She says those personal connections, whether with students, faculty, staff or alumni are among the things she’ll miss most about Pomona.

An early education teacher in Chicago before they came to Claremont, Claire still shares David’s passion for education. It’s something that is positive and forward looking, she says. Looking back and looking ahead, based on what she’s seen at Pomona, she believes the future is bright.

“It makes you feel good about the world each year when we’re graduating students. They’ve had this experience here, they’ve brought their experiences, they’ve had more, and now they’re going out, and it makes you feel hopeful.”

—Sneha Abraham

What struck me about David when I first met him was his deep per­sonal humility. In all of our conversations about priorities and financial decisions, his thinking is guided by a strong ethical core and a commitment to what is best for students in particular. Pomona community as a whole.

—Karen Sison ’79

Associate Dean of Students
The story of the Sontag Center for Collaborative Creativity is really the story of how David started out with a dream for the Claremont Colleges, how he managed to inspire a significant donor and how he managed to bring all of the five undergraduate colleges together to make it possible. And to me that’s characteristic of David—he has an end goal in mind, he is willing to take the time and figure out a process that will allow people to buy in; he is willing to enlist help from lots of different sources to get there; and he’s got an enormous amount of patience in seeing the big picture and being able to find a path to the place he wants to get to.

— Maria Klave, President, Harvey Mudd College

I’m a big fan of David’s, and one reason is his commitment to the arts. He’s worked really hard over the years to figure out, from a physical plant point of view, how we can do a better job of teaching the arts. Certainly, the Studio Art Hall is one example, and his commitment to building a new art museum is another. I know he’d love to go to his work with the architects, the late-night hearings and City Council meetings. He’s really put his heart and soul into seeing it forward, so that we can have these gorgeous buildings that will last years and years for thousands of students to experience and appreciate and to learn under those roofs.

— Janet Truskop Boston ’78 Trustee

“Silicon is the framework of Silicon Valley, but in truth, every valley is a kind of silicon valley since silicon is the basic building block of every kind of rock. But when you separate it out, it becomes solar cells and semiconductors. It’s not a metal or a non-metal, but a bridging element—that’s the crucial aspect that allows it to expand our ability to do things and to innovate. So in a way, it symbolizes the future.”

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Silicon / Innovation

“The world needs daring minds.”

With that simple, five-word sentence, Oxtoby introduced the central theme of the Daring Minds Campaign, the fundraising effort that was launched in 2010 and completed in 2015. Pomona, he said, must be a source for global citizens who possess not only the knowledge and understanding to give them mastery of their field, but also the creativity and intellectual daring necessary to use those resources to make a difference in the world.

In the end, the Daring Minds Campaign not only raised a total of more than $316 million, it changed the face of the College in significant ways. Out of it came a series of initiatives designed to challenge students to create something new or to pit their knowledge and problem-solving skills against dilemmas in the real world. For example, Pomona’s new Studio Art Building provides a state-of-the-art facility for the creation of art in an inspiring and rigorous setting, while the new Intensive Summer Experience program expands opportunities for students to spend a summer in research or an internship and provides funding to ensure that all students, including those whose families depend upon their summer earnings, can afford to take part.

But perhaps the most inventive expression of Oxtoby’s focus on nurturing daring minds came at the close of the campaign, with the creation of the Rick and Susan Sontag Center for Collaborative Creativity. This innovative new center is a place where students and faculty members—who possess the knowledge and understanding to see a universe of possibilities; who can have these gorgeous buildings that will last years and years for thousands of students to experience and appreciate and to learn under those roofs.

— Janet Truskop Boston ’78 Trustee

It was very clear to me from my first interview that David was really deeply involved in this search. You could see in his eyes that he cared a lot about the Sontag Center.

Then David called me personally to talk about how it had gone and what the next steps would be, and he spent some time on the phone with me at 9 o’clock on a Saturday night. And when I came back for a full day, he picked me up at the hotel at 7:30 in the morning in his car. Experiencing his commitment made a big difference in my interest and appreciation of the job.

— Fred Lechtler, Founding Director of the Sontag Center for Collaborative Creativity

I remember when James Turrell came to campus for the Skyspace project. We visited the site that would become Lincoln and Edmunds and then met with David in Alexander to discuss it. Turrell was talking about Sky-spaces and the site and David was really engaged. They started talking about the effects of light, including chemical interactions, and Turrell said something about rust. David leaned forward and said, “I’m really interested in rust!” and it turns out Turrell was too. And off they went, on rust—a real exchange between a scientist and an artist, about light and art. That’s David’s gift, to engage with things differently and to expand ideas.

— Kathleen Howe, Director of the Pomona College Museum of Art

David started out with a dream for Collaborative Creativity for thousands of students to experience and appreciate and to learn under those roofs. David started out with a dream for Collaborative Creativity for thousands of students to experience and appreciate and to learn under those roofs.
GOING HOME TO CARE FOR HER PARENTS SEEMED LIKE A BIG STEP BACK FOR CRISTINA GARCIA ’99, BUT IT PROVED TO BE A BIG STEP FORWARD FOR ONE OF CALIFORNIA’S MOST PASSIONATE LAWMAKERS.

THERE TO BE OUGHT A LAW...

BY CARLA GUERRERO ’06

When Cristina Garcia ’99, then a high school math teacher living in Pasadena, was nominated by her siblings to move back to Southeast Los Angeles to care for their ailing parents, she didn’t think twice about taking on her new role as caregiver. Moving back home when her family needed her was an easy decision. Garcia says she’d do it again in a heartbeat.

But resettling less than a mile away from her parents’ home, she suddenly found herself back in the heart of Bell Gardens, the city she thought she had left for good.
When she was growing up, her idea of success had followed the same age-old formula familiar to many. Leave your poor hometown, make something of yourself and never look back. And she had done exactly that. After excelling in high school in the mid-1990s, she had left her hometown, known for its high teen pregnancy rates and polluting air, for the tree-lined and book-filled campus of Pomona College. With a double major in mathematics and politics in hand, Garcia thought she was set for life. I taught math for 13 years and I had a pretty amazing life: I got to teach at the high school level and the college level,” she says.

Now she was right back where she started.

Today, sitting in her district office that bears her current title, California Assemblymember, she recalls the sense of failure that soon enveloped her upon her return home just a handful of years before. “We had been taught that success was leaving and never coming back to these communities,” she says. “And so I felt like a failure, in a way, coming back and giving up my comfy life that I had.”

It took a heart-to-heart intervention by her younger sister to help her snap out of it. “She said, ‘You have leadership skills and you have a responsibility,’” recalls Garcia. “I was like, you know, what I’m going to start going to council meetings and start asking questions, and eventually that led me to ask more questions.”

Garcia started by attending Bell Gardens council meetings, trying to get an education about the city budget and expenses. She hit a lot of roadblocks and found disturbing practices. Next door, in the City of Bell, residents were asking similar questions, trying to figure out why their taxes were so high. They too were hitting a brick wall, with no answers and no accountability from their elected officials.

Then in 2010, the Los Angeles Times broke one of the biggest corruption scandals to rock the state in recent memory. At the heart of it—and that all changed all of a sudden when I decided I was going to do this—was the sense of responsibility that helped her make the choice.

“We’ve had about a 20 percent decrease for my whole life. I realized I had to sacrifice my comfortable life and become a public figure. I’d been doing math all my life, so you don’t get to talk to people all the time—and that changed all of a sudden when I decided I was going to do this,” she says.

Social Responsibility

Garcia’s sense of social responsibility was shaped during her time at Pomona College. She came to campus at a time when anti-immigrant sentiment ran strong in California politics. She protested and organized against Proposition 187, which made undocumented immigrants ineligible for public benefits, and Proposition 209, which ended affirmative action in public universities.

“I was aware of the opportunities and privileges that I had and how different I was from most of my peers back home who didn’t get to go to college or who did get to go to college but didn’t get to have the same opportunities I had at Pomona—personal attention, study abroad, or when I didn’t have money for books, being able to receive a grant for books,” says Garcia.

“It came with a sense of social responsibility. There were a lot of these civic engagements on campus when I was there. As Prop. 187 had passed and Prop. 209 was going on, and Pomona College allowed those discussions to happen.”

That sense of social responsibility continued to guide Garcia well into her career as a teacher, and in her decision to run for the state Assembly.

In 2012, defeating a longtime incumbent, Garcia was elected to represent the 58th Assembly District, which includes the cities of Artesia, Bellflower, Bell Gardens, Cerritos, Commerce, Downey, Montebello, Norwalk and Pico Rivera. She was reelected in 2014 and is up for reelection again this November.

Garcia came into office with the stated goal of making politics more transparent and rebuilding the public’s trust in government. And in 2014, she introduced a wide-ranging package of ethics and transparency measures. Five of these passed and two, Jerry Brown signed them into law.

Garcia is proud of that accomplishment, but she’s not sitting back and relaxing. “She knows how to keep. In her four years in office, Garcia has focused on three areas dear to her heart: good government and reform, environmental justice, and elevating and expanding the role of women in society and government. She chairs the Committee on Accountability and Administrative Review, and she is the vice chair of the Legislative Women’s Caucus.

“I decided that to be a legislator, I was going to legislate to empower other women and change that. There’s a lot of work and not enough women, so I want to share the wealth with other women,” she says.

Among her most recent and lauded efforts is the so-called “Tampon Tax,” a bill that would repeal the sales tax on pads, tampons and other menstrual items. Although Gov. Jerry Brown recently vetoed the law, Garcia says she’s not giving up.

“I am known as ‘Ms. Maxi.’ I am the ‘Tampon Lady’ everywhere I go. ‘Ms. Flo.’ And at the same time, I take on the jokes because I get to expand on women’s health empowerment. It’s not something to be ashamed of or to see as something that is dirty,” says Garcia with a smile. “It’s exciting to talk to young women. It’s exciting to see it become a national discussion. It’s exciting to see women’s health in a different way, and it’s exciting because it affects our day-to-day life.”

Recently, Garcia also introduced legislation to revise an outdated definition of rape—an issue brought to light after a judge sentenced former Stanford swimmer Brock Turner to six months after he was convicted on three counts of sexual assault. Garcia was moved to action after reading the open letter penned by the unnamed sur­vivor in the case.

“Part of getting rid of our rape culture is talking about it, but it’s also about how we define it… If we’re going to end rape culture, we have to call rape what it is—‘it’s rape’.”

Investing in Government

Although she’s faced a lot of setbacks, Garcia remains undaunted. Picking up lessons from her past, it seems like failure is no longer part of her equation.

When asked what advice she would give a younger Cristina or college students of today, she says simply, “Don’t do it all.”

Another tough lesson learned:

Garcia says she did indeed try to “do it all” as a Pomona student, a habit that she carried over in her first years in the legislature.

“’For a while I tried 20 different clubs [in college], but it’s better to find one or two that you’re passionate about and be really good at it,’” she says. “’This year I’ve pared it down to the basics, things I really care about. So I only have seven bills that I’m working on. They’re a lot of work, but really hands-on and I’m really passionate about them, and I’m much happier about the work that I’m doing.’”

Her advice to students: “Find something you’re passionate about and get engaged in it and figure out how you’re going to be engaged. Take on leadership roles like president or secretary.”

And Garcia is helping her constituents of all ages become agents of change. Her annual “There Ought to Be a Law” contest gives residents a chance to introduce legislation that will improve their community.

Last year, a local fifth grade class invited Garcia to their classroom for a special presentation on the nearly 1.5 million people of Mexican descent deported by executive order in the 1930s. “Those students felt that history was repeating itself, so they did presenta­tions; they wrote poems and books. They became activists and lobbyists, ’” she says.

Garcia encouraged the students to enter her contest and they won. Last October, they saw their proposal signed into law by Gov. Brown.

This year, all new public school history textbooks will include information on the Mexican Repatriation of the 1930s.

“I’m an idealsat heart,” she says. “I’m an idealist in the belief of the social contract, that in order to have a government that works for us, we have to do our part.”

That’s a tall order, but Garcia is game. Sitting in her district office, Garcia says, “There are times when I joke. Can I retire now?”

Not for a while, it seems.
WHEN OSMAN KIBAR ’92 SET OUT TO CREATE A CURE FOR A RANGE OF DEGENERATIVE DISEASES, HE KNEW THERE WOULD BE SKEPTICS.

OSMAN KIBAR ’92 HAS GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO SKEPTICS. THEY DON’T SEEM TO BOTHER HIM.

Osman Kibar ’92 has grown accustomed to skeptics. They don’t seem to bother him.

Kibar is the founder and CEO of Samumed, a small San Diego biotech company with new drugs in clinical trials seeking to cure arthritic knees, hair loss, scarring of the lungs, degenerative disc disease and four types of gastrointestinal cancers. Even Alzheimer’s is on the longer-term list of about a dozen targeted diseases.

Samumed’s goals are stunningly ambitious. What Kibar and his team are trying to do is repair or regenerate human tissues through drugs that target the complex system known as the Wnt pathway, which is a key process in regulating cell development, cell proliferation and tissue regeneration.

The potential is so mind-boggling that despite being at least two years from an important Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of the first of many drugs in its pipeline, Samumed already has raised $220 million in funding and is completing another round of $100 million that values the company at an astonishing $12 billion, making it the most valuable biotech startup in the world.

That eye-popping valuation and the boldness of Samumed’s venture landed Kibar, 45, on the cover of Forbes magazine in May, the featured figure on a list of 30 Global Game Changers that included Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg.

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Though Samumed—named for the Zen term “sama,” for meditation at work or in action—doesn’t have a product to sell yet, the confidence of Kibar, his team and key investors has soared on the early results in human trials of the hair loss and osteoarthritis drugs, which appear to show Samumed’s drugs may safely regrow hair and even cartilage.

The potential of the osteoarthritis drug alone is tantalizing to Fan Tan, chairman of Vickers Venture Partners, an international venture capital company that owns about 3.5% of Samumed and is bullish enough to be seeking to take 20% of the current round of funding.

“It doesn’t matter who cures osteoarthritis. Whoever it is, it will change the world,” says Tan, basing his calculations in part on the fact that there are some 20 million osteoarthritis sufferers in the U.S alone.

And Samumed is going after far more than fixing worn-out knees.

“It doesn’t matter who cures osteoarthritis. Whoever it is, they have the potential to be the largest company in the world,” says Tan, basing his calculations in part on the fact that there are some 20 million osteoarthritis sufferers in the U.S alone.

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from its Phase I trial of 61 patients for a new drug that seeks to regrow knee cartilage to treat osteoarthritis. Animal studies already had shown that injections of Samumed’s compound caused stem cells to regenerate cartilage in rats. The Phase I study focused on demonstrating that the drug is safe in humans, but MRIs and X-rays also suggested a single dose showed what the company called “statistically significant improved joint space width” in the knees of patients who received it. A Phase II study of 445 patients is under way and expected to be complete next spring.

Samumed followed those announcements with a presentation of Phase I data from its trial to treat baldness at the World Congress for Hair Research, and in March presented data from its completed Phase II hair-growth trial to the American Academy of Dermatology. That study of 310 participants showed that hair count in a one-square-centimeter area of one group of subjects’ scalps increased by 7.7 hairs (6.9%) and by 10.1 hairs (9.6%) in another, though the largest increase was in the group that received the lower of two doses. The control group lost hair.

Tan, the venture capitalist known for making an early bet on Baidu, the Chinese answer to Google, sticks to his assertion that Samumed appears to be doing it in human trials.”

“From a technical perspective, we don’t lose any sleep anymore, because we have demonstrated safety and efficacy and disease modification in enough programs that we believe we have already validated the broader platform,” Kibar says. “In terms of funding, we’re also in a fortunate position in that we have all the money we need to bring these programs all the way to approvals. With our first approval, the company will become cash-flow positive. And we have enough cash in the bank to get us to multiple approvals, so that gives us additional diversification.”

The management team still on board after Hood’s departure is solid, united by decades-old friendship: Three of Kibar’s top executives also went to the elite Robert College high school. But he rejects any suggestion that he has simply surrounded himself with high school chums, saying instead that they have all reached such heights in their careers that the only reason a startup could have lured them is because of their confidence in him and his project.

The chief financial officer, Cevdet Samioglu, cofounded a hedge fund, Greywolf Capital Management, after becoming a director and portfolio manager at Goldman Sachs following Harvard Business School. The chief legal officer, Arman Oruc, earned a master’s in economics from the University of Cambridge and a law degree at UC Berkeley before becoming a partner at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett, where he represented clients like MasterCard, Ericsson, LG and Novartis. And the chief medical officer, Yusuf Yazici, is an internationally known rheumatologist who has maintained his role as an assistant professor at NYU, where he is director of the Seligman Center for Advanced Therapeutics, which conducts all clinical trials in rheumatology for the NYU Hospital for Joint Diseases.

They are on a journey together along a path that still holds suspense. “These are all long-term projects, taking a molecule from discovery to animal studies to clinical and then commercialization. You’re talking a minimum 10 years,” Kibar says. “The data—we are sharing it with the FDA, and we shared it with the doctors. Beyond that, no matter what we share, people will either not understand or not care or not believe. So those are the skeptics. And in certain programs, they may turn out to be right. We haven’t done it yet.”

FROM A TECHNICAL PERSPECTIVE, WE DON’T LOSE ANY SLEEP ANYMORE, BECAUSE WE HAVE DEMONSTRATED SAFETY AND EFFICACY AND DISEASE MODIFICATION IN ENOUGH PROGRAMS THAT WE BELIEVE WE HAVE ALREADY VALIDATED THE WIDER PLATFORM.
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED POKÉMON GO PLAYER IN THE WORLD? ASK NICK JOHNSON ’11, THE FIRST PERSON TO CATCH ALL 145 POKÉMON AROUND THE GLOBE.

STORY BY GORDEN HABER
PHOTOS BY CASEY KELBAUGH

It was lunchtime on a bright early-autumn day in Madison Square Park, a peaceful, leafy rectangle in New York City. The park was busy with office workers, chatting, eating, or just enjoying the mild weather. I, however, was trying to avoid walking into a tree.
Pokémon, you may recall, are fictional creatures that battle each other with the aid of their human “trainers.” The franchise was created in the late ‘90s for the Nintendo Game Boy. It has since spawned dozens of iterations, from card games to play-throughs to shirking cartoon toons that you wish your kid had never found on Netflix.

The latest version is the wildly successful app, Pokémon GO. Since its launch in July of 2016, Pokémon GO has been downloaded more than half a billion times—and grossed more than $500 million dollars. For a little perspective, that’s over twice as much money as Ghostbusters II.

The point of the game is fairly straightforward. You walk around “capturing” Pokémon. But when I downloaded the app, I had some trouble figuring it out all. First of all, I’m one of those imaginative types who like to make their avatars resemble themselves. Unfortunately Pokémon GO offers no way to create a myopic bald man. (Are they seriously types who like to make their avatars resemble themselves. Unfortunately Pokémon GO offers no way to create a myopic bald man. (Are they seriously types who like to make their avatars resemble themselves. Unfortunately Pokémon GO offers no way to create a myopic bald man. (Are they seriously types who like to make their avatars resemble themselves. Unfortunately Pokémon GO offers no way to create a myopic bald man. (Are they seriously times—and Sydneys, Australia.

As Nick put it, the game is just a “fancy skin on Google Maps.”

Like many games, Pokémon GO is simultaneously simple and complicated.

In Madison Square Park, it took me a few tries to catch my first Pokémon, a cross-eyed, bucktoothed, polka dot named Rattata. It was waiting for me by the statue of William Henry Seward, Abraham Lincoln’s secretary of state. When the ball hit the Pokémon, my phone emitted a satisfying ping.

“So if you walk in a zigzag, it’s wasted energy.”

Nick explained all this stuff very patiently, and if most of it didn’t make much sense to him, that’s more than him I did quite some wisdom from the Ted Williams of Pokémon.

First of all, don’t use the camera.

It makes it harder to catch them, and it kills your battery life.”

As he’d already mentioned, “Keep your head up so you don’t die.”

Indeed, as we walked around Pokémon hunting, I almost walked into about twelve people. But Nick looked more at the real world than at his screen. Which is why he’s never had any Pokémon GO-related injuries. Unlike some other people.

There was a Wall Street guy who was trying to get all the international Pokémon before I did. He broke his ankle in Sydney. He was hit by a car while trying to catch a Kangaskhan. After that he was like, screw this, and he went to Hawaii.

Nick’s third rule: Walk in a straight line. There are rewards within the game for going certain distances, but the game measures distance as the crow flies. “So if you walk in a zigzag, it’s wasted energy.”

With Nick’s guidance, I caught a few more Pokémon. Then we grabbed a bench to discuss how a mild mannered 20-something became the world’s greatest Pokémon GO player. Did he consider himself a gamer?

“Gamer,” those circles don’t mean anything any more,” Nick said. “When you have 500 million people downloading an app, it just shows that in a way we’re all gamers. When I’m out playing, I meet everyone from kids to retired people looking to get some exercise. My aunt is addicted to Candy Crush, but I wouldn’t call her a gamer.”

So it wasn’t the gaming, how did he explain his obsession with Pokémon GO?

“There are two reasons I started. I watched the TV show when I was a kid, so there was that nostalgia aspect for me. The second reason was it’s kind of what I do for a living.”

Nick, 142 Pokémon. He posted on Reddit about it.

“I answered some questions, went to sleep, and when I woke up, I had like 20 media requests. After appearing on shows like Good Morning America and in national newspapers like USA Today, Nick decided to take his Pokémon GO to the world. In an admirable display of chutzpah, Nick got published in the business class flights and Marriott Rewards to cover the lodging.

“I stayed in some sweet hotels,” he said. In the span of four days, Nick caught the three remaining Pokémon in Paris, Hong Kong and Sydney, Australia.

Nick might be right about the pointlessness of categories like “gamer.” You’d expect someone with this level of devotion to be intensely single-minded. But he has other pursuits: He’s into soccer, or at least the European kind.

“American soccer is like Googles,” he said. “The only people interested are those involved with it.”

And with Nick there is a thoughtfulness alongside his intensity. Wind, Sand and Stars, the lyrical aviation memoir of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, is his favorite book. He reads serious fiction by J.F. Powers, David Foster Wallace and William Gaddis. While all these details demonstrate that Nick is a well-rounded guy, they don’t quite explain what drove him toward this kind of digital achievement. When I pressed him on this, he pointed to his T-shirt—“Hustle 24­7­365”—and smiled. “If I do anything, I do it 100 percent,” he said. “I take everything.”

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Nick had to get back to his desk. He had work to do. We shook hands, and the Pokémon GO master of the world headed for his office, his phone firmly in his pocket.

But I already had my phone out. I quickly canceled my next appointment. Then I stayed in the park to catch some Pokémon.
On the first morning of my writing residency, I looked out the window and was filled with dread. “It’s back,” I thought. For months I’d been battling episodes of vertigo, which seemed to strike after changes in elevation. And since I’d just flown from the mountains of Colorado and landed at sea level, I was sure it was back, and just in time to thwart this dream opportunity. Fortunately, what I thought was an imbalance in my inner ear was actually the gentle swaying of the outside world. After all, I was on a boat, a houseboat in fact—the SS Vallejo—home to the newly created Varda Artist in Residence (VAR) Program.

The Vallejo had a rich history before landing in the hands of Carla Varda, who officially became the home of the VAR program. Given that I’d been writing about the rather heavy topic of cancer, it was fitting that the boat was given to me—along with a mug of coffee, or any- thing for that matter, down the ladder was much easier than taking it up. When I first ar- rived, I made a dozen or so trips up and down carrying my clothes and books in small, backpack-sized deliveries. But at one point, the rock music- ian suggested to me, “Why not just throw your clothes down? An excel- lent idea I wished I’d thought of myself!”

This began the jettisoning of shorts, dresses, and pants to the main level of the boat in a Great Gatsby- esque moment of liber- tication. I’m sure, at the very least, the Beat poets would have approved. The program allowed as much or little contact with the outside world as we liked. Some of the artists spent their days exploring the offer- ings of San Francisco, while others stayed on the boat. For me, it was a bit of a let- ter, less hip group. Among other reasons for this was the chance to observe a tragic pair of resident scoundrels. This couple squawked inside our room early each morning; then walked on the roof with such deliberation that I wondered if two very serious lawyers were debating above me. One day I noticed that the gulls had built their nest precariously atop one of the pier’s wooden piles. Upon some investigation, I learned that each year their nest fell terribly into the ocean—the eggs lost to the deep blue. The parents cried grief passed. And yet each spring they’d rebuild their nest in the same place, and the same disaster ensued. I wondered what kinds of bird- brains dreamed behavior my fellow artists were witnessing on the streets of San Francisco.

Since time to time the Vallejo hosted its share of social gatherings. These were nothing like the famed wild parties of the Beat Genera- tion. Rather, it was intimate events that allowed each artist to display his or her work. On our last evening, we ate salmon from the local fish- monger, broiled with fresh cherries. We made a colorful salad, cut up rainbow lights the spaces of a spider’s web: the colors, it said, “can be seen only after the years of darkness. But the stones, the old unbelievers, remained unmoving in the streets, and watched as the same stirs were an- chted, the same ships were hailed to sea. Only the children, looking out from their big glass houses, saw the New World like a painting, like something from a dream.”

—Jodie Hollander ’99

Vagabonds
After Rimbaud
Oh, fateful brother,
it cannot be your sister
you cannot be my brother,
since you are still a mistress
to our late mother—
Many years have passed, and
does this Count win; what’s become of you?
and what foreign land
do you these days inhabit?
Russia, Japan, China,
in that mind of yours
you were never right. But
what if now we meet?
Could I restore you
to your original state,
or would you drag me,
just as She did,
into your dark room of
old howling sorrow?

Après Le Deluge
After the idea of the deluge
ended, a little hore appeared
in the moving flowers,
spoke of
peace of an untroubled
light of the eyes—
the colors, it said, could be seen only
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Becoming a writer in the springs of student-athletic-ism, community, complete with a reputation for wild parties that experimented with alternative ways of thinking. The Vallejo also became home to many of the Beat poet gatherings, as well as the conversations Alan Watt recorded that came to be known as the “Houseboat Sessions.” After Varda’s death in 1971, the boat changed hands several times. In 2015 the Vallejo officially became the home of the VAR program.

Among the other artists with me were a rock musician from New York, a sound artist from Portland, Ore., and a visual artist from New Zealand. Not only was I the only writer, I was also the program’s first poet. Before my arrival, I’d just completed my first full-length poetry collection, My Dark Horse, and I was waiting to hear news from publishers. Given that I’d been writing about the rather heavy topic of my childhood, I felt both a sense of accomplishment and relief after finishing the book, and I was looking forward to using the residency to tackle something new. Originally I’d planned to translate the French poet Arthur Rimbaud’s Illuminations. However, after a few days into the project, and with the boat’s rich inspiration, I found myself creating a sheaf of my own new poems that built off Rim- baud’s poetry.

I was delighted by the simple yet elegant space I’d been given for my work. My room was a freshly painted white, and three of its walls had expansive views of Sausalito Bay. Blooming plants were in every corner, and the large windows allowed the fresh air and the music of the ocean and birds to enter. I faced my desk toward the long view of the water and unpacked my favorite collected poems by Philip Larkin, Robert Frost, Sylvia Plath, and Donald Justice. I placed them next to the computer and was ready to return to my desk.

However, no progress was to be made without a strong cup of coffee. I unpacked my stroopwafel espresso maker and beans and figured I’d do the rest. After looking around the kitchen, I was surprised to find I’d be grinding my beans by hand and working a sweat from turning the crank hundreds of times. I eventually grew accustomed to the ritual and even came to enjoy it. But as it turned out, the real coffee challenge was yet to come. One of the unique things about house- boats was that one must climb a ladder to reach one’s room.

Other than the possibility of a drunken stumble or unexpected bout of vertigo, it hadn’t occurred to me that the ladder would be an obstacle—I was forced to devise a system. First, I’d take a few sips to lower the coffee level in my mug and to give myself a small shot of caffeine, should I need to make a quick save during transport. Then, I’d hold the side of the ladder with my left hand moving the coffee cup up one rung at a time with my right. Meanwhile, my feet followed suit, one rung at a time, until my coffee and I were both safely delivered up the ladder to my desk and my computer.

I’m sure this looked ridiculous, particularly to the others who simply drank their coffee in the kitchen and avoided the drama altogether. But even from enjoying my coffee in solitude, I’d developed this quirk of needing a mug of coffee beside me while I worked; thus the struggle was worth the effort.

Bringing an empty coffee mug, or anything for that matter, down the ladder was much easier than taking it up. When I first ar- rived, I made a dozen or so trips up and down carrying my clothes and books in small, backpack-sized deliveries. But at one point, the rock music- ian suggested to me, “Why not just throw your clothes down? An excel- ent idea I wished I’d thought of myself!”

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Welcome
New Alumni Association Board Members

47 hearty chirps to Jordan Pedraza ’09 as she steps into her new role as president of the Pomona College Alumni Association. On October 2, to kick off the first meeting of the 2016–17 Alumni Association Board at the Seaver House, Pedraza welcomed four new at-large members to the Board: Mercedes Fitchett ’91, Nina Janeiro ’08, Ginny Kruger ’53 and Don Swan ’15. Pedraza also shared her goal for the board this year—

• COMMUNICATION—to raise the visibility of the Alumni Board so alumni have an additional channel to be heard, and also to share more updates and opportunities between the board and the community

• CONNECTION—to enhance alumni connections across a range of affinity groups, regions, identities and generations, as well as increase connections between alumni and students

• COLLABORATION—to strengthen the productivity of the board as we work to create opportunities and events through special projects and our working committees

Congratulations, Jordan, and welcome new board members! The Alumni Board is a group of dedicated volunteers who lead alumni engagement efforts and serve as conduits between the on-campus and off-campus Pomona communities. To see the roster of current board members and learn how to get involved, visit www.pomona.edu/alumni/alumni-association-board.

Settle Into Fall with New Pomona Book Club Selections

Fall semester is well underway and it’s time to head back to the library with Pomona! With a national election on the minds of many Sagehens, we’ve asked faculty across campus to recommend books that approach social and cultural topics in insightful ways. Fall and early winter selections include:

October
The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America by George Packer
Recommended by
Associate Professor of Politics Susan McWilliams

November
Founding Brothers by Joseph J. Ellis
Recommended by
Warren Finney Day Professor of History Helena Wall

December/January
The Plot Against America by Philip Roth
Recommended by
Associate Professor of Sociology Colin Beck

To join the Book Club and access exclusive discussion questions, faculty notes and video content, visit www.pomona.edu/bookclub.

Calling All Lifelong Learners: Join Ideas @Pomona

Ever wish you could go back to class? The new Ideas@Pomona program curates the best academic videos from around campus and the Pomona alumni to ignite discussion, share ideas and highlight rising research. To take part, join the Ideas@Pomona Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/ideasatpomona and learn how to get involved, visit www.pomona.edu/alumni/alumni-association-board.

Career Connections at Pomona College

Pomona College Career Connections kicked off its year of programming at Claremont Graduate University’s downtown LA campus on September 27 with a panel of Sagehens discussing careers in advertising, digital media and virtual reality. Panelists included Paulette Barros ’11, Wayne Goldstein ’96, Jeremiah Knight ’94, Bill Sewell ’95 and Matt Thompson ’96. The Pomona College Career Connections program fosters meaningful relationships for Sagehens in their professional lives and provides opportunities for volunteers to help current students as they discover different career paths. To learn more, visit www.pomona.edu/alumni/careerconnections.

What are you committed to at Pomona College?

“For me, opportunities to learn new perspectives and wrestle with challenging questions are what make Pomona’s liberal arts education so transformative.”—Audrey Bilger, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College

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Class Notes only available in print edition
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print edition
[IN MEMORIAM]

Alfred Kwok
Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy
1965–2016

After receiving the heartbreaking news in late September, the Pomona College community began to mourn the passing of Professor Alfred Kwok, who died while on a trip in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Students, faculty and staff crowded into the Physics Commons, mixing tears and laughter as they shared memories of the vibrant professor who was passionate about physics, the outdoors and life.

“He was a source of energy and excitement,” said Physics Professor Tom Moore. “He genuinely loved being a teacher. He was always thinking about how to get something across better.”

After the gathering, students came forward one after another to write memories on whiteboards:

“Kwok always stayed in Millikan until 2–3 a.m., and would always help with whatever class you were working on—even philosophy.”

“Professor Kwok single-handedly bridged the gap between profs and students.”

“He always knew what each person was interested in and always had advice and experience to share.”

“He invited me on a ‘moderate’ hike of 22 miles.”

“He’s the reason I’m a physics major.”

Professor Kwok, 50, was an associate professor of physics and astronomy, and a member of Pomona’s faculty since 2000. He grew up in Hong Kong and came to the U.S. for college, earning his B.A. from UC Santa Cruz and his Ph.D. from Yale University. He came to Pomona from Franklin and Marshall College, having previously served as a postdoctoral researcher at the Stanford University Free Electron Laser Center.

Kwok was the recipient of the Becton Prize for Excellence in Engineering and Applied Science and the Optical Society of America, Newport Research Award, Finalist. Some of his research interests included microresonators/whispering gallery modes, laser spectroscopy and nonlinear optics.

Kwok was active in outdoor education trips and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. An avid climber, he loved being in the mountains and sharing his love of the outdoors. His death occurred in the rugged backcountry of Kings Canyon National Park, on the southwest face of 13,270-foot Deerhorn Mountain.

“Anything he loved in life, he always wanted to share, whether it was physics or food or hiking,” read one message on the whiteboard. “His joy in life always bubbled over.”

Class Notes
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A long, long time ago—way back when Facebook was young—Virginia and I discussed the possibility of becoming “friends” in that newfangled way. I was ambivalent about this new style of virtual, public, quote-unquote friendship, but she thought she might be eager for the novelty, given that she was the most curious, modern 90-something person who ever lived.

I mean, Virginia’s entire life—for nearly 10 decades—was a testament to the power of humans to evolve. Think about it: Here’s a girl born, in Oklahoma, before American women have the right to vote. In the 1930s, she lives in Germany, who ever lived.

She was Madame Crosby, my middle-aged French professor—regal, demanding, with a demeanor as efficient as her matronly bun. In her presence, I always felt I was slouching. I struggled to make it on time to her 8 a.m. French 51 class. The only things I could say with confidence were “Pardon” and “Répétez, s’il vous plaît.”

“Je suis allée au musée,” she replied in an email. “Darn it, for me friendship is private and personal—as with email. “Darn it, for me friendship is private and personal—as with email. I don’t even want to send ‘thank you’ cards. I’m a performer” she once said when I asked her the key to her resilience—but unlike many people who love attention, she also gave it; wholeheartedly. She was curious to the point of hunger. How are you? Her’s your family? Are you happy? She often asked me that—are you happy?—and then we’d have a long discussion on the nature of happiness.

One day while I was in her Paris apartment, a young workman was fixing something in the garden out back. He was sweating, no shirt. Virginia watched him. She sighed. Oh, she said, how she missed the days when she didn’t feel invisible to young men.

As you all know, Virginia gave great conversations. It ranged from just the right amount of tart gossip to books (she loved haute literature and trashy mysteries) to politics (Go Democrats) to the meaning of life.

Once, as I was thinking about all the discoveries and inventions she’d lived through—from the electric refrigerator to the Internet—I asked her what she thought the next great frontier would be.

“She’s right,” she promptly said. After I understood the brain, she believed, we won’t understand anything

One day while I was in her Paris apartment, a young workman was fixing something in the garden out back. He was sweating, no shirt. She watched him. She sighed. Oh, she said, how she missed the days when she didn’t feel invisible to young men.

Virginia maintained close relationships with a number of former students. They adored her; she thrived on them. My brother Chris, who lived near her in Paris, became one of her dearest friends.

Virginia also gave us a vision of how a woman might live a forceful life. Women have the right to vote. In the 1930s, she lives in Germany, who ever lived.

As the years wore on, we talked a lot about aging. She didn’t like it. But she faced it with her bracing humor and candor.

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I have no idea what she said. I leaned over her bed. “Répétez, s’il vous plaît?”

She hoisted an imaginary wine glass and in a raspy voice said, “Vogue la galère!”

Those were the words, she said, that she wanted to “go out” on. When I got home, I looked it up. It has various definitions.

“Let the galley be kept rowing; keep on, whatever may happen.”

“Vogue la galère, ma chère amie.”

She inspired, excited, encouraged us, laughed heartily at our jokes. She made us feel valued, seen. She made us more real to ourselves.

Virginia loved attention—“I’m a performer” she once said when I asked her the key to her resilience—but unlike many people who love attention, she also gave it wholeheartedly. She was curious to the point of hunger. How are you? Her’s your family? Are you happy? She often asked me that—are you happy?—and then we’d have a long discussion on the nature of happiness.

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This is the test of a eulogy delivered by Mary Schmich ‘75 at a memorial service for Professor Emerita of French Virginia Crosby. Schmich is a columnist for the Chicago Tribune.
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