HALCYON TIDINGS

A Newsletter of FPU's University Scholars Program

Luke 12:48: "To whom much is given, from them much is expected."

August 2026

FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

Greetings, University Scholars Community!

Welcome to a new academic year! Freshmen have returned from Hume, transfers have met their advisors and found their classrooms, and returning students have revisited some of their favorite campus haunts.

Halcyon Tidings aims to provide you with knowledge of significant campus opportunities and activities, especially as they involve our University Scholars. We will always start with significant dates to keep in mind.

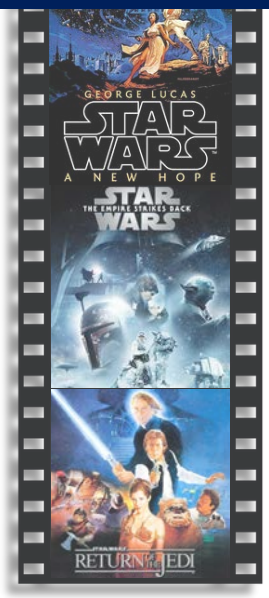
We are pleased in this issue to share with you some of the ways you can be involved in student publications: at FPU, we are a community on a shared journey, and student writing is a great way to foreground our common work.

There will be many other ways to work with student colleagues and professors outside the classroom: you will see the upcoming Honors Banquet in the dates, and you can read an explanation of Alpha Chi Collaborative Research.

The Odyssey was one of the most celebrated films of the summer; since one of the editors is a classicist, we have a comment on it. And we have a new LEAD prof this falll, so we meet Austin Cantrell!

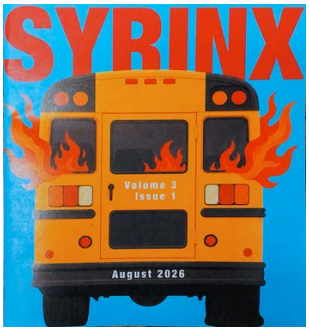
We heard many positive comments last year about a review of some of the cool places on campus that it might take a while to find otherwise, so we are including that feature once again, as well as several useful links throughout.

Spring '26 Dates of Interest



August 26	Fall Convocation
August 27	Screening of *The Empire Strikes Back* @ 6 PM in the Black Box Theatre
September 3	Screening of *The Return of the Jedi* @ 6 PM in the Black Box Theatre
September 9	UCSB Graduate Admissions Webinar Series begins (see pg. 13)
September 16	Town Hall: Feed Your Funny Bone w/ Colin Quinn @ 7 PM Shaghoian Concert Hall
October 8-9	Fall Break
October 14	Town Hall: Feed Your Patriotic Pride Norah O'Donnell @ 10 AM William Saroyan Theatre
October 16	Fall Honors Banquet
November 18	Town Hall: Feed Your Inner Space Cowboy Kobie Boykins @ 10 AM William Saroyan Theatre
November 23-27	Thanksgiving Break

Pick up the back-to-school *Syrinx* issue on campus.
Use this link for *The Syrinx*'s video content.
The Syrinx - YouTube



To learn more about USP, check out the updated USP website.
Click here

Verse of the Month

Paragon Scholar Ella Sauskojus selects the verses in Romans 6:3-4: “Or do you not know that as many of us were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were baptized with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life."

President Stephens takes a selfie with the Paragons

Sauskojus explains: “The Orthodox Study Bible explains these verses, stating: ‘Freedom from sin is grounded in the sacrament of holy baptism. Ignorance of what happens when we are baptized is a great enemy. Through this ignorance, many are defeated in their battle against sin. What Christ accomplished on the Cross—an actual death to sin—baptism accomplishes in us: an actual death to sin and our liberation from its power.

‘Because our baptism into Christ gives us power over sin, it is an exact likeness of His death. Baptism does not merely ‘stand for’ this truth, but is itself our death to sin’ (Orthodox Study Bible, page 1531). I love this verse because it reminds me that my baptism into the church should not be taken lightly. In Eastern Orthodoxy, baptism is not merely a symbolic ritual or a declaration of faith. It is a sacramental Mystery that physically and spiritually unites a person to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Orthodox Christians view baptism as the literal birth into the Kingdom of God and the beginning of a lifelong transformation (theosis).”

Media and Affect

by Judith Flores Mora, HT Co-Editor

Since the beginning of time, humans have told stories. It is our tendency to share the things that excite, terrify, upset, and uplift us. We are privileged to live in a society with media outlets that share the good, the bad, the ugly. Unfortunately, we live in a world where systems, far too often, become corrupt; systems meant to educate and capture the stories that shape community and identity are weaponized. Renowned journalist Scott Pelley says journalism breeds democracy. Although events in the world have made it increasingly difficult to believe in that principle, I remain optimistic.

We can always strive for democracy. FPU certainly does. Although our school isn't run by students, they are at the core of how leadership decides we should move forward. Students, in great part, are responsible for the flourishing of our community. I've sat in a great deal of leadership talks, and the message I have always walked away with is that leadership is embodied in many distinct ways; however, all types of leading require a voice—loud, quiet, gradual, or immediate.

God created us with a voice as a tool. He gave us what *He* used when He *spoke* the heavens, earth, and sky into existence. I want to apply the same philosophy Rose Horowich, a staff writer at *The Atlantic*, used in one of her feature pieces: "What [we do] with this inheritance is up to us." We become what we consume —language, thought, traditions, and trends—and much of what is consumed today, and how it is consumed, comes from media culture. The awesome part is that we get to decide what we consume and how we respond.

At FPU, there are several ways to participate in the discourse surrounding societal and community issues, two of which are specifically student media; in other words, media led and created by students. Fresno Pacific's literary journal, *The Green Light*, aims to be an outlet for creative minds in our community and includes short stories, artwork, poetry, etc. *The Green Light* anxiously awaits all first-time authors and artists and can't wait to admire the next set of brilliant minds.

Media and Affect

The Syrinx, our student magazine, is the voice of the Sunbirds. We encourage all who feel the urge to speak on issues, be it global, national, or local, to render their story in a place where it is welcome. We balance the light and fluffy with the heavy and uncomfortable. We provide a place for the stories of the people, by the people, for the people. It is a place to do what is innate for us—to tell the stories of humanity for humanity.

Scan here if you're interested in joining the team!

Side Note:

The interdisciplinary society Alpha Chi celebrates the top ten percent of students in their major, providing opportunities to make "scholarship effective for good." Alpha Chi members are invited to attend annual conferences to present research in their area of study. AX scholars are also encouraged to work collaboratively. At the annual conference, groups of AX scholars present their findings on a given topic, applying research relevant to their major; the Trisha Yarbrough Collaborative Research Competition can award up to $2,500 per group! This year's theme is "Living Healthy in an Online World." If you are an Alpha Chi scholar, or would like to take part, and have questions about involvement, please email Judith at jzf135@students.fresno.edu.

Nolan's *Odyssey*, Some Thoughts

by W. Marshall Johnston, HT Co-Editor

You may have had a chance to see Nolan's film *The Odyssey* this summer. Homeric poetry remains some of the most compelling tales in literature – you may have seen another retelling, *The Return*, a few years ago. Since your Honors Director is also a Classicist (I study the ancient world and its literature), we thought I should share a few thoughts.

Dr. Pam and I are lifelong dog people, and the appearance of Argos in *The Odyssey* has always been one of our favorite scenes, and we tear up every time we read it. Nolan even expanded Argos' role and, in fact, used him to illuminate the character of the humans. As many of us have shared, "we don't deserve dogs!"

The ancient idea of xenia, hospitality, is called "Zeus' Law" in the film. In a world without hotels and highways, being able to hope for a safe harbor was absolutely essential. You needed to depend on hospitality; in part, it was said, because a stranger might be Zeus. Of course, this idea is similar to chapter 13 of Hebrews! "Some have hosted angels unawares..."

At the end of the Bronze Age (ca. 1200 BC), multiple sources refer to the emergence of the "Sea Peoples"; Penelope says to Odysseus, "You ARE the Sea Peoples!" There has been a huge debate about who they were, but the Mycenaean Greeks were embroiled in those turbulent times. In the famous Pogo insight, "We have met the enemy, and he is us!"

Nolan's *Odyssey*, Some Thoughts

I personally love the Homeric epic's clever interaction among Athena, Penelope, and Odysseus, but Athena was kind of left out of it in Nolan's interpretation (is she even actually there?). I would also say that you must read the poem, because there is a cyclops trick by Odysseus and an architectural trick by Penelope that are world-class! But see the film, too…

Get to Know Professor Austin Cantrell

On his 2nd year as a kinesiology professor

Has been teaching at FPU since 2021

Specializes in research on exercise physiology with a special emphasis on sports performance (all collegiate sports and performance)

Office is on the 2nd floor of AIMS

Received his B.S. and M.A. from FPU

His favorite things about working at FPU are building relationships with the students and the support/inspiration from faculty and staff.

A multi-instrumentalist (guitar being his main instrument) and music producer

All three of his children were born in August, each exactly two years apart, making August the birthday month.

Revisiting Sit, Think, Mingle

Once again, there have been many new developments around the Fresno Pacific campus throughout the summer. Last summer, the Sattler rooms underwent a complete makeover; this summer, thanks to incredibly generous donors, Marpeck underwent the same transformation. The AIMS Maker Studio has proved to be the perfect place for curiosity and creativity to take flight. The Outdoor Lab honoring Dr. Michael Kunz, just southeast of Marpeck, has grown new plant life. Now that the Valley's heat appears to have died down, the Lohrenz Sculpture Garden can be the perfect place to take a breather from all the anxiety and stress that accumulate at the start of the semester. Some of these places are fantastic spots to just sit, think, and mingle. If you are looking for a quiet, secluded area around campus, here are a few locations you might want to visit on your own or with your friends.

The Larry Ecklund Memorial Garden

Located on the south side of AIMS Hall. It seconds as a perfect area for video or photo shooting projects!

The Lohrenz Sculpture Garden

Located on the east side of Heibert Library.

Revisiting Sit, Think, Mingle

The Outdoor Learning Lab

This space is dedicated to biology professor, Dr. Michael Kunz, for all of his contributions to the STEM program at FPU. If you are curious about little critters, this spot is for you.

"The Sunken Garden"

Disclaimer: "The Sunken Garden" still has not been made official. Other unofficial titles are the "AIMS Amphitheatre" and "The Cove." If you think that you have the perfect name for this spot, please let us know!

Fire Pit

Located beside the FPU pool, hidden within Holman Park. With more appropriate weather, this is the ideal corner for a s'mores campfire.

North Hall Seating Area

Situated between the BC Lounge and the North Hall main offices. This seating area is home to the "Watergirl."

Revisiting Sit, Think, Mingle

Fishbowl

This study spot sits in the corner of the AIMS Hall atrium.

The Hiebert Mezzanine

The Mezzanine is the upper section in Hiebert Library. Here, you can find quiet study areas within the vast amount of resources.

The Warkentin Chapel

When in need to decompress, recenter, or have a moment of prayer, visit the Chapel located north of Hiebert Library.

The HUB

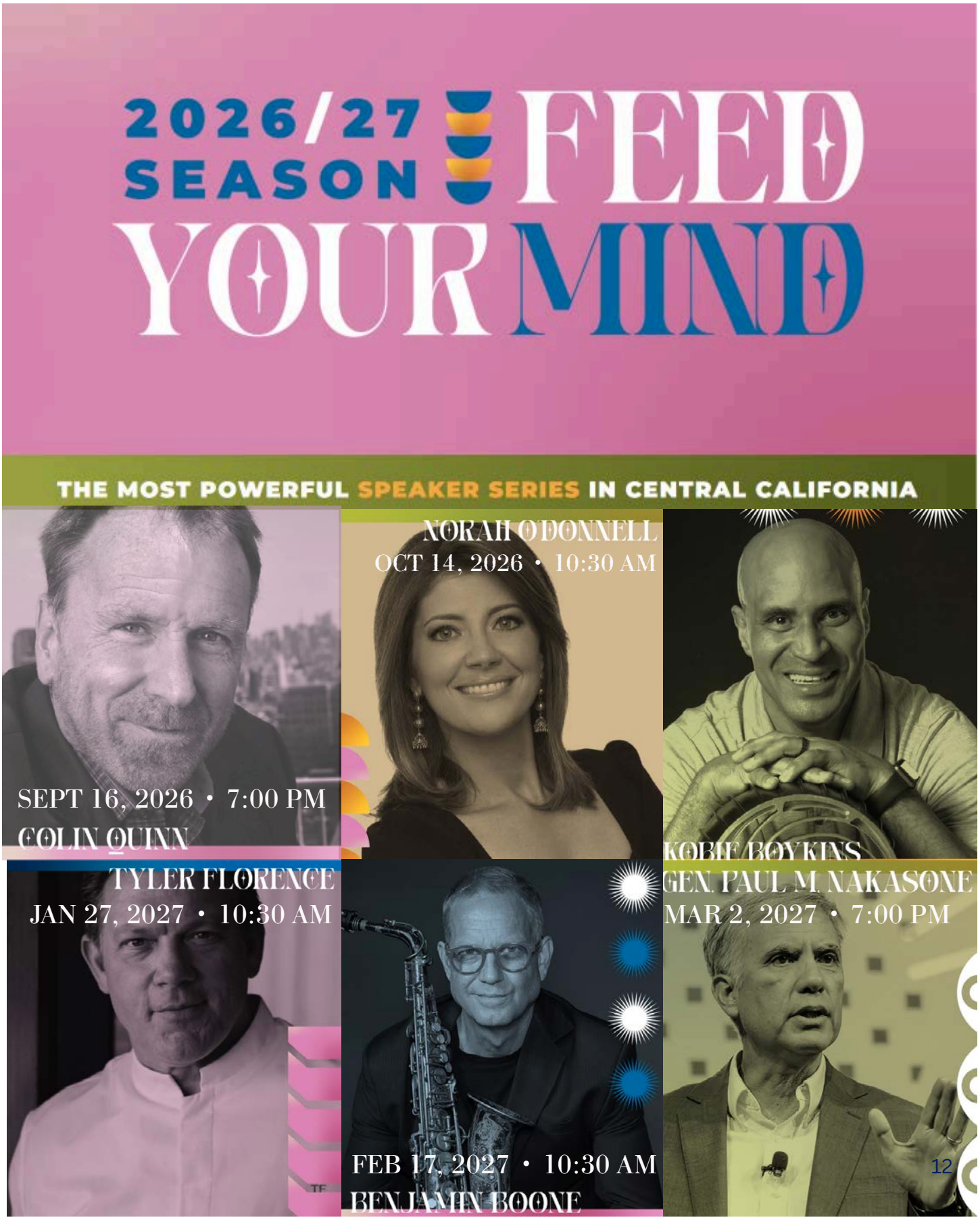
Consider it a shameless plug. But in all seriousness, the Seminar Room offers comfort and a perfect ambience for creativity. Hold study group sessions or perhaps even a solo study session paired with amazing views of the center of FPU action. Consider stopping by the USP library (also in the HUB) to find primary and secondary texts for your courses or scholarly research.

USP Library

USP Seminar Room

USP Conference Room

2026-27 Town Hall Speaker Line-up



2026-27 Speaker Line-up

More on Sunny's Blog

Check out the posts written by Alumna Jasmine Sirvent ('25), "Oh, the Person You Could Become," and Alumnus Raymond Andrade ('26), "Who Am I Called to Be?"
Click here for Sunny's Blog

Fall Graduate Admissions Webinar Series

Scan QR to learn more about UC Santa Barbara's Graduate Admissions virtual fall workshops.

For more weekly announcements, check out *The Scoop* or the *Sunbird Spotlight*!

Shalom, Judith, Marshall, and the University Scholars Team

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The FPU Honors Council:

LaKosha Wharry, Program Assistant; Quentin Kinnison, SAS Dean
W. Marshall Johnston, USP Coordinator; Judith Flores Mora, USP Student Assistant
SAS: Chris Janzen, Brian Schultz, Pamela Johnston, Daniel Larson, Andrew Sensenig
GPS: Sharon Starcher, Jon Clark

HONOR SOCIETIES

To learn more about the interdisciplinary **Alpha Chi Honor Society**, please visit:
https://www.alphachihonor.org.
Advisor: Dr. Daniel Larson

To learn more about the **Phi Alpha Theta Honor Society** for History, please visit:
http://phialphatheta.org
Advisor: Dr. Pamela Johnston

To learn more about the **Kappa Mu Epsilon Honor Society** for Mathematics, please visit:
http://www.kappamuepsilon.org/pages/a/index.php.
Advisor: Professor Jeremiah Ruesch

To learn more about **Theta Alpha Kappa Honor Society** for Biblical Studies, please visit:
http://thetaalphakappa.org
Advisor: Dr. Eric Vail

To learn more about the **Pi Gamma Mu Honor Society** for the Social Sciences, please visit:
http://pigammamu.org
Advisor: Dr. Daniel Nelson

To learn more about **Alpha Alpha Alpha Honor Society**, for our first-generation scholars:
https://www.1stgenhonors.org
Advisors: Dr. Sharon Starcher

To learn more about **Phi Alpha**, for our most outstanding Social Work students:
https://phialpha.org
Advisor: Sai Mounaoutoua, MSW

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Why the name “*Halcyon Tidings*” for our newsletter? Whenever we have discussed a merit scholarship in the program, the name “Halcyon” has always come up, because it evokes a calm and peaceful place, that center that we have in our community, founded in Christ. “Tidings” worked as a nicely learned and archaic word for news.