

HALCYON TIDINGS

A Newsletter of FPU's University Scholars Program



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

May 2026

Greetings, University Scholars Community!

Thanks for supporting our work throughout this year!

We wanted to provide you with some more inspiring information about the University Scholars as the academic calendar switched to summer semester. While there will still be interesting FPU activities going on, for many the rhythms will change to travel and different sorts of study and work.

In the Dates of Interest, we include a brief look forward into fall, if you are interested in one of the fascinating Town Halls. And don't forget the student art that is still on display in the Ewert Gallery in the Warkentine Culture and Arts Center. Make sure the first-Thursdays of ArtHop is on your schedule!

We especially wanted to share something about the last two major USP events of the spring, Research Night and the Major Honors Banquet, and then of course we all gathered for a moving Graduation. We also include a tribute to a valuable colleague in our work, Dr. Nick Saleh.

See you in August for the start of fall semester!

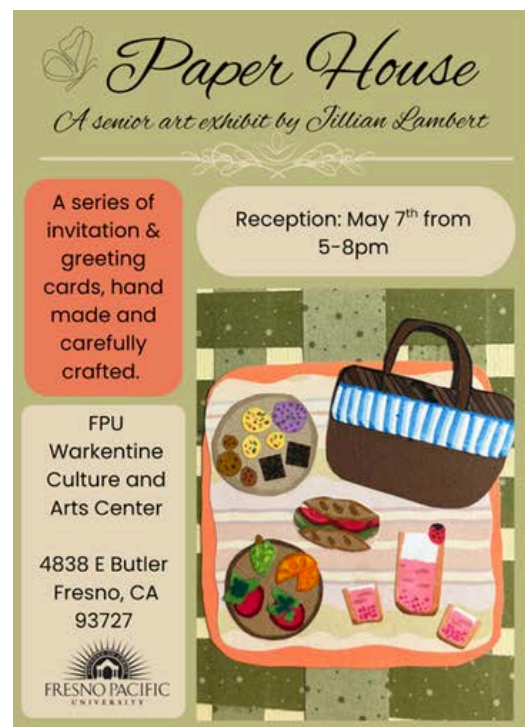
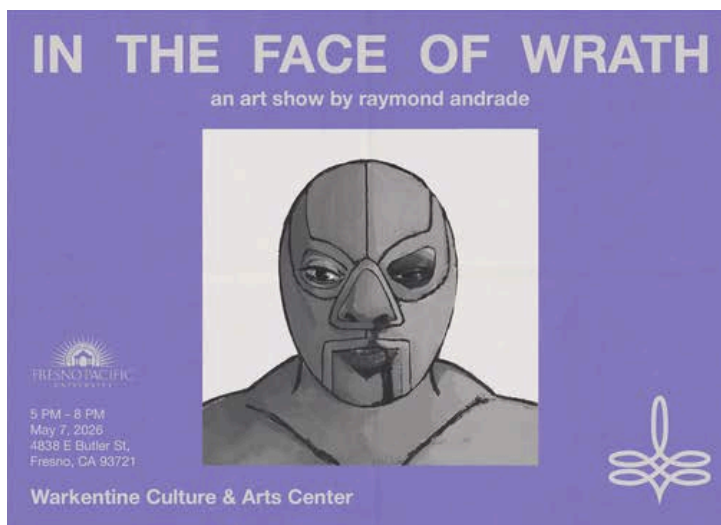


Spring '26 Dates of Interest

- Sept. 16 Town Hall: "Feed Your Funny Bone" by Colin Quinn
@ Paul Shaghoian Concert Hall, 7 PM
- Oct. 14 Town Hall: "Feed Your Patriotic Pride," by
Norah O'Donnell @ William Soroyan Theatre, 10 AM
- Nov. 18 Town Hall: "Feed Your Inner Space Cowboy" by
Kobie Boykins @ William Saroyan Theatre, 10 AM

The San Joaquin Town Hall Speaker Series Line-up for 2026-27 has been released!
[Check out the entire line-up here.](#)

Student Artwork on Display in the Ewert Gallery



Use this link for *The Syrinx's* new video content, including a video on recent graduates reflecting on their time at FPU!

[The Syrinx - YouTube](#)



Check out the newly updated USP website!

[Click here](#)



Verse of the Month

University Scholar Joey Brocar selects Matthew 6:26-27 as the verse to meditate throughout summer break: “Look at the birds in the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?”

Joey states, “This verse serves as a reminder that both faith and fear are a choice.” Our heavenly Father knows what we need, and He has equipped our graduates and Honors recipients for the Kingdom. We are grateful that FPU is part of their journey.



Grandma, Mom, and Daughter share the stage to celebrate the award of Outstanding University Scholar.

Undergraduate Research Night

We had the largest-ever Research Night with a great Keynote, delicious tacos, and eleven categories of research! The papers were presented all over campus, and the posters were grouped in the WCAC Elizabeth Lyles Theatre.



Winning Papers:

Biblical Studies and Philosophy: MacKenzie Sepeda, “Resurrecting The Past? A Virtue-Ethical Analysis of De-Extinction”

Social Work and Sociology: Jacquelin de la Cruz Magallanes, “Culture Identity Among Long-Term Mexican Immigrants in Tulare County”

Literature and Communication: Judith Flores Mora, “The Debacle of ‘Tamed’ or ‘Cured’: The Horse in Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*”

History: Roberto Perez-Puente, “Cultures Intertwined: Cuban and American Histories Entwined”

Anthropology: Victoria Stephens, “We Resist Metaphor: The Danger of Making Disability Sentient”

Research Night

Winning Posters:

Psychology I: Gia Hernandez and Yajaira Gahagan, “Perceived Age and Race Effects on Credibility of Online Health Information”

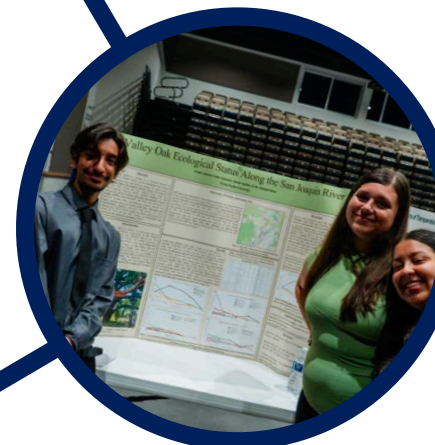
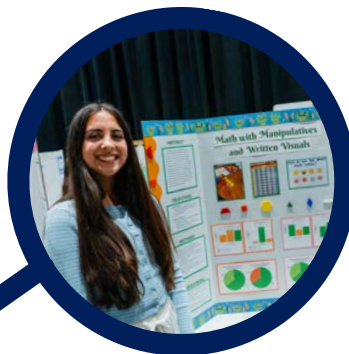
Psychology II: Kennedy Haslip and Kylie Roberts, “Stop, Drop, and Stretch”

Liberal Studies I: Emily Garza, “Math with Manipulatives and Written Visuals”

Liberal Studies II: Kaleigh Larios, “Understanding Self and Making Better Decisions”

Kinesiology: Malia Mitchell, “Differences in Kinetic Variables between Pneumatic Resistance and Free-Weight Squats” (supervised by Don Diboll)

Biology and Chemistry: Emily Garcia, Leslie Alejandre, and David Aguliar, “Valley Oak Ecological Status Along the San Joaquin River” (supervised by Michael Kunz)



Major Honors Banquet Awards

We had the most awards ever for our Major Honors students! We had an engaging Keynote Address and a delicious meal to go along with our celebrations! We list the awards here and the statements that faculty made about their Highest Honors students.



This year's Keynote was Dr. Alison Noble on what it means to cultivate calling.

Awards for the Business Department

Gavyn Cirricione - Junior Honors

Sierra Coyne - Junior Honors

Major Honors Banquet

Business Department Contd.

Matthew Bettencourt - Junior Highest Honors

Matthew is a consistently engaged and reliable student who works well with peers, contributes thoughtfully in class, and demonstrates steady follow-through in all aspects of his coursework. His ability to balance strong academic performance with his commitments as a baseball student-athlete reflects impressive discipline, time management, and dedication.

Kyran Ross - Senior Honors

Lorena Soriano - Senior Honors

Ryan Braam - Senior Highest Honors

Ryan is an engaged, responsible student who collaborates effectively with peers, often stepping into leadership roles, and maintains strong accountability for his progress and attendance. His ability to balance academic excellence with his commitments as a basketball student-athlete reflects impressive discipline, time management, and perseverance.

Awards for the Fine Art & Humanities Department

Art

Autumn Johnson- Senior Honors

Yetzanit Amador-Rodriguez - Senior Honors

Raymond Andrade - Senior Highest Honors

Raymond is an exceptional student and gifted artist. He is always a polite, conscientious, and hardworking individual. We look forward to his art show next week!

Major Honors Banquet

Communication

Carson Haslam - Junior Highest Honors

Carson's self-deprecating charm makes him a favorite in class. He is a talented wordsmith, and gifted rhetorician – an artist of persuasion.

Iyanna Fuller – Senior Honors

Victoria Stephens - Senior Honors

Giselle Salcedo Camacho - Senior Highest Honors

Giselle is an animated classroom participant, and she is already finding ways to work in the community with her communication skills. She is an exemplary Paragon scholar, and we are glad she will do her graduate study at FPU!

English

Ashley Guerra - Senior Highest Honors

Ashley is a future English teacher. She is a dedicated student, astute reader, and respected leader in and out of the classroom. She has been a leader in Folkorico, and she was the only student at Research Night to participate in both a panel and poster session.

History

Joseph Brocar - Junior Honors

Carson Haslam - Junior Highest Honors

Carson is a man of few words, but when he does speak, it is always worth listening to... he is thoughtful, reflective, and incisive. His dry sense of humor bursts forth at the least expected moments.

Classics – Personalized Major

Elizabeth Drake - Senior Honors

Major Honors Banquet

Music

Juan Meza - Junior Highest Honors

Juan is a hard-working, intelligent student, always seeking opportunities for improvement. He is an adventurous and collaborative musician.

Michelle Camarillo - Senior Highest Honors

Michelle works really hard, loves music, is a strong pianist, and is always eager to learn and grow. She has been a very active and helpful colleague in numerous aspects of our program.

Spanish

Giselle Salcedo Camacho - Senior Honors

Rita Curiel - Senior Honors

Natalia Lopez - Senior Highest Honors

Natalia was an extraordinary Spanish student, and she also took a minor in Criminology. We are very pleased that she is now preparing for her credential at FPU!

Awards for the Nursing Department

Nursing

Grace Bartel - Junior Honors

Griselda Mejia - Junior Honors

Malia Edwardson - Junior Highest Honors

Malia is an asset to Fresno Pacific University. She exemplifies excellence in the classroom and clinical setting. She is a dedicated member of the university's volleyball team, consistently upholding Christian values through her integrity, humility, and respect for others.

Rodney Chemalmal - Senior Honors

Major Honors Banquet

Nursing Contd.

Alyssa Reeves - Senior Highest Honors

Alyssa consistently exemplifies the highest standards of nursing practice, academic excellence, and Christ-centered service. She leads by example, demonstrating accountability, collaboration, and genuine concern for her patients and peers. She uplifts those around her, integrates faith into practice by embodying kindness, ethical stewardship, and steadfast dedication to holistic care.

Awards for the Ministry, Biblical, & Theological, Philosophy Department

Biblical and Theological Studies

Elizabeth Drake - Senior Honors

Christian Ministry and Leadership

Anna Anderson - Senior Honors

Rodney Hall - Senior Honors

Melissa Chavez-Diaz - Senior Highest Honors

Melissa has a love and care for people, a heart for church ministry, thoughtful leadership skills, and is a wonderful role model. She has been a meaningful leader of a very gifted cohort of extraordinary students.

Liberal Studies

Jade Johnson - Junior Honors

Rachel Isgrigg - Junior Honors

Rhyan Atkin - Junior Highest Honors

Rhyan is an excellent student with a 4.0 GPA. She is a Paragon Scholar and a campus leader, as well as a member of the Water Polo team.

Emily Garza - Senior Honors

Maggie Cook - Senior Honors

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Major Honors Banquet

Liberal Studies Contd.

Margaret Arambula - Senior Highest Honors

Margaret is an excellent student with a 3.9 GPA. She works on campus as an instructional designer at AIMS, participates in spiritual leadership opportunities on campus, and currently serves students at a local elementary school.

Philosophy

Marc Villareal - Senior Honors

MacKenzie Sepeda - Senior Highest Honors

MacKenzie is an exemplary student of philosophy who shows fierce passion when engaging with questions in class. She ignites people around her. Her Philosophy gifts will be wonderfully served when she pursues her law degree.

Awards for the Natural and Applied Sciences Department

Biology

Xenia Cruz-Ayuso - Junior Honors

Abigail Spain - Junior Highest Honors

Abigail is an outstanding scholar with a subtle, endearing sense of humor. Her leadership in the Wilderness program and student publications shows her interdisciplinarity.

Charlotte Wilbers - Senior Honors

Joseph LeBeau - Senior Highest Honors

Joseph is deeply thoughtful and perceptive. He has a deep understanding of science, and he is a gifted and compassionate mentor.

Major Honors Banquet

Computer Science and Software Engineering

Elmer Carballo Castaneda - Senior Highest Honors

Elmer graduated this last Fall and has continued his education with a Business Master's with his goal of helping to manage and support programming teams. He showed his desire to do this last year as he worked with three other students to complete their senior project.

Kinesiology

Remni White - Junior Honors

Siolo Lua – Junior Honors

Jansen Gillig - Junior Highest Honors

Jansen grasps complex concepts, and consistently produces high-quality work. He is a Paragon scholar and an extraordinary athlete in both Track and Cross Country.

Malia Mitchell - Senior Highest Honors

Malia is an exceptional student with a 4.0 GPA. She is in women's tennis, embodies commitment, and exudes a gracious spirit. Her first place at Research Night is only her most recent success.

Mathematics

Xiaoying Song - Junior Highest Honors

Xiaoying consistently demonstrates profound mastery of theoretical frameworks; she has the resilience, character, and discipline for lasting contributions.

Pre-Health Sciences

Deacon Yang - Junior Honors

Halle Faherty - Junior Honors

Gianna Menchu - Junior Highest Honors

Gianna is brilliant, thoughtful, highly academic, and has a natural curiosity about science that delights her professors and will help her embark on her future career.

Major Honors Banquet

Pre-Health Sciences Contd.

Julissa Avila Perez - Senior Highest Honors

Julissa is a disciplined and motivated student. The discipline is very evident as she excels in on the Track and Field team as well as in the classroom.

Awards for the Social Science Department

Criminology

Carson Sandoval - Junior Honors

Lexamarie Sandoval - Junior Honors

Tristin Fox - Junior Highest Honors

Tristin is an outstanding criminology student with a 4.0 GPA. He is thoughtful, critical, and always engaged in the class. He is also a teammate on the Water Polo team and a great mentor for Fresno Unified Students.

Elijah Eckert - Senior Honors

Xitlali Alvarez - Senior Honors

Cambria Waites - Senior Highest Honors

Cambria is an individual who has done it all. Maintains a high GPA throughout her program, is captain of the Volleyball team, and embodies excellence in academics, leadership, and service.

Political Science

William Jenkins - Senior Honors

MacKenzie Sepeda - Senior Highest Honors

MacKenzie has strong academic skills, shows a sharp wit and love for learning, and juggles academics with athletics. With a double major in Philosophy and Political Science, she has much to offer our region!

Major Honors Banquet

Pre-Law

Gisellie Rodriguez - Senior Highest Honors

Gisellie has a quiet nature and a deep knowledge and understanding of legal and political questions. Her relational character has been a great asset to the Fresno Pacific community.

Psychology

Georgia Hernandez - Junior Honors

Maria Bratz - Junior Honors

Valerie Rocha-Cervantes - Junior Highest Honors

Valerie transferred to FPU this year and has made quite the impression. This Madera-based superstar shows dedication both on the field and in the classroom. Valerie has shown herself to be a diligent and bright student in her psychology courses.

Lisa Reynaga - Senior Honors

Miryam Lopez Ramirez - Senior Honors

Vincent Hernandez Rodriguez - Senior Highest Honors

Vincent is consistently the top student in class while reliably being a team player. He sets the bar high, and is always ready to participate and answer questions in class.

Awards for the Social Work Department

Austin Flores Becerra - Junior Honors

Mariah Regalado - Junior Highest Honors

Mariah consistently maintains a high GPA, shows outstanding dedication to academic excellence, and exemplifies the core value of social work through her compassion.

Major Honors Banquet

Social Work Department Contd.

Jacquelin De La Cruz-Magallanes - Senior Honors

Natalie Santana - Senior Highest Honors

Natalie is a very diligent, studious student. She is intelligent and demonstrates high-quality writing skills, knowledge, and values, which are essential in Social Work.

Outstanding University Scholar: Judith Flores Mora

The Outstanding University Scholar Award goes to the student who has lived into our signal Bible verse, “To whom much is given, from them much is expected.” This student shows her willingness to work beyond the curriculum in conferences, travel, and learned societies to leaven our whole community.

Judith Flores Mora, a junior English Major and History Minor, has been selected by the Honors Council as a very worthy recipient of this award. She was the Student Keynote Speaker at the Fall Honors Banquet. She recruited for and actively participated in the Alpha Chi Collaborative Research Team. She presented a paper of her own at the Alpha Chi Conference in Orlando; she was awarded a competitive scholarship at that convention as well. She was a second-time participant in the ACTC “Questions That Endure” conference this spring, and she won her category at Research Night.



Major Honors Banquet

Harold Haak Winner: Raymond Andrade

This is the twenty-first anniversary of the Harold Haak Award, given to the Outstanding Undergraduate each year. In December 2004, Betty Haak gave a donation to FPU to endow an annual award to honor and memorialize Harold H. Haak, her husband and former president of Fresno Pacific. First awarded in 2006, this award is based on academic achievement, merit, character, and leadership.



Raymond Andrade, a senior Art Administration Major, has been selected by the faculty as the recipient of this significant award! He has shown his leadership and ability in student publications, the *Syrinx* and the *Green Light*, and in the FPU Alpha Chi chapter, where he is president and led the Collaborative Research Project.

He has worked as a student assistant to the Social Work Department, and he has served as a tutor on campus. His efforts in other clubs and volunteer service are too lengthy to review, but we should add that a show of his art will open at ArtHop next week.

A Bittersweet Farewell

by Director of Honors, W. Marshall Johnston

It is the end of an era! There have been many gifted Leadership class faculty colleagues over my time at FPU (and probably many more before that), but Judith, Nick, and I enjoyed working together, and, I think, provided an excellent classroom dynamic for these last two years. Judith and I will find an excellent colleague for next year's classes, but it will never be quite like this team, as Nick moves on to another post, still in the Central Valley Vineyard. For all these things, we can be happy and sad at the same time!

[#ToWhomMuchIsGiven](#) [#LearningFromBees](#)



Congratulations to the Class of 2026!



More on Sunny's Blog

Check out the most recent posts on Sunny's Blog, including the inspiring story of recently graduated USP Scholar Ryan Braam. [Click here for Sunny's Blog](#)



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

Shalom, Judith, Marshall, and the University Scholars Team

Marshall.Johnston@fresno.edu; jzf135@students.fresno.edu; LaKosha.Wharry@fresno.edu

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

HALCYON TIDINGS

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

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.



Alumnus Jan Bialecki, accompanied by his father, surprised us at the HUB with a visit. He shared the good news that he has received a Master’s from USC and is now married to the esteemed FPU alumna Audrey Bradford.

