

# ***HALCYON TIDINGS***

A Newsletter of FPU's University Scholars Program



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

**April 2026**

## Greetings, University Scholars Community!

We are in the final lap before the end of the academic year – as a community, following St. Paul, we have run the race with perseverance and faith: we hope that ‘25-’26 has been a blessing to you and yours, and you have meaningful summer plans in the works!

In the Dates of Interest we include a few upcoming events, as well as links that might be of use. With a large amount going on this month for our University Scholars, we include features about some of the activities of our Honor Societies and a great Town Hall outing.

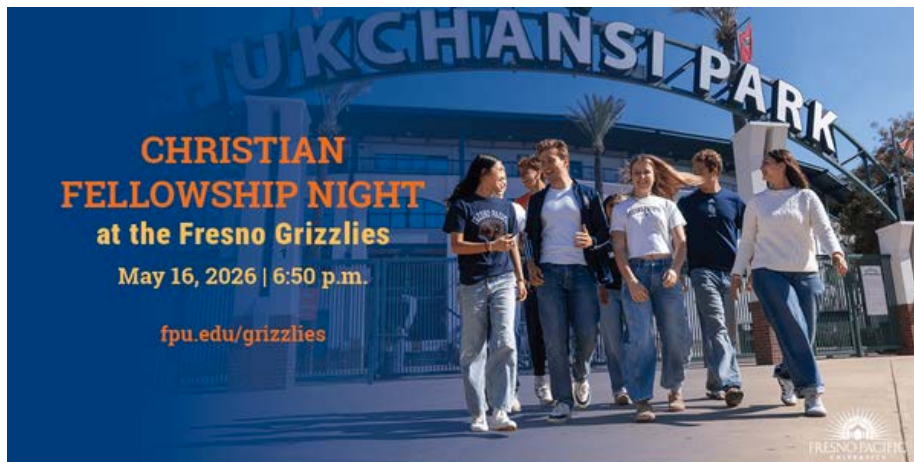
Please enjoy reading a reflection from one of our multi-honor society USP graduates. And this is a time to think about our journeys – it is fascinating to hear from two of our seniors about how significant faculty members have inspired and helped shape them.

You can read about the amazing Choir performance, the luncheon for our first-gen Tri-Alfa Honor Society members, and much more. We are especially thankful for how former President Edmund Janzen shaped FPU: he passed into the Greater Life this month. The link will lead you to some memories of him.



## Spring '26 Dates of Interest

- May 1                                      Major Honors Banquet
  
- May 9                                        Graduation!
  
- May 16                                      Christian Fellowship Night!  
@ Chukchansi Park



### Finals Week Schedule

Regularly-Scheduled Class Time	Final Exam Time (finals week)
M/W 8:00–9:15 AM	Mon 9:00–11:00 AM
M/W 9:25–10:40 AM	Wed 9:00–11:00 AM
M/W 12:00–1:15 PM	Mon 12:00–2:00 PM
M/W 1:25–2:40 PM	Wed 12:00–2:00 PM
M/W 2:50–4:05 PM	Mon 3:00–5:00 PM
M/W 4:15–5:30 PM	Wed 3:00–5:00 PM
T/R 8:00–9:15 AM	Tue 9:00–11:00 AM
T/R 9:25–10:40 AM	Thu 9:00–11:00 AM
T/R 10:50 AM–12:05 PM	Tue 12:00–2:00 PM
T/R 1:25–2:40 PM	Thu 12:00–2:00 PM
T/R 2:50–4:05 PM	Tue 3:00–5:00 PM
T/R 4:15–5:30 PM	Thu 3:00–5:00 PM

Use this link for *The Syrinx's* new video content, including a video on soon-to-be-graduating seniors reflecting on their time at FPU!

[The Syrinx - YouTube](#)



Pick up the latest issue for yourself on campus.

Check out the newly updated USP website!

[Click here](#)



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## Verse of the Month

University Scholar Heidi Cortez selected 2 Corinthians 8:8-9 as the verse of the month: “I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (NRSVCE).



*USP Scholar MacKenzie Sepeda giving her Most Inspirational Professor address at the Alpha Chi Induction. Read her speech later in this issue.*

Heidi explains why this verse has proved significant to her: “St. Paul teaches that we should be generous not out of obligation, but to imitate Jesus, who showed generosity through his actions and teachings. The goal of the Christian life is not simply to be decent and kind. It is to become spiritually rich by following Jesus, who gave up his riches and became poor to reach people’s hearts and draw them closer to true spiritual wealth.”

## Reflection on the Multi-Honor Society Induction, April 16th

by USP Scholar Franny Lara

As I prepare to graduate, I reflect on a journey that was never mine alone, but one guided by faith, perseverance, and purpose. Being recognized with multiple honors, including Tri-Alpha, Theta Alpha Kappa, Alpha Chi, Magna Cum Laude, and Outstanding Graduate, is something I receive with deep humility and gratitude.



My greatest challenge was learning to balance my responsibilities. Before I am a student, I am a daughter of God, a mother of four, and a wife. Many nights were spent studying through the night, holding myself accountable to a standard I refused to lower. There were many moments I wanted to quit, but I didn't. What carried me through was my "why." My children became my daily motivation. I will never forget my 9-year-old encouraging me late at night, after seeing my tears, saying, "You can do this, Mommy, you're almost done, and then you can go to sleep." Alongside them, God placed a village in my life: family, friends, sisters and brothers in Christ, who reminded me to keep going: "It is only a season."

Through my studies in Christian Ministry and Leadership, I have grown into a woman who openly acknowledges where my strength comes from. This journey strengthened my faith and affirmed my calling, and I know I am not alone. I stand alongside fellow graduates who have also persevered, each with their own challenges, sacrifices, and stories of faith.

While these honors represent achievement, they also reflect sacrifice, growth, and grace. This is my journey, but it is His story being told through my life, and for that, I am forever grateful.

## Takeaways from Amy Tan's Town Hall Talk

by Alana Navarro, Ashley Guirre Duran, and Ruby Marentes-Cabrera



*Professor Fran's Intro to Lit students gathered in front of the Saroyan Theatre*

"She spoke about living in Fresno for a short period of her time before moving back to Shanghai because her mother struggled to feel fulfilled and adjust to their life in the United States. Hearing her describe a bit of her parents' background, including her mother's upbringing and her father's shift from engineering to ministry, then back to engineering, made her story feel deeply personal. I found it extremely meaningful

when she discussed the lack of Asian representation in Literature during her early years and how often others underestimated her abilities, especially in relation to language and writing.

One line that especially stayed with me was when she said, 'Fiction is not lies, fiction is the truth.' That idea really changed the way I think about writing. Often in grade school, when describing fiction compared to non-fiction, it's always told that fiction is fake, stories, made up, and that non-fiction is real, and even facts. Still, Amy Tan explained how fiction can reveal deeper truths about human relationships, emotion, and experience. I found that perspective incredibly powerful because I never thought about it that way; it just goes to show how storytelling is powerful in the way it can be used to communicate feelings and realities that facts alone sometimes cannot.

Her dedication is inspiring. Learning that she had over 73 different bird species that had visited her home this year was insane to me. She talked about how it wasn't always that many birds, but she learned and prepared her backyard to attract that many. Some would say she acknowledges the birds back by finding their favorite feeds, growing plants that they liked, and creating a space that welcomes wildlife. Her connection between birds and humans, especially in the experience of grief, love, and loss, was also deeply moving."

—Alana Navarro

## Takeaways from Tan's Talk by Navarro, Duran, and Marentes-Cabrera

"She talked a lot about birds, her writing, and her book, and how birdwatching became something really important in her life. At first, I thought it was kind of random and didn't really connect to anything, but as she kept talking, I started to understand her point more. She was trying to show that slowing down and noticing small details can actually help you feel more creative and more at peace. It made me realize that not everything has to be big or exciting to matter, sometimes just paying attention to little things is enough. One thing I really took away from her speech is that creativity can come from anywhere, even from something simple like watching birds. I never really thought about that before, because I usually think creativity has to be something big like art or writing."

–Ashley Guirre Duran

"What stood out to me most was how she shared personal stories about her childhood and family, which made her feel more real and relatable instead of just a famous author. I also thought it was surprising that one of her teachers once wrote that she 'lacked imagination or drive,' because clearly that was not true at all. It shows how people can be wrong about someone's potential. One thing I really took away from her talk was the importance of curiosity, attention, observation, and wonder. She explained how these ideas connect to both writing and life, especially through her love for birding. I liked hearing about how she studies birds so carefully and even had a hummingbird drink from her hand, which is kind of amazing. Overall, her message made me think more about slowing down and noticing the world around me, even the small details we usually ignore."

–Ruby Marentes-Cabrera



## Not “The Song of Hope,” but “The Story of Hope”



The FPU Choir performed its final concert of the spring semester on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Professor Carrie Vail directed the entire concert, and Professor Matt Horton served as the accompanist. After months of preparation and countless vocal warm-ups, the Choir delivered not a concert nor a performance, but a story. *The Song of Hope*

was a story of believing even when it seems obsolete. It was a story of believing in oneself, believing in others, and believing in a power beyond this world. The blend of baritones, altos, tenors, and sopranos bouncing off the walls of the WCAC Atrium not only made the ears tingle with pleasure but also created an immersive experience for the soul.

Keep your pen close to your calendar for the fall if you want to take part in the next story FPU’s Choir will sing.

## And that’s a wrap . . . for now

The Alpha Alpha Alpha honor society hosted its last luncheon of the semester on the 21<sup>st</sup> of this month. It was a time to decompress from the mid-April stress and enjoy the company of other First-Gen peers and faculty whilst eating a slice of pizza (or maybe three). Tri-Alpha seniors chatted about their plans after graduation and were formally congratulated by the group. For all those First-Gen graduating scholars who were not able to attend, congratulations! And for all those who are not yet graduating, keep a keen eye out for more Tri-Alpha luncheons and events in the fall!



## Alpha Chi Induction, Dessert, and Most Inspirational Professor Gathering

*On Friday, April 24th, Alpha Chi members and friends gathered to celebrate some notable achievements and admirable colleagues. We inducted new members, including Dean Quentin Kinnison in an honorary capacity. Raymond Andrade received the Patricia Williams Chapter Member of the Year Award, and Judith Flores Mora was elected next year's President of California Zeta! We had two eloquent Most Inspirational Professor nominations, below.*

### **AX Most Inspiring Professor Nomination: Dr. Nathan Carson**

#### **MacKenzie Sepeda**



“Towards the beginning of my college career, I found myself in my professor’s office seeking clarification and advice about adding a philosophy major. As an anxious freshman in his Intro to Philosophy class, I remember feeling intimidated by him and honestly hesitant to even have that meeting with him. I have always been someone who is afraid of failing or being “bad” at something, and I wanted to be completely sure that if I took on more coursework, I wouldn’t be setting myself up for mistakes or disappointment.

What I expected to be a quick, formal meeting turned into something that completely shifted how I saw him and, in many ways, how I saw myself as a student. Instead of making me feel uncertain or discouraged, he listened carefully, asked thoughtful questions, and responded with genuine patience and care. In that moment, it became clear that he was not only invested in academic success, but in helping students grow through challenge, even when that process involves struggle.

## **AX Induction: Most Inspirational Professor**

After that meeting, I remember leaving and realizing that I would likely be taking many more classes with him throughout my time in college. At the time, I didn't fully understand how significant that would be. Looking back now, choosing to continue in philosophy, and eventually shifting more fully into it, did not just change my coursework, it changed the entire direction of my educational journey. He has consistently walked with me step by step through that process, and I truly do not know where I would be without his guidance and steady support.

One of the most important things I have learned from him is that it is okay to be wrong. I have always been afraid of failure and of not being good enough, especially when it comes to writing and assignments where I feel pressure to perform perfectly the first time. However, through his feedback and guidance, I have slowly learned that making mistakes is not something to fear, but something to learn from. He has helped me understand that I do not need to be great immediately, and that growth depends on being willing to struggle, revise, and try again.

One moment I will never forget happened after class one day when he told me I needed to slow down. I was overwhelmed, stressed, and trying to handle too many things at once. Those simple words stayed with me far more than I expected. Coming from someone I respect deeply, it helped me pause and realize that I was putting too much pressure on myself to do everything perfectly. It reminded me that I am allowed to take things step by step, and that slowing down does not mean I am failing.

To me, he has not only been an influential educator, but a grounding and steady presence in my life as a student. His willingness to guide, challenge, and support me has shaped not only how I think and learn, but how I handle pressure, mistakes, and personal growth."

## AX Induction: Most Inspirational Professor

### AX Most Inspiring Professor Nomination: Dr. Dan Larson

#### Raymond Andrade

“Sunday, March 15, 2026. The Alpha-Chi crew boarded a charter bus in Orlando, Florida, from the Hilton hotel, where we spent the last three nights attending the National Convention. Admittedly, I was not too excited to spend five days (which turned out to be more like seven) away from home during what was supposed to be my spring break. Personally, I was going through it. I was in the middle of my busiest and final semester as an undergraduate. The last several days, although exciting and nothing short of enjoyment, proved to be demanding. Despite how much I enjoyed the other brilliant academics and peers I appreciate, the introvert in me needed time to process everything.

I had so much on my mind before the trip. There were uncertainty and anxiety over what followed the graduation ceremony. These emotions only let in a storm of more questions. “Who am I after all these years?” “What path exists for me?” “How can I make both my family and me proud?” “What’s the next step?” “What truly is my calling?” I love being in community with other people. I enjoy making friends. I feel at my best in company. But for this moment, I wanted to be alone.



As I boarded that charter bus, I sat in silence by a window seat away from everyone else. Looking out the glass at the gray Floridian clouds, I began to hear the melancholy that whispers whenever another chapter in my life nears its end. Sensing that familiar tension, I let out a deep breath, trying to relieve myself from the weight I carried.

## **AX Induction: Most Inspirational Professor**

I wanted to be alone.

And then Dr. Larson came and sat right next to me. I am not one to complain. So, I did not complain. No, really, it was fine! It did not bother me at all. No, seriously.

In fact, I probably needed the small talk we made. We shared thoughts and comments on the trip so far, some highlights—that sort of thing. Eventually, he asked me the question I was trying to ask myself, “How do you feel about this experience?”


Of course he understood. That is the kind of person Dr. Larson is. He is a busy man with a long title for his profession, involved in so much, not including the family he has of his own. And yet, despite the closet full of hats that he wears, and the many pins on his jackets, he makes time to meet students where they’re at. For me, I was on a bus ride, miles from home, tired and confused, desperate to grab life’s bull by its horns, trying not to snap the rubber band I exist in. When we arrived back home, drained from sleepless nights in airports, he still made time within a week to meet with me and continue helping me visualize my future.

I let my mouth do the talking; It wasn’t my intention to, but I used our conversation as a practice in external processing. I remember sharing with him my struggles in naming my purpose as a first-generation student that balances the pressure between responsibility of familial expectations and personal ambitions. I often find myself in the middle of the tension from what feels like the two paths pulling farther away from each other with each passing day.

Dr. Larson understood well. ‘You let me know when you find the answer to that.’

Dr. Larson is inspiring to me because he cuts through the layers of situational circumstance and sees you for the person you are, before guiding you to the person you can become. Despite being in high demand everywhere, he prioritizes the people he is in service to. He’s honest, he’s insightful, and he’s constructive. Dr. Larson is exactly the type of person I would not mind sitting next to on a bus.”

## Send in your votes!



2026-2027 COLLEGE HOUR

### Chapel Speaker Recommendations

The Office of Spiritual Formation is looking for local, regional and national speakers to consider for the 26-27 Chapel series. If you would like to nominate a Chapel speaker (or yourself!), please scan the QR Code to complete the form. Email [brian.davis@fresno.edu](mailto:brian.davis@fresno.edu) with questions.

## Wilderness Program Outings



Fresno Pacific University  
**WILDERNESS**  
Explore. Experience. Inspire.

Program Fee:  
\$799 plus unit cost  
\*Some scholarships available

### Summer in the Sierras 2026

**ROAD TRIP Session (Seven National Parks):**  
May 18-25 (WILD 100, PHIL 100, PHIL 430)

**SESSION ONE-- YOSEMITE:**  
June 19-30 (WILD 100, PHIL 100, PHIL 430,  
ENV 1\*\*): Natural History

**SESSION TWO-- YOSEMITE:**  
July 7-18 (WILD 100, BLIT 201: Bible & the Environment)

**THINK OUTSIDE!**



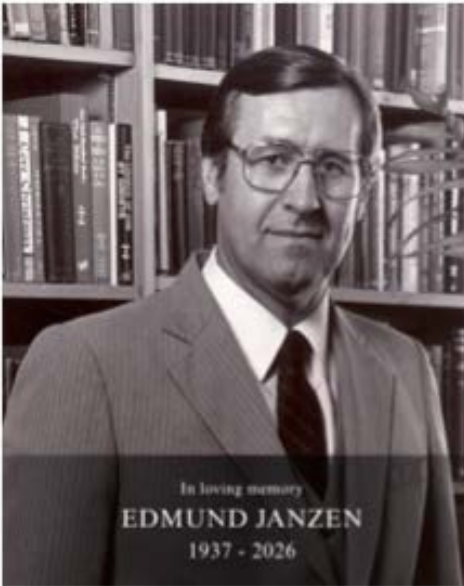
[www.fresno.edu/wilderness](http://www.fresno.edu/wilderness)

## More on Sunny's Blog

Check out the most recent posts on Sunny's Blog.  
[Click here for Sunny's Blog](#)



## Honoring the Life and Legacy of Former President Edmund Janzen



We invite you to join us in honoring the life and legacy of former President Edmund Janzen by visiting a dedicated tribute page created in his memory. The page features a commemorative video celebrating his impact, as well as a message board where you are welcome to share your memories, reflections and words of appreciation.

Please take a moment to visit:  
<https://www.fresno.edu/edmund>

Your participation is a meaningful way to recognize Edmund's contributions and support our community as we remember him together.

Submitted By: Ali Sena

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

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## 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

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

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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.

