Pandemic Response
The College transitions to remote learning

Racial Justice Initiative
Three areas of transformative action

Environmental Analysis
Celebrating 50 years
I write this message at the end of a year that has continually defied and redefined our sense of reality. We have struggled at times to comprehend the moment we’re living in. We have reeled from the whirlwind of world events, disruption and losses within our own lives—of jobs and loved ones and a way of being. We are exhausted.

I also write this message at the cusp of a new year, as headlines tell us that hope packed in dry ice is on the way and that democracy’s tenets may have been battered, but its seawall is still holding. And Pitzer College just admitted the first members of the Class of 2025.

As president of Pitzer College, standing on this corner of time, I want you to know that I, too, have felt despair and disbelief this year, but that our community’s response to the challenges of 2020 fills me with pride and awe.

This special issue of The Participant begins to tell that story of tireless determination, endless creativity and a profound commitment to each other and our shared ideals. While Pitzer’s campus has been closed since mid-March, and we will start spring 2021 online, you will read how our community came together even as we were forced apart. These pages show how we individually and collectively rose to meet this moment and, as the Dean of Faculty Allen Omoto says, “learned from each other.”

The magazine—online only for the first time—portrays the unprecedented shift that our faculty, students and staff made to remote teaching and learning after COVID-19 hit. It touches on many of the stresses inherent with an online educational environment in the midst of a global pandemic. It shares the calls to action following the killing of George Floyd and the launch of the Racial Justice Initiative, which I established to better understand racial violence and inequality and address issues of equity and inclusion on campus.

This issue also honors the 50th anniversary of Pitzer’s Environmental Analysis Field Group—one of the first programs of its kind in the country. For decades now, EA faculty, alumni and students have expanded our understanding and deepened our relationship with the natural world. They began addressing the roots of climate change long before the term became part of our vocabulary and our lived reality.

EA is emblematic of Pitzer’s approach to education, which ties expanding knowledge to taking action. Despite this year’s changing and outright strange conditions, we found ways to broaden our academic and co-curricular ambitions. We kept innovating. Pitzer Now, Pitzer@Home, and the People’s Pitzer are just some of the programs that were born as faculty, students and staff created new platforms to address our community’s needs. On December 10, Pitzer and the Justice Education Initiative of The Claremont Colleges launched the country’s first BA program for currently incarcerated students that puts “inside” students into the same classroom with “outside” Claremont Colleges students and faculty.

As I read this Participant, as I reflect on this year, I can see ways in which Pitzer’s foundations in 1963 played out in 2020. We have had to reimagine college life as we know it, but reimagining the world is one of the things Pitzer does so well. And perhaps being a bit unconventional helps prepare you for the unprecedented.

This year we did indeed learn from each other. That’s what we do here, whether the other is a professor or a student or a community member or a discipline outside of our own. At Pitzer, we know that we have teachers everywhere.

We also took care of each other. Despite a pandemic-related budget deficit, the College increased aid to students who needed extra financial support and protected the jobs of staff who couldn’t work from home. And we showed up, again and again and again, in Zoom mosaics, ready to work through shifting mountains of logistics and multiple scenarios for delivering a Pitzer education in a pandemic.

That work goes on. In the midst of such uncertainty, we do know this: Pitzer’s commitment to its brand of liberal arts education and core values endures. When we return to campus, not everything will or should go back to the way it was before. The challenges and opportunities are great, and so am Pitzer’s capacity and heart. We are part of the solution. We have learned so much from each other and done so much together. The Pitzer community has my eternal gratitude and admiration.

During my inauguration nearly four years ago, I invited the Pitzer community to create a discourse that reflects “the sanctity of the individual and the mutual interdependence of humanity” I am grateful we are on this journey together.

Provida Futuri,
Melvin L. Oliver
President
The Participant

President’s Message
Melvin L. Oliver

Pitzer Pathfinder
Romarilyn Ralston ’14

Board of Trustees’ Message

Class of 2020

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Miriam Merrill

Pitzer Participant
Matthew Adler ’97

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On the Cover: The Pitzer College community remained engaged, active and grounded in its core values as the College turned to remote learning.

The diverse opinions expressed in The Participant are those of the individual profilees and do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or the College.

Pitzer College welcomes comments from its readers.

Pitzer College is a nationally top-ranked undergraduate college of the liberal arts and sciences. Pitzer offers a distinctive approach to a liberal arts education by linking intellectual inquiry with interdisciplinary studies, cultural immersion, social responsibility and community involvement.

Follow your passion

Pitzer College
PATHFINDER

Romarilyn Ralston ’14
Passion for social justice, an unshakeable sense of purpose and a bond with Pitzer

When Romarilyn Ralston was incarcerated at the age of 24, her life might have seemed to be over before it started. After serving 23 years, Ralston made the remarkable transition to a highly competitive liberal arts college to earn her Pitzer College degree with honors in gender and feminist studies. She went on to obtain her master’s degree from Washington University in St. Louis.

Today, Ralston has dedicated her life to providing individualized support to formerly incarcerated students pursuing higher education as program director of Project Rebound at California State University, Fullerton.

She has been an invited panelist on Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti’s Access to Higher Education Challenge Event in 2016 and was a presidential panelist at the 2018 National Women’s Studies Association Conference.

Pitzer has named Ralston the 2020 Distinguished Alumni—honoring her as a graduate who lives the spirit of her Pitzer education and is making meaningful change in her community.

Romarilyn Ralston ‘14 has taken the path less traveled to advance herself and her community.
Dear Pitzer Community,

This has been an incredibly difficult time for the country, and for us. The world will grapple with the long shadow of 2020 for years to come. We have confronted a new virus and centuries-old racism. We have seen the basic tenets of democracy attacked, economic foundations undermined and fires and floods fueled by the climate crisis. It has been a time of reckoning.

We have had to alter our plans time and again, and finally were required to deliver online education in the fall. As I write this, we don’t know whether the conditions imposed by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, and the pandemic itself, make a spring reopening feasible. This places a huge burden on students, faculty and staff alike, while temporarily depriving all of the fullest Pitzer experience.

Yet, in the face of a global pandemic, our community has shown great grace, courage and kindness. The faculty have invested tremendous effort to adapt to a new and challenging form of teaching. The students must deal with difficult work in unusual circumstances. Campus leaders have spent days and nights planning—and replanning—amidst ever-evolving conditions and guidelines. And alumni, families and friends of the College have offered solidarity and financial support. Throughout, our community has done its best to protect Pitzer’s wellbeing, and the College has sought to serve those who have entrusted their education and livelihoods to this special place.

We are also a community that reverberated with outrage and pain when George Floyd was killed by those sworn to serve and protect. In the wake of Floyd’s death, and in recognition of the violence that has taken so many Black lives before and since, President Oliver launched the Racial Justice Initiative. “I have spent my professional life trying to understand the sources of that violence,” President Oliver wrote at the time, as he committed the College to addressing systemic racism in the nation and Pitzer’s own shortcomings in its efforts to create a truly inclusive campus.

The Pitzer community also brought its signature blend of academics and activism to bear on November’s election. In virtual classrooms, Zoom forums and email inboxes, people pored over issues and rallied to promote civic engagement. With the election behind us and the transition in DC setting the stage for our new president, our work must and does go on. The world needs Pitzer now more than ever.

Pitzer’s character and convictions, so clearly on display these past months, drew me to the school more than a decade ago. I didn’t have any connection to Pitzer when a colleague introduced me to this incredible community. Still, I was quickly captivated by its innovative approach to education, its ethos and inimitable Pitzer personality and the involvement of its students, alumni, faculty and the entire Pitzer family in the world at large. I passionately believe that as a trustee and as a supporter, I am not only contributing to a college but to a better world.

For your response in these challenging times, my fellow trustees and I thank you. We are so grateful for the Pitzer community and promise to stand with you and stay true to the College’s pledge to be forever mindful of the future.

Provida Futuri,

Harold A. Brown
Chair, Board of Trustees
Participant

Within a week, the College had pivoted to remote education for the materials and also arranged sessions for idea exchange and discussion. The Dean of Faculty's office set up a resource page for faculty to share and advised. Pitzer IT held workshops to bring faculty up to technological speed. The Dean of Faculty's office supported faculty participation in webinars on asynchronous classes. A mix of the two can lead to perfect storm of conditions upended the lives of members of the Pitzer College community in 2020. In mid-March, due to the worldwide pandemic, the College moved all classes online, as did all The Claremont Colleges, continuing through fall semester.

Pitzer College reinforced its distinctive academic mission and core values: Community engagement continued, in a different form. Social responsibility action thrived in an election year. Environmental analysis was on new agendas as wildfires raged throughout the West and in the hills above Claremont this summer. Pitzer President Melvin Oliver's Racial Justice Initiative took root (see article on p. 4). The connection to the local and intercultural understanding remained at the core of a Pitzer education.

Faculty redesigned their curricula and pedagogy to accommodate remote learning. Fields such as science and art, with their reliance on labs and studio spaces, found ways to engage students virtually in hands-on exploration and creativity. Students discovered how to connect with one another despite transforming their bedroom or kitchen into their own isolated classroom. It wasn't easy and it wasn't perfect. How could it be, with the campus closed? But learning continued.

This is the story of how the Pitzer College community came together to provide a pathway forward for students during enormous stress and upheaval.

We learned from each other

When the pandemic exploded worldwide in early spring, the College determined the most ethical and socially responsible decision was to go entirely online to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The administration moved fast. The 3-College Center for Teaching and Learning consulted and advised. Pitzer IT held workshops to bring faculty up to technological speed. The Dean of Faculty's office set up a resource page for faculty to share materials and also arranged sessions for idea exchange and discussion. Within a week, the College had proved to have remote education for the remainder of spring semester.

This summer, the College looked at what had worked and what hadn't. The Dean of Faculty conducted a survey of students enrolled in spring semester asking about their experiences transitioning to remote learning and challenges they had encountered with their courses. Students also let faculty know the opportunity to engage through Zoom and suggested what would help them connect with one another and reduce stress.

"We learned from each other," said Dean of Faculty Allen Omoto. "For many members, it was an opportunity to revisit their learning goals and prioritize them, especially as they planned for the fall semester."

The Dean of Faculty's office supported faculty participation in webinars on online pedagogy, offered consultation with instructional design consultants, and provided equipment for faculty to teach from home—standing desks, for example, if needed. The College also developed a technology assistance program in which faculty members could request a student aide to help lighten some of their increased load, such as scanning, organizing, and uploading materials for class. "We wanted faculty to focus on their teaching rather than technology," said Omoto.

The College reached out to students in the summer through online messaging and interactive programming, inviting questions and discussion. Pitzer Now, an initiative that included online presentations by faculty and staff, highlighted for students the opportunities for engagement through curricular and extra-curricular activities and proposed that "this is the most important semester you will ever spend at Pitzer College." There was concern that many students, primarily newly admitted first-years, might choose to take a gap year or semester off. Most students chose to enroll in the fall.

Quinn Munn '24, from San Francisco Bay Area, debated whether she wanted to go through the same struggle with remote learning she experienced as a high school senior. Then, she realized anything she wanted to do, such as intern in medicine, would not be possible because of the pandemic. Enrolled now at Pitzer, Munn has made new friends and connections. "We talk about all the stuff we would do if we were on campus. We're bonding over shared pain," she said.

Fall 2020, online again

Fall classes started in late August, again online. Faculty were ready, students were eager, all were anxious.

"I didn't really know what to expect," said Professor of Linguistics Carmen Fought. "I went into it thinking, 'Oh, I'll just do what I have been doing, but I'll just do it online.' That was a little naive. I think I underestimated how much time it would take for me to learn to use the tools correctly."

Fought felt "thrown for a loop" at the beginning of the semester because, she said, "I really feel of the energy of the students, and I can in person tell whether something is not going well. It was looking to me how they were doing online. If students were quiet, I wasn't sure if the material was reaching them or if there was just other stuff going on. I felt pessimistic and tired."

Then, things clicked. She learned which tools were important—such as the whiteboard, where students make humorous sketches and engage in wordplay, and which students can use in their breakout groups to illustrate concepts from the class. She also encouraged them to use the chat box feature on Zoom. "They do this in a very creative way, and they are hilarious. I think that fires them up to have a little fun."

Faculty and students also appreciated the value of mixing synchronous (all together at one time) and asynchronous classes. A mix of the two can lead to fewer long meetings and more work individually or in groups outside the class structure.

"We learned from each other. For many faculty, it was an opportunity to revisit their learning goals and prioritize them."

—Dean of Faculty Allen Omoto

“Zoom fatigue strikes everyone”

"Zoom fatigue is a real thing," said Professor of Chemistry Katie Purvis-Roberts. "We admit to being tired—too, just like our students."

"The hard thing for the faculty is that it’s taken us a long time to get all our materials online, to do things in a Zoom environment," she said. "We started working on the lab part of our class in June, so we’ve really been going strong. For our lectures, we’re recording them ahead of time and putting them up. When students come to class, we focus on problem solving with them so that they get some community building. We didn’t just want to be up there lecturing; we wanted them to be doing things together in groups.”

Tessa Hicks Peterson, assistant vice president of community engagement and associate professor of urban studies, offered a different take: "I’m a very experiential teacher. We do meditation, we do theatre, we do group discussions, we do dyade. It’s impossible to get to the same level of intimacy through Zoom. I thought, how the heck is this going to work?"

"But it does. In a strange way, there’s a different level of intimacy. I don’t know whether it’s because we’re all in each other’s bedrooms, or because we’re investing our bodies and our faces in these little boxes. And there’s no distraction in the room or what’s happening outside of the room. In some ways, there’s an interconnected presence in that little Zoom box that is unexpected, and it really still allows for community building in the classroom. We’re all happily surprised.”

Katey Stewart, professor of American studies, conducts research on loneliness as a critical public health issue. "It does dovetail with this teaching moment during this global pandemic," she said. In her class, "we start with a check in, as many faculty do. "We might do a short paired-conversation in breakout rooms with a prompt; such as what is your 'back-bench' for the week. The rose is something you can appreciate, the bud is something emerging that’s not full grown, the green is, ‘Oh, that didn’t feel great.’"

Faculty made changes throughout the semester, as they worked out the Zoom bugs. They factored in time and support. "It’s a weird time. It’s unprecedented norms. Most of my classes this semester are project-based, and it’s fun for me, but I imagine those doing analytical work, it would be difficult to just stare at the screen all day."

Other students said they mixed up studying at home with exercise, such as doing aerobics or Zen. One student said he fought with his siblings over who got to walk the dog, just so he could get out of the house.

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Adjusted expectations help relieve stress

Faculty recognized the major stress students were under. Because of the significant time difference, overseas students might have had a class at 2 or 3 a.m. Reliable internet access might not have been readily available for some. Family health issues, the election and disturbing national and international news affected students’ ability to concentrate. The fact that they were isolated from campus and friends added to their struggles, and we encouraged them to reach out to one another.

Some faculty let their students know that they had issues, too. Assistant Professor of Mathematics Jemma Lorenat, in her hybrid precalculus/calculus class, had students complete a survey on issues of disease modeling to see how a disease might travel through a population. Her goal was to teach students about coding and apply that to COVID-19 modeling.

“Alongside teaching technical material, I’m interested in showing how modeling works, to demystify the process,” she said. “We’re living in a world where so many things are driven by predictions, by models, so it just seems like a good tool being a human.”

Her student, Rakesh Peddibhotla ‘24, said, “The subject [COVID-19] might be bleak, but it’s interesting and inspiring because what we’re learning in class applies to reality.”

Global connections through language

Fély Catan, assistant professor of modern languages, literatures and cultures (French and Portuguese), connected her students with journalists in Ecuador, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Germany and South Africa. Students explored such subjects as daily life in the digital, media, feminist journalism and journalism in the context of the pandemic. She and her students also participated in the Racial Justice Initiative through a series of asynchronous conversations on race in Brazil between her Portuguese 1 students and young organizers with the Steve Biko Cultural Institute in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil.

“Because the whole world is going through this isolation period, everyone was eager to participate because of our shared experiences,” Aristizábal said. “This created a lot of opportunities for us as a language course, where we do all about cross-cultural learning and communication across languages.”

Community engagement, now more than ever

It might seem that community engagement would be on hold, or severely dismantled, during a raging pandemic, when all personal contact is done online. Not so at Pitzer.

“Community engagement is at the center of the College’s core values and a hallmark of the Pitzer experience,” said Catan. “Pitzer advances social justice and Social Advocacy (CASA), Pitzer advances social justice and Social Advocacy on campus and in the community through institutional partnership, pairing students’ faculty expertise and student action.”

This semester, 302 students were involved in community-based activities through the CEC. 262 students enrolled in sociopolitical praxis classes through 14 different courses.

“That’s a lot. It’s pretty amazing” said Susan Phillips, faculty director of the CEC and professor of environmental analysis.

“We didn’t give them chemicals,” said Associate Professor of Chemistry Babak Sanii, who created an assignment that had the students to source many ingredients from home, such as sugar and baking soda. Students reported that they greatly preferred the inclusive nature of the assignment. “The hands-on aspect has been a huge win for giving them a real sense for the practice of chemistry,” he said.

Sage Fletcher ‘23, a chemistry professor, had a proposal, a vision, and we then co-created it, she said. “We visited people with very different ideas and artistic strategies.”

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“The focus of learning in the third semester was collaborative and project-based. ‘I’m learning a ton,’ said Fletcher.

Sani, however, debated cancelling his advanced chemistry lab, with 17 students. “How would you get at least an hour of lab every week?” he asked. As it turned out, he devised an unusual assignment: They had to pretend they were 18th-century chemists and research what was new about science at that time. Then, using 18th-century methods, repeat an experiment of one of the prominent German scientists of that era, Agnes Pockels. Next, take her experiment further using current knowledge. Finally, write a letter in the style of the time about their experiences.

“I could give them open-ended things like that, and they really ran with it,” he said.

Sage Ofte, lab coordinator at Keck Science, developed the online curriculum for the organic chemistry labs. She gave students three ways to engage: 1) a Zoom class, 2) individual study groups (especially good for international students who can arrange a time convenient for them), and 3) engagement on Piazza, where students post and answer questions and connect with one another, not necessarily in real time.

“Most students use a combination of these three, with almost all using Piazza,” Ofte said.

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Rachael Saliama ‘23 from Thailand didn’t expect online geology labs to be like the real deal. “We would make recommendations, such as establishing more bike lanes. Then, KMUTT students would see if this was plausible.”

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“Classes that engage students in meaningful work outside the campus and their own lives have really been playing an important role.”

—Susan Phillips, CEC faculty director and professor of women’s studies

Phillips believes that when students are involved in CEC partnerships and social responsibility classes, it benefits their wellbeing. “Those classes are an anchor for them,” she said. “They tap into a different skill set. Classes that engage students in meaningful work outside the campus and their own lives have really been playing an important role.”

Pitzer’s commitment to community engagement teaches students that their work is of enormous value to other people, Phillips said. “Pitzer does that really well. Even if it doesn’t approximate normal life right now—none of us get to live a normal life right now—this kind of administration is different now,” said Hicks Peterson. “You just have to have more flexibility in how you approach it. The organizations we work with are on the front line of justice issues that don’t stop during a pandemic. Their work is perhaps even more urgent now than ever.”

Normally, Hicks Peterson said, if a community speaker comes to her classroom, perhaps only 10 to 12 people get the benefit. “Now, if I put it out on the web, perhaps 30 people will show up, from all over the country—Pitzer alums, too. Everyone’s welcome.”

Students still listen and perform community engagement. They meet with Zoom, attend their staff meetings, work on projects on their own or in collaboration with students from other colleges—all remotely.

“IT’s all what we were doing before, it’s just not in person. The loss is that you don’t get the five senses in the way that you gain that what is happening on the front lines of justice in our communities it is still happening, and students can still be involved and make an impact around these issues,” Hicks Peterson said.

Pitzer’s Office of Study Abroad faced a stark reality when the College decided to “shut down” its programs for both fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters.

“Study Abroad continued during fall semester, at home virtually for College students. The Claremont Colleges will help young students learn English by developing teaching resources for them, including a short video that demonstrates a category of household words, such as colors or names for members of a family. Mitchie pointed out that Ecuador’s Minister of Education requires that all Ecuadoran students learn English. “The Indigenous students don’t have English teachers, and our intern are able to learn about another culture as they engage in international outreach,” he said.”

Ethel Jorge, professor of modern languages, literatures and cultures (Spanish), said that going exclusively online has given her field group the opportunity to work on its long-standing goal of integrating Pitzer’s Study Abroad sites in Ecuador, Costa Rica and Brazil and expanding its network of activists, intellectuals and academics throughout Latin America and the French- and Creole-speaking Caribbean. In Spanish 31, for example, the Community-based Spanish Practicum, which is offered in partnership with the Universidad Central de Ecuador, which provides virtual engagement with Ecuadoran students. “I am proud of how we have responded—in our teaching and in some of the initiatives we’ve taken up as part of our online education: racial justice, intercultural understanding, sustainability, the environment.”

—Ethel Jorge, professor of modern languages, literatures and cultures

“I am proud of how we have responded—in our teaching and in some of the initiatives we’ve taken up as part of our online education: racial justice, intercultural understanding, sustainability, the environment.”

—Dean of Faculty Allen Omoto

“What we want to show how as citizens we can impact how the government functions. We’ll be working on awareness of the divide and on education tactics—how you can be civically engaged and active when it’s not an election cycle.”

—Benjamin Shaw ’24
I n response to the deaths earlier this year of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and other people of color, President Melvin Oliver spearheaded the Racial Justice Initiative (RJI) to embed the study of racial justice and violence throughout the Pitzer curriculum.

With continuing acts of racialized violence and the mobilization efforts by the Black Lives Matter movement and its allies to fight for racial justice, the RJI provides an important backdrop for scholars, administrators and students to analyze this unique moment in time.

The Racial Justice Initiative hosted online panel events to bring the goals of RJI into the community beyond faculty and students to include alumni, parents and community members. The inaugural panel, “Racial Justice in Our Time: A Conversation with Activist Scholars,” was held September 10.

The Racial Justice Initiative launched a virtual inaugural panel of the Racial Justice Initiative, Racial Justice in Our Time: A Conversation with Activist Scholars, on September 10. Panelists included, clockwise, from top left: President Oliver, a leading authority on issues around wealth disparities in the Black community; John A. Powell, professor of law, African-American studies and ethnic studies at UC Berkeley, and an internationally recognized expert in the areas of civil rights and civil liberties; Phillip Atiba Goff, founder and CEO of the Center for Policing Equity and professor of African-American studies and psychology at Yale University; Andrea J. Ritchie, an immigrant police misconduct attorney and organizer who is currently researching-in-residence on race, gender, sexuality and criminalization at the Barnard Center for Research on Women.

Three Areas of Transformation at Pitzer

President Melvin L. Oliver moderated the virtual inaugural panel of the Racial Justice Initiative, Racial Justice in Our Time: A Conversation with Activist Scholars, on September 10. Panelists included, clockwise, from top left: President Oliver, a leading authority on issues around wealth disparities in the Black community; John A. Powell, professor of law, African-American studies and ethnic studies at UC Berkeley, and an internationally recognized expert in the areas of civil rights and civil liberties; Phillip Atiba Goff, founder and CEO of the Center for Policing Equity and professor of African-American studies and psychology at Yale University; Andrea J. Ritchie, an immigrant police misconduct attorney and organizer who is currently researching-in-residence on race, gender, sexuality and criminalization at the Barnard Center for Research on Women.

In three areas of transformation at Pitzer...

In addition to President Oliver, the Initiative’s Organizing Committee includes Chair Adrián D. Pantoja, professor in political studies and Chicano studies and an associate dean of faculty; Barbara Jaramillo, associate professor of organizational studies, who teaches interdisciplinary courses in organizational theory, organizational culture and politics and uses a social dynamics and change; Jessica M. Kizer, assistant professor of sociology and an affiliate of the Intercollegiate Department of African Studies, Linda T. Williams for the Center for Asian Pacific American Students (CAPAS), and student representative Quentin Jenkins, 23, who is also involved in the Black Student Union.

“This is an important moment in the history of the country and college,” said Pantoja. “I am proud to work with a diverse group of people to lead President Oliver’s Racial Justice Initiative.”

Added Jenkins: “I was excited to be a part of this committee because I want to pave the way for future generations of minority students at Pitzer College and help them find a home on Pitzer’s campus, thus making their lived experiences feel valid in every aspect of the College. Through the committee, we have been able to promote inclusive pedagogy—where all students feel included, fund workshops and training for Racial Justice, and sponsored talks pertaining to anti-Black racism.”

A call for action in three areas

The RJI was kick-started virtually with the inaugural panel moderated by President Melvin Oliver. It was an opportunity for faculty, staff, students and the community to get to know the president not merely as the head of the institution, but as a renowned scholar. “It was exciting to have a top scholar on the issue of race leading the College, and it also made sense for him, on the issue of racial inequality, to launch this initiative,” said Pantoja. In addition to President Oliver, panel attendees included Andrea J. Ritchie, John A. Powell and Philip Atiba Goff (see panel photo, opposite page).

In May, the RJI Committee invited all Pitzer academic centers and programs to develop programs in three primary areas: curricular transformation, co-curricular transformation and structural transformation.

Together, these are designed to deepen student, staff and faculty knowledge and action around racialized violence.

The programs can focus on domestic or international issues ranging from topics such as the Black diaspora to criminalization, racial bias and racialized violence, to policing, abolition, social movements and racial justice. Thanks to a generous grant from the Mellon Foundation, centers and programs across academic affiliates are eligible for awards ranging from $500 to $3,000 for their projects.

“We have theoretical conversations in the classrooms, and we have the resources to implement discussions with community partners to learn through the lived experience,” said Kizer. “Focusing on racial justice is part of Pitzer’s core values of interdisciplinary learning and student engagement.”

Area I: Curricular Transformation – incorporating racial justice themes

To transform the curriculum for fall 2020, the Racial Justice Initiative committee sent out a call for faculty to restructure courses or design new courses that included racial justice themes. The 23 new or redesigned RJI-awarded courses included a course taught by Professor of Mathematics David Ricihman.

“He’s exploring racial redistricting and how the composition of those political spaces mathematically help produce certain political outcomes,” explained Pantoja. “Math plays an important role in elections and in this course, Mathematics of Democracy, Professor Bachman is able to show how mathematics can be used to analyze political outcomes and inequalities.”

Economics, taught by Linus Yaman, professor of economics, was restructured to centralize the role of race in shaping economic outcomes. Courses ranging from Critical Community Studies, Social Theory of Thich Nhat Hanh, and Post-Apartheid Novels to African/a and Latinx Food Identity and Resistance, to Portuguese and Internships in Psychology also provide a solid basis for a curricular transformation.

Beginning in spring 2021, the Racial Justice Initiative plans to support faculty courses by sponsoring guest speakers. “We’re continuing the theme of curricular transformation by funding guest speakers,” said Pantoja. “This is a way for faculty to build networks, as well as a chance for students to develop their own connections with scholars looking at racial and social justice issues.”

Encouraging faculty-student research

Pantoja sees the Racial Justice Initiative as a key vehicle to encourage more faculty-student art, music, performance, community engagement, organizing and their research collaborations.

“Keely Nguyen ’22 appreciates the opportunity an RJI research grant gives her to continue the research on transformative justice she started in May with Tosha Hicks Peterson, assistant vice president of community engagement and associate director of urban studies, as well as with another Pitzer senior and Claremont Graduate University student. "Our research is focused on how to integrate self-care to make an impact on the way we want to live," she said. "My research on social responsibility has helped me look at how it uplifts my own identity in feeling marginalized and as a first generation student."”

Additionally, as part of the faculty-student research grants, the Racial Justice Initiative plans to provide stipends for students to attend RJI mission-related conferences.

Area II: Co-Curricular Transformation – working across Pitzer’s programming

Creating strategic programming across the work of multiple centers or programs, including the Writing Center, Justice Education, CASA (Critical Analysis and Social Action), the Community Engagement Center (CEC), the Institute for Global/Local Action & Study (IGLAS), the Pitt Art Galleries, Study Abroad and the Robert Redford Conservatory for Southern Californian Sustainability, is another vital goal for the Racial Justice Initiative.

“This is something that Quentin and I have been working on,” said Lam. “We’ve gathered faculty from across the College to think co-curricularly, student research and art. We’ve sent out student organization calls for proposals to encourage the cross-curricular programming.”

“Linda Lam and I have worked very closely in ensuring that student voices are heard and that students are a central part of the Racial Justice Initiative,” said Kizer. “Through our collaboration and the new initiatives we’re seeing, we’ve been able to fund different programs, training workshops and that focus on a wide array of issues, some of those being criminalization, racial bias, racialized violence and policing.”

Area III: Structural Transformation – addressing root problems

The Racial Justice Initiative’s third structural transformation is a tall order, but RJI members are confident that it can be achieved. “The sum of all of these different activities are going to help build and help create a different culture and a different institution,” said Oliver.

“My work is focused on creating programs for Asian-American students,” noted Lam. “As part of RJI, we can take my work and explore how to implement it on a larger scale to include Black, Latinx and other groups. Racism is embedded in our society, and we help Asian-American students address the root problems, but don’t bring them out from their community. We hope to make Pitzer a more just and fair place, as well as an environment to flourish and be successful. Academia and research are not separate entities—they can support social justice and social responsibility together.”

Broadening the conversation

The Racial Justice Initiative hosted online panel events to bring the goals of RJI into the community beyond faculty and students to include alumni, parents and community members. The inaugural panel, “Racial Justice in Our Time: A Conversation with Activist Scholars,” was held September 10, and the second, “The Rainbow Wave and the 2020 Election,” was held October 15.

“The panels are additional tools that we can use in the classroom—now and in the future—to help us bring what we’re learning and the research we do to our community and help continue to build the curriculum or activities in Student Affairs or in Academic Affairs,” said Pantoja.

Over fall semester, CASA Pitzer highlighted racial justice and racializing justice within its work of community and engagement. In a series of nine online Zoom meetings, CASA Pitzer invited activist scholars and community leaders to discuss strategies for social change from their frameworks, issues of broad expert topics included Disrupting Injustice and Mobilizing Social Change, Structures of Surveillance/Visions of Restorative Justice, Re-creating our Community Spaces: Transitional Housing and Community Gardens and Art as Culture, as Resistance. Additionally, to add to the conversation, Pitt Art College Galleries, Pitzer’s Writing Center and the RJI invited students, faculty and staff to participate in a collective project to create manifestos. The resulting Eight Minutes and Forty-Six Seconds—remembering the last brutal eight minutes and forty-six seconds of George Floyd’s life—addresses not only systemic racism and police brutality, but the ingrained inequality that persists in our educational and economic systems.

Looking toward the future of the Racial Justice Initiative

“We have such a vast repository of shared knowledge and experience within the College,” said Lam. “Moving forward, we need to foster more cross-communication through RJI. Our work, impact and change can be even better if we share.”

www.pitzer.edu/racial-justice-initiative to view related videos.

Research on Women.

Visit www.pitzer.edu/racial-justice-initiative to learn more.
Fifty years ago, Pitzer College led the nation in recognizing the vital role of scholarship and education about our natural environment. In the years since, environmental sustainability has become one of Pitzer’s core values. From campus landscaping utilizing drought-resistant native plants to the construction and renovation of LEED-certified sustainable buildings, the College puts its values into action. Through its rich history of environmental awareness, the College continues to educate today’s environmental leaders.

Pitzer’s environmental analysis major offers four tracks: Environment & Society, Environmental Policy, Sustainability and the Built Environment, and Environmental Science. In this issue, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Environmental Analysis field group and the sustainability efforts throughout its rich history to date.
John Rodman, professor of political studies, was hired in 1960 and began teaching environmental studies at Pitzer in the 1970s. He retired from teaching in 2000. In 1966-68, he testified at state and federal hearings on air pollution. In 1970, he joined the US House of Representatives' subcommittee on Science, Research and Development. Today, all 33 acres of Pitzer's main campus are dedicated as the Rodman Arboretum.

Professor Susan A. Phillips arrived at Pitzer in 2002 to serve as director for the Center for California and Social issues and became a part of the Environmental Analysis field group in 2008. An expert in urban studies, Phillips served as the academic director for the Urban Network Program. She is the recipient of a Simmons Fellowship and most recently a Getty Scholars Fellowship to complete her third book, The City Beneath: A Century of Los Angeles Graffiti, published by Yale University Press in 2019.

Professor Brinda Sarathy came to Pitzer in 2007 as an expert on natural resource management, environmental justice, race, and immigration; social inequality and US environmental policy. Since 2014, she has served as the director for Pitzer’s Robert Redfield Conservancy and oversees building management, maintenance and analytical and environmental conservation. She is the recipient of a Henry Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar award and one of 11 Science Fellows named by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine in 2016. Purvis-Roberts worked at the US State Department’s Bureau of East Asian & Pacific Affairs in the Office of Economic Policy, where her work focused on environmental policies around the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

McFarlane has led numerous study trips and student research projects at Pitzer’s Firestone Center for Restoration Ecology in Costa Rica since it opened in 2005. He has been awarded multiple grants from the National Geographic Society’s Global Explorations Fund. He served as an official delegate to the 15th International Congress of Speleology and is currently president of the Commission on Archaeology and Paleontology of Caves.

In 2020, he was awarded the 2020 Faculty Recognition Award by the California State University. He is also a member of the American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship.

Professor and plant biologist Muriel Poston served as the College’s 13th dean of faculty and vice president for academic affairs from 2012 to 2015. She is an expert in plant systematics, environmental law and environmental policy. In 2018, Poston was elected chair of the education section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. From 2009 to 2018, she served as the division director for the National Science Foundation’s Division of Biological Infrastructure.

In 2012, Lance Neckar became the inaugural director of the Robert Redfield Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability at Pitzer College. As professor of environmental analysis in the sustainability and the built environment track, Neckar integrates the concept of sustainability into a multidisciplinary approach to understanding and remaking human-ma de surroundings. Neckar received a National Science Foundation planning grant to design research and academic opportunities at the Claremont Colleges’ Robert J. Bernard Field Station on behalf of the Redfield Conservancy.

Associate Professor Craig Wallis is an expert in development and interpretation of new types of proxies for the marine environment, with a focus on the penetration of anthropogenic carbon into marine environments and the resulting ocean acidification, and natural and anthropogenic-induced ocean and climate variability over the past millennium. She leads the William Marie Environmental Change Lab at the Claremont Colleges.

Kathleen S. Pitzer Professor Donald A. McFarlane is an expert in the ecology of extinction, late Quaternary paleoecology and paleoecology, ecology of coral ecosystems, ecology of lates, evolutionary biogeography of tropical islands, mammalogy and cave paleontology. McFarlane led numerous student research projects at Pitzer’s Firestone Center for Restoration Ecology in Costa Rica since it opened in 2005. He has been awarded multiple grants from the National Geographic Society’s Global Explorations Fund. He served as an official delegate to the 15th International Congress of Speleology and is currently president of the Commission on Archaeology and Paleontology of Caves.

Associate Professor Colin B. Roberts is a physical oceanographer, geophysicist, and environmental scientist. He is an expert in the ways landscape components record surface, climate and terrestrial histories at scales ranging from the nanometer to the kilometer. He has published research on experimental soil dating techniques that could help scientists better understand climate change and how soils record temperature over time.
The Alumni

Hunter Lovins ’72 has committed herself to global sustainability issues and their human dimension. She is the president and founder of Natural Capitalism Solutions, a nonprofit formed in 2002 in Longmont, CO.

Charlie Miller ’79 is co-founder of Axiom Analytical, an environmental consultancy, and a Fellow at the Institute for Energy and Environment at the University of California, Berkeley. He is also a co-founder of Environmental Defense Fund, a nonprofit based in Washington, D.C.

Jennifer Layko ’80 is the global director of energy programs with the World Resources Institute, an environmental research organization dedicated to finding practical solutions to some of the world’s most critical problems.

Adria Arko ’80 is the distinguished visiting professor of environmental studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is also the executive director of the Center for Environmental Solutions, a nonprofit formed in 2002 in Longmont, CO.

Belinda Valles Faustinos ’73 is the retired executive director of Sustained Habitat and has served as the executive director of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, the Los Angeles River and Mountains Conservancy (RMSC), and the executive director of three joint powers entities: the Watershed Conservation Authority, the San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority and the Los Carros Water District Authority.

In 2016, Philippe Cohen ’75 retired as the director of Stanford University’s Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve. During his 36-year career managing biological field stations, he worked on issues relating to fire ecology, avian species management, endangered species, grazing, mining, water rights and managing ecosystems threatened by climate change.

Rebecca DiDomenico ’81 is an artist and environmental advocate who creates interactive installations that explore the intersections between art and science. Her work is part of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture’s permanent collection.

Jim Weiner ’80, the principle of Collaborative Project Consulting, works with municipalities, universities and the private sector to facilitate high-performance building design and operations that provide long-term planning LEED consulting, energy modeling and project management services.

Jennifer Layko ’80 is a recognized leader in the battle against climate change and for the development of a clean-energy economy.

Eric Baudry ’00 is founder and CEO of Upward Spirals, a regenerative think tank and consulting company helping intentional communities, small businesses and social entrepreneurs develop organizations that are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

Joe Gaddy ’13 and Julian Martinez CMC ’13’s Barbaresco restaurant in Santa Barbara, CA, offers sustainable food. Gaddy was a Shakedown Café manager at Zanzibar.

Phoebe Duvall ’13 is the planning and environmental policy officer at An Taisce in Dublin, Ireland, where she works to protect Ireland’s natural beauty and to promote sustainable urban and land-use planning.

Attorney Anthony Guarino ’80 was appointed in 2013 to the advisory board of Town Law Center’s newly formed Institute on Land Use and Sustainable Development Law. Guarino is a partner at Farrell Fritz attorneys and writes a land-use column for the New York Law Journal.

Kim Delos ’80 is the principal of building services for Citadel Environmental Services, Inc. He has two decades of experience in the environmental industry, holding management positions with both consulting and contracting firms. He has extensive experience in building sciences related work, industrial hygiene, moisture intrusion and environmental due diligence.

Joshua Brown ’03, department chair of special education at Oliver Wendell Holmes Middle School in Los Angeles, has incorporated environmental education into his teaching curriculum. Brown earned two fellowships in the 2015–16 academic year, a TeachPlus Teacher Policy Fellowship and an Earthwatch fellowship.

Mark Moore ’79 is founder and president of the Earthwatch Foundation, a nonprofit designed to encourage the development of a more compassionate and sustainable world.

Hunter Lovins ’72 is the president and founder of Natural Capitalism Solutions, a nonprofit formed in 2002 in Longmont, CO.

Kristin Dolbin ’03 was awarded a National Science Foundation grant for her graduate research on the role of special drinking water districts in California. Now the regional water management coordinator at Community Water Center in Visalia, CA, she works with disadvantaged communities in California’s Central Valley to promote access to water as a human right.

Jennifer Layko ’80 is the global director of energy programs with the World Resources Institute, an environmental research organization dedicated to finding practical solutions to some of the world’s most critical problems.

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The Students

Victoria Ramirez ‘20’s interest in the environment began when she learned about the different environmental injustices occurring within her Pomona, CA community, particularly the impact of multiple waste and recycling centers on residents’ health and livelihoods. She hopes to help alleviate the environmental burdens that low-income communities and communities of color face.

Nicole Pease ‘22 is passionate about supporting food justice and sustainable food systems. She has worked alongside urban farmers and community gardeners to alleviate food insecurity and promote self-sufficiency and community health. At Pitzer, she is involved with the Food Recovery Network.

Carly Dennis ‘22 has worked during recent summers for the Sitka Conservation Society in the small island town of Sitka, AK, and on salmon habitat campaigns with the Alaska Center. An alumna of Alaska Youth for Environmental Action, she loves to explore the Bernardo mountains and talk about land use.

Malaya Caligtan-Tran ‘22 is pursuing a self-designed major incorporating food and health, Indigenous knowledge and public health. She looks forward to supporting relationship building to the land and strengthening reciprocal and sustainable relationships with the local Tongva community.

Lily Fillwalk ‘22 was inspired to study environmental issues, specifically food justice, when her hometown of Muncie, IN, became a food desert. She plans to pursue a career in environmental law to promote sustainability as a political act. At Pitzer, she is a member of the Food Recovery Network and a volunteer with Claremont Sustainable Agriculture.

Niklas Ugalde Recarte ‘24 is the managing director and founder at Claremont Sustainability Consulting, which advises businesses on strategies to improve environmental, social and financial sustainability. He has returned for the Global Foundation and Climate Policy and Research.

Emma Barker ‘22 is interested in how the issues of urban planning, sustainability and gentrification coexist in cities around the world. She is involved in the student club A Cleaner Tomorrow and participates in Designing Urban Spaces, a SC club.

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In 2020, wildfires in the western states burned more than 8 million acres, destroyed more than 10,000 structures and took at least 37 lives. In the hills above Claremont, the Bobcat Fire burned more than 115,000 acres in the central San Gabriel Mountains between September 6 and November 2, 2020.

How did the Bobcat Fire affect you personally?

Professors Paul Faulstich and Char Miller teach in the Environmental Analysis program at Pitzer College and Pomona College, respectively. In October, they engaged in a free-flowing Zoom discussion about the wildfires then raging in the West, climate change and the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples regarding forest management. The following conversation has been edited for length.

PAUL: As Chair well knows and chides me about, I live in the foothills, and I’m becoming increasingly aware of how wildfires are driven in large part by the climate crisis. The problem is so serious that we need to develop strategies of resilience. That becomes key to what students are thinking: how do we create resilient communities? Also, how do we change our actions, our vocabulary, our understanding? Now, we’re looking at other forms of knowledge, other ways of knowing that complement, not compete with, science. Ecologists increasingly recognize the contribution of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous practices, not only in the maintenance of the systems but also in their restoration.

CHAR: There are lots of people in the early twentieth century who thought the Forest Service was totally wrong—ranchers and others burned for the exact same reasons that the Indigenous Peoples did. When paradigms get created, as the Forest Service did with the fire suppression model, inside that there are the germ of its destruction. I’m finding all these little tendrils of folks that pop up—just read one—this rancher in Klamath who in 1920 said, “The moment you stop burning, you’re building up fuel. And when it goes up, it’s going to go big.” So, why not do what the Indigenous Peoples have been doing and the ranchers have been doing as long as they’ve been there, because that is going to reduce the size of major fires.

PAUL: Australia, there’s a fundamental understanding of the ways in which Indigenous Australians have cared for the land for 60,000-plus years and have allowed that land to flourish over time. What are the nuts and bolts of those examples? Indigenous Australians have cared for the land for 60,000-plus years and have allowed that land to flourish over time. What are the nuts and bolts of those examples?

CHAR: A similar story occurred with the Bobcat Fire. It overlapped with two other fires—the Station Fire and Fire and then overlapped the area the logged areas. That suggests logging didn’t work. And what happened this year—it came right back, two years later. So, there’s enough fuel on the ground to burn, and as Paul said, that’s because of the invasive species that have moved in. We’re doing absolutely the wrong thing.

PAUL: What’s going to happen? Those trees are ultimately going to go. When you look at the fires this summer, in the Mojave National Reserve, for example, more than 63,000 acres burned, torching an estimated 1,500,000,000 acres in the San Gabriels, if they repeatedly burn, they’re not going to regenerate. What’s going to happen? Those trees are ultimately going to go. When you look at the fires this summer, in the Mojave National Reserve, for example, more than 63,000 acres burned, torching an estimated 1,500,000,000 acres in the San Gabriels, if they repeatedly burn, they’re not going to regenerate.

CHAR: If you watch what happened in Pomona, as Brenda Sarkey [professor of environmental analysis] would tell us, that’s a social justice issue, not a wildfire issue. The smoke impacts the lungs of a lot of people. We’ve got a lot of work to do.

PAUL: We do have a lot of work to do. Wildfires continue in parts of the West that don’t often burn. Climate denial has also arisen, along with the idea that we should focus decisions exclusively on forest management. Rather than forest management, we should turn our attention to the urban/wildlands interface—how we build, and where we build. Large wildfires are driven largely by our climate crisis. And recent fires illustrate this point. Communities are increasingly in danger not only because of the way we manage our forests, but also the way we build our communities. Recent fires traveled most rapidly in areas where extensive commercial logging had occurred. Often times, that logging was under the deceptive guise of forest health. Even now, proposed legislation, ostensibly in response to the wildfires, would erode environmental laws in the deceptive guise of fuel reduction.

CHAR: It’s not just what I don’t think Paul. I actually worry about Paul. A view of the 2020 Bobcat Fire taken from the home of a Pitzer staff member in Monrovia. We’ve got a lot of work to do. Wildfires continue in parts of the West that don’t often burn. Climate denial has also arisen, along with the idea that we should focus decisions exclusively on forest management. Rather than forest management, we should turn our attention to the urban/wildlands interface—how we build, and where we build. Large wildfires are driven largely by our climate crisis. And recent fires illustrate this point. Communities are increasingly in danger not only because of the way we manage our forests, but also the way we build our communities. Recent fires traveled most rapidly in areas where extensive commercial logging had occurred. Often times, that logging was under the deceptive guise of forest health. Even now, proposed legislation, ostensibly in response to the wildfires, would erode environmental laws in the deceptive guise of fuel reduction.

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PAUL: And, of course, to deal with this issue of climate change, which we have been skirting around, is to create fire-safe communities. And, of course, to deal with this issue of climate change, which we have been skirting around, is to create fire-safe communities. And, of course, to deal with this issue of climate change, which we have been skirting around, is to create fire-safe communities.
Radical Acceptance
Advice from Assistant Professor of Psychology
Marcus Rodriguez during virtual learning

In the first semester, when we went online, I think a lot of students were really resisting the idea. Not ethnically—Pitzer students are very clear that at this time social distancing is the right decision for the greatest amount of people—and yet, they were saying, “I can’t believe this is really happening. This is terrible.” In rejecting that reality and wishing that it wasn’t the way it was, we turn pain into suffering. Radical acceptance is an idea that comes from dialectical behavior therapy, a treatment developed by Marsha Linehan. It is a skill I use in my clinical work, with my students and in my own life to keep pain just as pain, without turning it into suffering.

Do you teach that skill?

I share this idea with all of my students. I teach it in the context of dialectics, and the primary dialectical emphasis as a clinician is the idea of balancing change and acceptance. Kind of like the serenity prayer: change the things we can and accept the things we cannot change. I teach conceptually the idea that when we practice acceptance, we can actually experience less suffering.

OK, so how do you do it?

At some point we have to make a mental commitment to accept the way things are. “We are having class online,” for example. Or, “I’m not living on campus this semester.” That is the statement of fact at Pitzer. Then, every time our mind turns to “Oh, no, that shouldn’t be” or “I don’t want to” or rejecting that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.” We’re not trying to convince ourselves we like it, we’re just trying to acknowledge, that fact, we need to bring our mind back to “No, this is the way it is.”
incarcerated men at California Rehabilitation Center (CRC) in Norco, CA, can now earn a bachelor’s degree from one of the country’s top liberal arts colleges. Pitzer College is the first university or college in the country to offer a bachelor’s degree program for the incarcerated based on a sustainable inside-out curriculum. The inaugural cohort of eight incarcerated students in the Pitzer Inside-Out Pathway-to-BA are expected to graduate by the end of 2021. The inside-out education model provides an academic education by yearning to view both 2020 Election panels. In October, “The Rainbow Wave and the 2020 Election” examined the forecast and uncertainty regarding African American, Latino and Asian American votes turnout and their vote choices. Chaired by Pitzer Professor of Political Studies/Chicano Studies Adrian Pantoja, panelists and academic experts shared their insights; Jane Junn (USC) on the Asian American vote, Evelyn M. Steinman (University of Connecticut) on the Black vote and Victoria DeFrancesco Soto (University of Texas) on the Latino vote.

Post-election, “The 2020 Election: What Happened, What Comes Next?” featured panelists Professor Adrian Pantoja, the Professor of Political Studies Rachel VanSickle-Ward, and activists and scholars linked to the president of Emerge, an organization dedicated to recruiting and training Democratic women to run for office, and Natalie Manors, associate professor of political science and Asian American studies at UCLA. Visit www.pitzer.edu/racial-justice-initiative to view both 2020 Election panels.

The Power of Boundless Compassion

In November, Father Gregory Boyle, the founder of the LA-based gang intervention, rehabilitation and ex-entry program, spoke about “The Power of Boundless Compassion and Radical Kinship” with Professor and Associate Dean of Faculty Adrian Panotta P’18, P’24. Boyle is also the author of Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion; the first reading selection of Pitzer’s new Alumni & Family Book Club. About 20 minutes into the discussion, Father Boyle commented that after having done “a million and a half Q and A’s like this, these are some of the best questions I’ve ever gotten.” Visit www.pitzer.edu/pitzer-at-home to view the video, learn more about the book club and view other recorded Pitzer@Home events.

Pitzer Friday was back in the fall semester. Pitzer Friday is an opportunity for the community to submit their photos of Pitzer swag or maybe one that features our favorite color, orange, and that shows their love for Pitzer. Visit www.pitzer.edu/pitzer-at-home to view the video, learn more about the book club and view other recorded Pitzer@Home events.

Around the Mounds

News from Campus and Beyond

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Environmental Racism and Climate Justice

At the end of September, authors, activists and academics Michael Méndez (UCI) and Julie Sze (UC Davis) joined Susan Phillips, professor of environmental studies and interim director of the Robert Redford Conservancy, for the annual Redford Conservancy Fall Lecture. The conversation centered on the intersection of climate change and environmental justice and was sponsored by the Robert Redford Conservancy for Sustainable California Sustainability and the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation. Visit www.pitzer.edu/redfordconservancy/2020/09/20/redford-conservancy-fall-lecture-julie-sze-and-michael-mendez/ to view the panel discussion.

Making Masks

Kathleen Kile ’97, Pitzer’s mail room supervisor, made hundreds of masks to donate to the local community and Pitzer students and staff remaining on campus. Professor Tim Berg and Rebekah Meyers also designed and made masks for donation to local medical centers.

Carnegie Community Engagement Classification

Earlier this year, Pitzer College received the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, an elective designation that indicates institutional commitment to community engagement from the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching. Pitzer has held this endorsement for 14 consecutive years since 2006 when the Carnegie Foundation first established the program to recognize colleges and universities for their public service work. This is the third reclassification for the College and is valid until 2026.

Strive2Thrive

Strive2Thrive, Pitzer’s holistic health, thriving and well-being campaign, had a lot of exciting programming and expanded support, resources and workshops in the fall 2020 semester. This included the Wellness Wednesday workshops and programming, self-care kits, mental health support and more. Larry Basden P’22 and Ramsey Sains of P’22 established Strive2Thrive in 2019 to focus on student health and well-being, the Office of Student Affairs oversees the program.

Virtual Admitted Student’s Day

On April 18, the Office of Admission held a virtual Admitted Student’s Day with more than 330 prospective students and their families from across the US and around world from as far as Nepal, Vietnam and Paraguay. Student panels, faculty and staff demonstrated a tremendous amount of care and compassion to those newly admitted students as they answered questions and gave wonderful advice, a virtual warm welcome to Pitzer.

CASA Pitzer Racial & Healing Justice

This fall, CASA Pitzer highlighted racial and healing justice within the work of community-based research and engagement by inviting activist scholars and community leaders to discuss strategies for social change. The topics focused on Immigrant Justice; Critical Education and Mentoring; Labor, Race, and Space and more. Critical Action & Social Advocacy (CASA) Pitzer advances critical analysis and community partnerships around the most pressing issues in the Inland Empire.

Pitzer College Art Galleries

After moving to a virtual format in March, the Pitzer College Art Galleries featured a series of innovative talks throughout the spring, summer and fall with artists who had previously exhibited in the Galleries. Pitzer art students and alumni led the series. “Stay at Home with Pitzer” was made possible through the support of Alumni & Family Engagement and the Office of College Advancement.

In the fall, the community was invited to participate in “MANIFESTO: Eight Minutes and Forty-Six Seconds,” via written statements, performances, videos, photographs and more which have been posted on the Galleries website and are being shared via social media. The project is a collaboration between Pitzer College Art Galleries, Pitzer’s Writing Center and President Oliver’s Racial Justice Initiative.

Visit www.pitzer.edu/galleries/category/manifesto to view manifestos.

Virtual 2020 Senior Thesis Virtual Art Exhibition

NoSingleSources featured the senior thesis work of Angel Del Amor ’20; Nicholas Endicott ’20; Yihan (Cassie) Li ’20; Ivry Manson ’20; Grace Russell ’20; Elias Schmidt ’20; Sophia Silane ’20; Kieran Silva ’20; Eve Spelling ’20; Ingrid Topp (Johnston) ’20 and Nancy Xing ’20. Their work is shown at www.pitzer.edu/galleries/category/manifesto.

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Giving Tuesday

This year’s Giving Tuesday on November 3 was a monumental success. A record-breaking 553 donors rallied together to make it Pitzer’s most successful Giving Tuesday to date! This year’s Giving Tuesday on November 1 was a monumental success. A record-breaking 553 donors rallied together to make it Pitzer’s most successful Giving Tuesday to date! This year’s Giving Tuesday on November 3 was a monumental success. A record-breaking 553 donors rallied together to make it Pitzer’s most successful Giving Tuesday to date! This year’s Giving Tuesday on November 1 was a monumental success. A record-breaking 553 donors rallied together to make it Pitzer’s most successful Giving Tuesday to date! This year’s Giving Tuesday on November 3 was a monumental success. A record-breaking 553 donors rallied together to make it Pitzer’s most successful Giving Tuesday to date!
Passion for Pitzer

Jan Bragado ’20 speaks in elucidation points. An efficient advisor for first-generation students and an agent of change, she is passionate about her life and interests, especially when she talks about Pitzer College. “Wow! I love my professors! I love what I’m learning and doing!”

Her career at Pitzer has been marked by the excitement she feels for the College and by the enthusiasm she generates in others, primarily first-generation students like herself. Yet Bragado might never have come to Pitzer if it hadn’t been for her initial interactions with Pitzer students and alumni.

As a high school senior in nearby Pomona, she had been accepted to 16 colleges throughout the US, including UCLA, UC Berkeley, Hamilton and Dartmouth. Pitzer wasn’t at the top of her list because it was so close to home. Then, 10 minutes before signing an acceptance letter to Dartmouth, Bragado had a change of heart. Pen in hand, she hesitated. She remembered her experience visiting Pitzer as a prospective student. “At move-in day, my relationship with Pitzer was formed. Rather than asking ‘Where’s the shower?’ I was feeling like I was going to cry and take a walk.”

Bragado immigrated to the US from the Philippines when she was 10, along with her parents and three siblings. “The family settled in Pomona, CA, where Bragado thrived academically. The Fletcher Jones Foundation awarded her a scholarship because of her outstanding grades in high school and her service to the community. At Pitzer, she immersed herself in helping with the Orientation Adventure program, became a diversity intern, a resident assistant and mentor to first-gen students. She also spent a semester abroad in Parma, Italy; through the Pitzer in Italy Program and tutored young refugee-immigrant children at the Center for Immigration & Asylum Cooperation. As a senior, she was promoted to admission fellow, where she held information sessions, interviewed prospective students and recruited students at local college fairs.

“By the time I was a senior, I was always involved and always the leaders of organizations. We expect that of ourselves!”

Bragado earned a double major in sociology and Chicano/a studies. She chose to focus on the self-care of student of color in historically white institutions. Her thesis examines the responsibility of color to mentor others of color. “It’s a responsibility we take on because we want to see more students like us thrive at Pitzer,” she said.

Bragado’s thesis also focused on the challenges students face during COVID-19. She finished her thesis this spring while living with a roommate in emergency housing provided by the College. “It was amazing what Pitzer did for us. It was a very difficult time, but it was important for me to have that space to finish the semester and to be with one of my best friends.”

She was also helped by the care given by her professors. Her thesis advisor, Joe Parker, would call to see how she was doing. “Rather than asking ‘Where’s this, where’s that?’ he was urging me to get out and take a walk.”

Bragado expresses thanks as easily as she does enthusiasm. Along with recognizing the many significant professors in her academic career, including Barbara Jumabii, Carmen Fought, Kathy Yip and Phil Zuckerman, she also is quick to thank her parents. “It does go lost in all my activities, but they gave me those opportunities with their hard work and sacrifices by coming to this country, which led to my attending Pitzer.”

With degree in hand and enthusiasm to spare, Bragado plans to work for a few years, then pursue a career within racial justice and police, and access and equity to higher education.


Nigel Boyle (Political Studies) completed the Vietnam portion of his 2018–20 Fulbright Global Scholar project. He was partway through the Pakistan leg of the project when he was evacuated home due to the COVID-19 crisis. He hopes to complete the project, a comparative study of new liberal arts colleges in different parts of the world in 2020–21, when he returns as the director of the Institute for Global/Local Action & Study at Pitzer.


Brian Keeley (Philosophy) provided expert commentary in the NRC News as a “Coronavirus conspiracy theories are frightening ER doctors.”

Amanda Lagi (English and World Literature) was awarded the Northeast Modern Language Association Annual Book Award for the first-unpublished manuscript for her work, Writing for New Parents: Postpartum and Colonial Time.

Jose Lerner (Media Studies) received a production grant from the Graham Foundation and completed a residency at the Headlands Center for the Arts. He gave invited talks at the Museo Universitaria del Arte Contemporaneo (Mexico City), the Block Museum of Art (Northwestern University, Evanston, IL), the Teatro José Ribón Romero (Morelia, Mexico), the Million Dollar Theater (Los Angeles), the Simposio Internacional de Teoría de Contemporáneo (at the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City), University of Southern California (the XVI Visible Evidence conference), UCLA (Urban Humanities Institute) and the Museo Tamayo (Mexico City). His books were received at the Pacific Film Archive (Berkeley), the Museo Ampuero (Puebla, Mexico), the Festival Magareres (Medellin), the Museo de Antropologia Palacio Camin (Merida, Yucatan) and Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellin. He published in Found print magazine (Madrid) and Cine politico en Mexico, 1966–2017 (New York, Peter Lang), and curated or co-curated exhibitions including Two or Three Things I know about Latin America in Arsenal, Berlin, Jeon Jeon Jeon Lightcone, Paris; Northwest Film Forum, Seattle, Film Frest, Chicago, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand, and the Festival Internacional de Cine de Cali, Colombia, and the documentary feature section of the Morelia International Film Festival.

David Moore (Psychology, Claremont Infant Study Center) co-authored two papers including “The development of mental rotation ability across the first year after birth” published in Advances in Child Development and Behavior and “Spatial thinking and first year after birth” published in Advances in Child Development and Behavior.”

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Parker encourages students to listen to multiple voices. They encourage discussion and guest speakers, he promotes inclusivity in his classes.

As he retires this year as professor of international and intercultural studies (IIS) after more than 30 years at Pitzer, Parker brings life and excitement to the classroom by incorporating new ideas and ways of thinking.

"It's important for students to be able to think critically— to see the phases and the nuances of every institution, whether it is the nation state, or the capitalist marketplace or patriarchy," he says. "I'm always thinking about language. What words am I using? What narrative am I leaving out? How can I frame this to be more inclusive?"

Parker wants his students to move beyond the critique stage and build a constructive vision for what they want in society.

"I've been happy to see the College thinking more about social justice. It's one thing to understand justice as a theory, and another to figure out how to do it," he says.

With a master's and PhD in East Asian languages and civilizations from Harvard, Parker taught Asian studies at Bucknell University and Japanese language and literature at Carleton College before coming to Pitzer in 1989.

"I had great mentors at Pitzer who helped me make the transition from specialized graduate work to broader interdisciplinary liberal arts teaching," says Parker. "The College made it easy to do that."

During the spring 2020—COVID-19 semester, Yeşil provided drop-in on- and off-campus in-person and virtual faculty and student discussions on the history of the United States. She served as a political commentator for China Review International. In addition to the Times of Israel, Al Wachtel's work has been published in national outlets such as the San Francisco Chronicle, Los Angeles Times and the Los Angeles Review of Books.

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The relevance of Black contributions to literature. "

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In every faculty meeting, she reminded faculty that excellence in higher education requires diversity in faculty, staff, students and curricula.

"Like ripples on a pond, Agnes's influences run far and wide—all over the faculty positions created in Africana Studies are due, in no small measure, to Black studies."

Moreland Jackson, "said Halford Fairchild, professor emeritus of psychology and founder of the Intercollegiate Department of Black Studies at The Claremont Colleges, now the Intercollegiate Department of Africana Studies.

She earned her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Redlands, her master's at the University of Washington and her PhD from Columbia University.

She was Pitzer's first tenure-track African American professor and was a founder of the Intercollegiate Department of Black Studies at The Claremont Colleges, now the Intercollegiate Department of Africana Studies.

My 23-year career at Pitzer was made possible by the sacrifices of Agnes Moreland Jackson," said Halford Fairchild, professor emeritus of psychology and founder of the Intercollegiate Department of Black Studies at The Claremont Colleges, now the Intercollegiate Department of Africana Studies.

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Calling Jackson the "conscience" of Pitzer College, Fairchild said that in every faculty meeting, she reminded faculty that excellence in higher education requires diversity in faculty, staff, students and curricula.

"Agnes taught everyone that 'Black Lives Matter' all through her career," and Professor of Sociology Ann Stromberg. "She was a beacon for that."

"Dr. Lucettia People ’71, an educator now in the San Francisco Bay Area, first took a class from Jackson at the Claremont School of Theology, followed by classes at Pitzer. Jackson bestowed on her the honor of being a "chosen" daughter and continued to mentor her after graduation. "She was always a teacher," People said. "She claimed she could teach anyone from two to 92. She wanted me to grow into the best person I could be."

Jackson’s classes drew not only students, but faculty as well, due to Jackson's vibrant teaching and, in some cases, to her remarkable connections with leaders in the creative arts. Stromberg recalled a course in the early 1980s she and several other faculty members took on Black literature, art and music.

"In that one semester, we had guest speakers that included Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Kenny Barril and Elizabeth Catlett! One of the other co-teachers was artist Samella Lewis. Can you imagine what a powerful experience we had?"

Jackson’s commitment to justice and quality education extended beyond The Claremont Colleges to neighboring communities. She served on the board of directors for the Pomona Unified School District, the Society for Values in Higher Education and on the nominating committee and board of directors for the Girl Scouts of America.

Upon her retirement, the College established the Agnes Moreland Jackson Annual Scholarship in her honor. Then, in 2008, a gift from alumna and former trustee Quinn Dilanary '76 and his husband, Wayne Jordan, enabled the College to establish the Agnes Moreland Jackson Diversity Program Fund, which provides support for programs and activities primarily directed toward first-year students but open to all. The theme and content of each event is meant to advance Pitzer’s core values of diversity and intercultural understanding.

Jackson was preceded in death by her husband of 16 years, Reverend Harold Andrew Jackson, Jr., in January 2020. She is survived by a brother, three chosen daughters and a chosen son, and numerous other relatives and friends.

At her graveside service, a Civil Rights Movement song by Sweet Honey in the Rock, called Ella’s Song, rang out with words that mirror Jackson’s life:

"He taught me to do things three times better. " He introduced me to James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright and to myself as a writer. It is because of his pedagogy, mentorship and insistence that I spend most of my day and night reading, that I do indeed attempt to do things three times better."

Masilela was a profound and prolific writer. His most recent book, A South African Looks at the African Diaspora: Essays and Interviews (2017), reflects on the meaning of, and relationship between, the concepts of home and exile. As an international scholar and a South African exile, he drew from both his own experiences and the research he conducted in archives on both sides of the Atlantic.

Among Masilela’s other enduring works are An Outline of the New African Movement (2013) and Historical Figures of the New African Movement (2014), in which he curates and makes legible the intellectual history of the 19th century South African intellectuals in colonial South Africa. He also wrote many articles, book chapters and book-length works, including The Cultural Modernity of H.E.E. Dhlomo (2007).


In addition to teaching and writing, Masilela was the former director of the H.E.E. Dhlomo Center for African Intellectual History at Pitzer, established in 1999 to create an extensive archive of the writings of New African intellectuals and to reconstruct South African intellectual history on the basis of this material.

Masilela is survived by daughters Vuyiswa and Nomaduma, and brothers Monde and Tombe, plus members of his extended family.
Share Your News With Pitzer!


70 Michael R. Mitchell’s new book, Roof Recovery: Healing from Medical Illness and Diagnosis, was published in fall 2020. A stroke survivor, Mitchell wrote this book to help others who are grappling with medical illness heal and adapt to their new conditions.

70 The Los Angeles Business Journal named Bruce Stein to its L.A. 500 list of the most influential leaders and executives in Los Angeles. Stein is the co-founder and CEO of Axiomatic Gaming.

77 Forbes named Jill Baskin one of the world’s most influential chief marketing officers (CMOs). Baskin, who is the CMO at The Hershey Company, appeared at #33 on Forbes’ list of top CMOs from around the globe.

77 Cheryl Polk, who lives in San Francisco, has been appointed to the State of California’s Early Childhood Policy Council. Polk has been president and chief executive office at HighScope Educational Research Foundation since 2013. Polk earned a PhD in psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology and a master of education degree in school psychology from Georgia State University.

1990s

79 Karen Hochman Brown, a Los Angeles-based photographer who uses software to manipulate her photographic images, exhibited Preventing Krstein as part of a group show at the Ronald H. Silverman Fine Arts Gallery. Her collaborative work with Ann Marie Rousseau, Indigo Circle of Sun, opened at The Loft at LiLs in Los Angeles in January 2020.

1980s

90 Robert DeKiewiet to the Pitzer community. Is delighted to welcome her "68 Louise Beaudette Thornton welcomed her first-great-grandson into the world and is delighted to introduce Owen to Robert De Kreest to the Pitzer community.


90 Lisa Geller is a patent attorney in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical sectors. She was appointed head of intellectual property at Frequency Therapeutics in early 2020. Previously, she was head of intellectual property at Casebia Therapeutics, where she was responsible for all aspects of intellectual property, including patent, trademark and trade secrets. Geller has published various articles on topics related to the interface between social issues and science, and she currently serves on the board of the international journal, Science and Engineering Ethics.

2010s

75 Anne Turley had a "great year for Pitzers" in 2019. In March, she and Elizabeth "Tooie" Steinman Smith ’75 took a train trip along the coast to Monterey, where Robyn Hamilton ’75, picked them up to tour Big Sur. Suzanne Kaiser ’75 joined them, and they traveled to Seattle to visit Jan Longfellow King ’74. Later, Turley flew to Minneapolis to see Judy Griesedieck ’75. Turley was roommates with Hamilton during her sophomore year, Smith her junior year, and Kaiser her senior year and shared an apartment with King at CGU. Turley writes, "Friends forever." Pictured, clockwise from top, from left, Jan King, Tooie Smith, Suzanne Kaiser and Anne Turley at Point No Point Lighthouse, Turley and Judy Griesedieck at Lake of the Isles in Minneapolis, MN; Turley and Robyn Hamilton at Ventana in Big Sur.

81 Benjamin Goldfarb joined the Los Angeles Fire Department’s Community Emergency Response Team. In this volunteer position, Goldfarb would serve as a community first responder in case of disaster.

81 The Inland Valley Daily Bulletin ran a feature story on Jo Ann Banks, who began displaying short messages in the window of her Claremont home in March 2020. A sample of some of Banks’ home motifs, “In It Together,” “Stay Calm in the Chaos,” "Believe the Data.”

81 The Los Angeles Business Journal named Baskin to its list of top CMOs from around the globe. Jill Baskin, who is the CMO at The Hershey Company, appeared at #33 on Forbes’ list of top CMOs from around the globe.

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81 Steve Gonzalez was elected in November to serve as chief justice of the Washington State Supreme Court. Gonzalez joined the state Supreme Court in 2012 and will start his new role on Monday, January 11.

81 Laverne Gore ran for US Congress in Ohio’s 11th Congressional District. She lost to the incumbent, Marcia Fudge. Gore is a community activist and the executive director of the Ohio Diversity Coalition.

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81 Wendi Meyers has served in the field of psychology for nearly 35 years. She says she has been blessed to visit 32 countries and has lived in New Zealand and Oahu, HI, and is currently living in Utah, where she enjoys the snow-capped mountains. She writes, "Pitzer has been good to me!"
1990s

100 Anne Turner was selected by California State Assemblyman Chris Holden as Claremont's 2020 Woman of Distinction for her tireless work on homeless issues in the San Gabriel Valley. Holden's website described her as a staunch advocate for Claremont's homeless population and a well-respected leader who brought “confidence and enthusiasm” to her role as the City of Claremont's human services director, a position she held for six years before resigning in September.


109 Marc Garcia is the president and CEO of Visit Mesa, a marketing organization that promotes the Mesa, AZ, area. Garcia was the driving force behind Mesa becoming the first city in the US to be “autism certified” by the International Community Living organization. Prior to certification, Garcia led a nearly yearlong effort to encourage businesses in the Mesa area to participate in specialized autism training so they could better serve people on the autism spectrum and their families. Garcia is also helping businesses in other cities create a more inclusive environment for those with diverse cognitive abilities. A Pitzer-perfect pair, Garcia is married to Jennifer (Van Liew) Garcia '95.

2000s

107 Beth Livesay was named director of brand content strategy for NAES Magazine, a publication that serves professional nail technicians and salon owners. Previously, Livesay served as the magazine’s executive editor.

109 Laura Mitchell Friedman and Grant Friedman ’10 welcomed Owen Friedman to the world on July 30, 2020, at 7 pounds, 11 ounces—the luckiest weight ever, according to the Vegas index. Congratulations!

110 Ellia Del Rey and Frankie Simbahan shared the happy news of the birth of Santiago Simbahan, born on January 28, 2020. Congratulations!

112 The research of Karen Eisenhauer and Professor of Linguistics Carmen Fought was featured by The Washington Post in a video about Disney’s “princess problem.” Their research explores gender representation through the nature of—and imbalance between—male and female dialogue in Disney princess movies.

113 Mick Rosenthal helped build the Bronx food coop, a non-profit urban mobile voting app designed to make democracy more accessible and increase voter turnout among people with disabilities. Rosenthal has been working on the project since the 2016 election.

114 Michael Ceraso ran for a Claremont City Council seat and came in second to the winning candidate in his district. Ceraso runs Winning Margins, his own consulting and media relations company, and is a founder of Community Groundwork, a nonprofit focused on training community college students interested in working on political campaigns and in the government.

120 Jack Higgins came across the “Jam in the Van” YouTube channel a year before he graduated from Pitzer. This encounter impacted the rest of his life. As a senior, he was the chair and treasurer of the Kohoutek Music and Arts Festival Committee. He also documented his work with the Kohoutek Festival and the Pitzer music community in his thesis. He drew on his experience at Pitzer, where he became an intern with “Jam in the Van.” Since then, Higgins has worked full time at the company as their lead content creator, creative director and, more recently, executive video producer.

2010s

111 Ruth Bernstein graduated with honors in anthropology and went on to obtain a master of social work degree from California State University, Los Angeles. In 2019, she became a licensed social clinical social worker and has worked as a psychiatric social worker for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, serving people who are experiencing homelessness. Earlier this year, she was deployed to a homeless quarantine/isolation COVID-19 unit that provides mental health support. She writes, “I am indebted to the Pitzer New Resources experience for preparing me for my demanding career. Thank you!”

113 Emily Souder was excited to share the news of her engagement to Devon Storlie. The couple got engaged during a hike at Devil’s Lake in Wisconsin with their dog, Miles, as a witness.

114 Michelle Siqueiros was elected to the board of The California Endowment in May 2020. Siqueiros is the president of The Campaign for College Opportunity. She is also chair of Pitzer’s Alumni Board and serves on the College’s Board of Trustees.

115 Kate Post Spitzer is the producer and guest booker for Spectrum News, which won a Los Angeles-area Emmy Award for its “LA Under the Gun” live town hall. The network also received the Los Angeles Press Club’s Best Regularly Scheduled Newscast award for “Your Morning” on Spectrum News.

115 Charles Fracchia is the subject of a film by Jon Landou titled The Adventures of Superfian. The film recounts Fracchia’s 35-year quest to get every autograph from the 1978 San Francisco Giants in a San Francisco Giants 1979 Media Guide. The sportswriter Dan Brown also covered Fracchia’s autograph-seeking adventures in an article in The Athletic. Fracchia told The Participant that the 1978 Giants team was “the first baseball team that I fell in love with.”
See the natural text in the provided document.
Miriam Merrill takes over as Pomona Pitzer athletic director

Pomerosa-Pitzer’s Miriam Merrill is an atypical athletic director doing her job in unusual times. She arrived in Claremont in July, in the midst of the pandemic and prior to decisions regarding the upcoming semester and fall athletics.

Merrill, who has a doctoral degree in sports psychology from Temple University, is a woman of color in a profession that is still largely dominated by white males. “I believe my presence is really important, as it models what an athletic director can look like,” she said.

When Pomerosa-Pitzer began searching for an athletic director, they were looking for someone who truly understood the value of the residential liberal arts experience and our student-athletes’ commitment to excelling academically and athletically, according to Mike Segawa, Pitzer College vice president for student affairs and a member of the search committee.

Pomerosa-Pitzer sought someone who could work effectively with all campus stakeholders—faculty, staff, students, coaches, parents and others—and collaborate with colleagues both on and off campus. In addition to these qualifications, the successful candidate would be responsible for generating support for the upcoming renovation and expansion of the Center for Athletics, Recreation and Wellness.

It was also important to hire someone who was intimately familiar with and genuinely embraced the Division III philosophy; who prioritized the overall educational experience of student-athletes at two highly selective colleges.

Merrill emerged as the top choice among a talented pool of candidates. “She’s a very supportive person, but it was also clear she would not be afraid to hold people accountable,” Segawa said.

Merrill joins the Sagehens from Hamilton College, a member of the New England Small College Athletic Conference, where she was associate director of athletics. Like Pomona and Pitzer, Hamilton is a small, highly selective liberal arts college competing in Division III. During her time there, she overseen numerous aspects of the athletic program and filled in as the interim director for four months in 2019.

Merrill’s experience also includes serving as athletic director at Chicago’s Richard J. Daley College and being head coach of women’s track and field at Robert Morris University in Chicago.

As a college student-athlete at the University of Cincinnati, Merrill was a track and field All-American and was inducted into the university’s Athletics Hall of Fame in 2012. Merrill, who is also a professor of physical education and chair of the department at Pomerosa, brings more than professional experience to her job, according to Segawa. She brings the lived experience of an elite athlete and that of a woman of color. “She is well prepared to succeed at Pomerosa-Pitzer,” Segawa said.

Since Merrill’s arrival, the department has launched a diversity newsletter and established a group that meets weekly to address diversity, equity and inclusion matters.

Understandably, COVID-19 has made getting to know Pomerosa and Pitzer challenging for Merrill. Exploring the two campuses and meeting the students, faculty and staff who bring the colleges to life has been slowed down by the pandemic.

Despite this, she has reached out virtually and is learning quickly. “People understand, and I am so appreciative,” Merrill said. “I would not be able to do it without the support of both Pomerosa and Pitzer.”

In the months since she has been in Claremont, Merrill and her staff have kept the lines of communication with coaches and student-athletes open as they weather the health crisis. Teleconferencing tools, such as Zoom, are being used to maintain contact with students and to ensure they are doing well both mentally and physically during the pandemic. “Coaches are focused on students’ overall mental health and well-being. They are being intentional about asking, ‘How are you doing?’” Merrill said.

Some ideas implemented during the pandemic could have a place in Pomerosa-Pitzer athletic programs post COVID-19. Merrill said. For instance, coaches in certain sports have attended virtual camps, where technology has provided additional information that will help in the recruitment of talented student-athletes. Video conferencing has also allowed coaches to host virtual open houses for prospective student-athletes interested in attending Pomerosa or Pomona. “Through Zoom, you can reach so many potential student-athletes,” commented Merrill.

As the academic year continues, Merrill and the coaches will be looking ahead and preparing for when public health conditions are expected to improve and students will be able to return to physical classrooms and engage in sports. “We will be ready,” she said. “There is an end in sight.”

Visit www.pitzer.edu/communications/2020/12/17/2020-sagehen-athletics-highlights to view highlights of 2020 Sagehens athletics.