A Grove of One’s Own

The citrus trees north of the Grove house were just saplings when this photo was taken in the late 1970s. The grove was planted to replicate the original setting surrounding the building, which was known as the Zetterberg house before moving to campus. Involved in the grove’s planting was John R. Rodman (pictured), who came to Pitzer College in 1965 as an assistant professor of political studies and nurtured the growth of the College’s unique gardens and landscaping. As this issue of Participant suggests, Rodman’s vision of environmental awareness spreading like branches across the College’s culture has thrived—just like those saplings—in the years since the photo was taken.

Advocating for Earth

When Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring* appeared in 1962, it unleashed a wave of environmental activism. Its publication coincided with the early career of John R. Rodman, who was a young assistant professor at Harvard at the time. When he arrived at Pitzer a few years later, Rodman was full of the fervor inspired by Carson and others in the environmental awareness movement.

Rodman was one of the prime movers behind Pitzer’s core mission to support and nurture environmental awareness, both on campus and beyond. In this issue of Participant, you’ll find him not only in the photo at left, but also highlighted in a cover story examining Pitzer’s deep roots in sustainability and environmental awareness.

Today, these terms have become commonplace in higher education, used by many colleges and universities. But they weren’t back when Rodman and his colleagues first started asking everyone to consider what he called, according to a conference he organized in the early 1970s, “the rights of nonhuman nature.”

Even prior to my arrival at Pitzer, I noted that our beloved College has long nurtured consistent core values that the rest of the world seems to be finally embracing now. Pitzer leads the way in multiple areas, including our sustainability and environmental awareness efforts. This magazine issue tells that story beautifully.

Environmental awareness and sustainability efforts are woven across the entire fabric of our campus life. The work we do today challenges us to think not just about cleaning up the skies, seas, and rivers or fighting for local and global sustainability. It’s also about reframing what environmental justice means.

When we strive for environmental justice, we are working on behalf of all living things. When we urge our students to advocate on behalf of communities and vulnerable populations that don’t have a voice of their own, that includes our environment, too. The rich ecosystems surrounding us in Claremont and elsewhere in the world can’t speak for themselves. They need us—and our students and graduates—to speak for them. They need our help.

I think Professor Rodman would be gratified to know his environmental vision is alive and thriving here.

Provida Furtur,

Storm C. Thacker
President
Pitzer College
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PARTICIPANT welcomes submissions for consideration; the editorial staff reserves the right to decline or to edit and alter submissions according to editorial guidelines.

If you don’t wish to receive Participant in the mail, send your request to pznews@pitzer.edu.

Submit alumni news & updates:
www.pitzer.edu/alumni/class-notes
www.pitzer.edu

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READ PARTICIPANT ONLINE
Visit www.pitzer.edu/participant for related video, extended features, and other exclusives on sustainability at Pitzer College.
SUSTAINABILITY

What Makes a Magazine Sustainable?

A chain of custody and certification are key elements in the process

Sustainable printing has been a hot topic for many years, and the print industry has been working on finding ways to decrease its environmental impact. Participant is also sensitive to these issues, and we want to share some information about the production of the magazine. Participant bears the stamp of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which means that the paper used in our production process has been certified by the FSC. You’ll find that stamp located at the bottom of p. 2. The FSC is a highly respected international, nongovernmental organization that promotes responsible forest management related to the print industry. The FSC oversees the entire chain of custody from the forest to the sawmills and lumberyards to the end product. Learn more about the FSC at us.fsc.org.

In presenting an issue about Pitzer’s sustainability efforts, we have sought to make sure the magazine’s production is aligned with the themes you’ll find here.

Nick Owchar, Editor
Stephanie Estrada, Creative Director

FACULTY DISTINCTIONS

Scholarship in Action

An Oxford visit and other scholarly achievements marked a busy academic season

The Social Lives of Fish

The National Science Foundation has awarded a Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) grant to Assistant Professor of Neuroscience Tessa Solomon-Lane. The prestigious CAREER program supports early-career faculty in leading advances in their fields and mentoring students. Solomon-Lane’s grant, titled “Early-Life Social Environments Drive Behavioral and Neural Mechanisms of Development,” will fund a five-year research project. Through funded summer research programs and increased resources for scientific discovery, Solomon-Lane’s CAREER grant will support undergraduate researchers in her lab. The project will explore causal relationships between early-life social experiences and long-term behavioral impacts by studying Burton’s Mouthbrooder, a species of fish found in parts of Africa. Solomon-Lane is focusing on behavioral neuroendocrinology (the study of how hormones and the brain interact).

“Topics in behavioral neuroendocrinology are relevant and impactful not just to the lived experiences of undergraduates, but also more broadly, to the laws impacting life-saving healthcare for pregnant people and trans people, as well as the environment,” said Solomon-Lane.

Elements of Possibility

The Britts quarterly magazine and website featured Visiting Professor David Goldblatt’s art installation, “Utopian Chemistry,” at The Galleries

FACULTY | News & Updates

Assistant Professor of Neuroscience Tessa Solomon-Lane, recipient of a National Science Foundation CAREER grant. (PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID TORRALVA)

Embodying Learning

Professor of Asian American Studies Kathy Yep presented her student-centered pedagogies and the qì gōng meditation form at a conference hosted by the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women’s Hospital. Yep’s work about qì gōng also appears in the anthology Anti-Racist Community Engagement: Principles and Practices.

Engagement in Higher Ed

Associate Professor of Urban Studies and CASA Pitzer Director Tessa Hicks Peterson contributed to the multimedia book The PLACE: Collaborative Higher Education, Community Engagement, and the Public Humanities. The book draws from a network of community-university partnerships (including CASA Pitzer) led by the national higher ed initiative Bringing Theory to Practice. Alongside Pitzer students and community partners, Hicks Peterson talked about their collaborative community photography project to explore immigrant experiences in the Inland Empire.
Decolonial Views in Central Asia
Last summer, Professor of Sociology Azamat Junusbai interviewed ethnic Qashaq in the city of Almaty in Kazakhstan about attitudes toward decolonial narratives, the Ukrainian war, and Russia as a colonial power. Junusbai presented preliminary findings from these interviews last fall at Pomona College's Oldenburg Luncheon Colloquium series.

Racial Bias in Policing
Associate Professor of Psychology Stefanie Guillermo presented her research this spring during a Claremont Discourse lecture at The Claremont Colleges Library. Her talk was titled "Unraveling Racial Bias in Attitudes Toward Police Use of Force." Guillermo shared results from two studies (one of which was conducted with Claremont Colleges students) and her aspirations for research as a CASA Pitzer community scholar in residence.

When in Rome
Bryan Mase student Marie Litzigter often wrote to her family about her experience studying mathematics in Rome from 1933 to 1934. Litzigter eventually established a career and reputation as a mathematician and researcher. One hundred years later, Associate Professor of Mathematics Jenna Lorenat pored over Litzigter's letters for an article that has been published in a recent issue of the journal Mathematical Intelligencer. Lorenat described Litzigter's writings as an "unexpected archival peek at the mundane drama of mathematics' imperceptibly human creators."

The Dapper Debater
Professor of Geo-Science and Societal Studies Phil Zuckerman participated in a debate hosted by the venerable Oxford Union, a British debating society founded in 1822 that draws participants from across the intellectual spectrum, from academia to politics to science. Bringing his academic expertise in secularism, Zuckerman and his debaters responded to this proposition: "This House Believes God is a Delusion." To watch Zuckerman's remarks, visit www.pitzer.edu/participant.

Shifting Politics in China
In the American Political Science Review, Assistant Professor of Political Studies Junisbai Junazhan recently published an article about how China's civil service exam reinforces regime stability despite rising inequality.

Environmental change is inevitable, and caves provide persuasive evidence of that. The real concern is how fast the changes are taking place now.

"The changes that enabled woolly rhinos to live where hippos did took place over tens of thousands of years. We're not talking in those terms anymore. When we talk about something like rising sea levels, we're talking about a short amount of time. There's so much development along coastal regions that even small changes are economically disastrous. You're seeing this now."

McFarlane also sees alarming signs of rapid change in Costa Rica, where he takes students to Pitzer's Firestone Center for Restoration Ecology to study biodiversity. He said the wilderness there was relatively untouched until the 1990s when it was heavily deforested for a homesteading program. Students see for themselves how surges in human activity are imperiling many habitats and ecosystems.

"If there's a positive in this, McFarlane said there's a special opportunity for students who wish to become scientists. "There are certainly bright points in the situation with climate change, especially for a young scientist," he said. "I tell them they have a chance to study closely how climate change is impacting places and then to use that information to determine how to physically protect affected species. There won't be any shortage of scientific opportunities for making positive improvements. There will be plenty of meaningful work waiting for them after graduation."
The Community Engagement Center serves as a central campus hub for activism.

For Pitzer students, social responsibility isn’t just an idea found inside a book—it lives in community gardens, warehouses, classrooms, on street corners, and beyond. Pitzer’s Community Engagement Center (CEC) has helped make this work possible for 25 years.

“We’re supporting the innovation, ideas, passions, and justice issues arising in our community partners by connecting them with faculty and students.”
—CEC Director Tricia Morgan ’08

The CEC facilitates the ethics training and partnerships for these courses. Recent SRX courses include Sustainable Sculpture, Media Arts for Social Justice, and R(El)east to Nature: Poetry & Theory.

Established in 1999, the CEC was originally the Center for California Cultural and Social Issues. Former Professor Lourdes Arguelles and former Dean of Faculty and Professor Emeritus Alan P. Jones founded the center to leverage institutional resources and join forces with local partners to advance social justice.

The CEC celebrated its anniversary during the 2023–24 academic year with a series of in-person and virtual events including voter registration, gardening, food drives, grassroots organizing training, a festival of storytellers, and more. Due to its longstanding collaborations with local communities, the CEC played an important role in Pitzer’s selection earlier this year as one of 368 institutions to receive the 2024 Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement.

CASA Pitzer celebrates 25 years of community outreach in the Inland Empire

Critical Action & Social Advocacy
(CASA) Pitzer has experienced many transformations during its 25 years of justice-oriented learning. Today, CASA Pitzer resides in Ontario in the Frankish Building—where murals, natural light, diagonal bookshelves, and cozy furniture welcome everyone who comes in. Here, activist research and community building become one.

Originally known as Pitzer in Ontario, CASA Pitzer advances critical analysis and local partnerships around issues in incarceration, immigration, education, labor, art, and more. CASA Pitzer brings residents, activists, artists, and nonprofits together with Pitzer faculty and students to enact change.

The two-course CASA Pitzer academic program facilitates student fellowships and community-based participatory action research with 10 core community partners. CASA Pitzer also offers scholar-in-residence programs to students, faculty, and community members. Meanwhile, the building in Ontario has become a vibrant community center for Pitzer and local residents to host events and exhibitions.

CASA Pitzer has the same founders as the Community Engagement Center—former Pitzer professors Lourdes Arguelles and Alan P. Jones. While the CEC supports community engagement at large for the College, CASA Pitzer is a place-based, three-credit program that works with a cohort of students every semester.

Students complete a 125-hour fellowship, which “provides deep cultural immersion in the Inland Empire,” said CASA Pitzer Director Tessa Hicks Peterson.

“There are few places that have what we have, which is an off-campus community center that involves longitudinal research projects for students to engage deeply and hands on.”
—CASA Pitzer Director Tessa Hicks Peterson
EXPLORING ASIAN AMERICAN IDENTITY
Since childhood, Daisy Okazaki ’25 has told stories informed by their experience as an Asian American. Now a media studies major and Asian American studies minor, Okazaki has received support from the Margo Okazawa-Rey (MOR) Fellowship to produce a film. Okazaki is featuring members of Bantray free!, which promotes community and leadership development for young Southeast Asian women.

“I am interested in telling stories through film and art that are relevant and uplifting towards Asian American communities and histories,” said Okazaki. The MOR Fellowship is offered by the Community Engagement Center (see p. 8) and the Intercollegiate Department of Asian American Studies at The Claremont Colleges.

CULTIVATING FOREIGN AFFAIRS
Mark Perez Navarro ’24, a political studies senior, is one of 45 fellows in the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship Program. Perez Navarro is the first Pitzer student to receive this fellowship. Through the fellowship, the Department of State finances a two-year master’s graduate program and a career in the foreign service. Perez Navarro plans to specialize in international security and U.S. foreign policy. He will enter the U.S. Foreign Service, taking assignments in various embassies and consulates across regions that include Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

COSTA RICAN CULTURAL IMMERSION
Zhane Molechina ’24 has received the U.S. Department of State’s Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, which enables students of limited financial means to study or intern abroad. Molechina is participating in the Pitzer in Costa Rica program this spring. Molechina is majoring in political studies and organizational studies with a minor in Spanish. She plans to advance her Spanish language skills as she stays with a host family and studies in San José and Pitzer’s Firestone Center for Restoration Ecology, which is near the town of Domicales.

“These experiences will promote both my professional and personal development by empowering me to surpass my limits, explore new horizons, and forge meaningful connections,” said Molechina.

FACULTY
In the Media

“Women’s work was once about women for themselves, women’s rights for themselves. Now what they are saying is that women’s rightful place in society—where they can do the most meaningful work—is at home with the family.”

—Hannah Liu, assistant professor of political studies, about the Chinese Communist Party’s attitudes toward women in the New York Times

“Amazon’s community engagement plan is a textbook example of [public policy analyst Sherry] Arnstein’s bottom-most rung: manipulation—what we called ‘gaslighting.’ Like gaslighting, manipulation is about educating, persuading, and advising uninformed residents about what they should want. These campaigns prime a community to accept corporate wishes and to question contradictory voices that reflect real community knowledge or concerns.”

—Susan A. Phillips, professor of environmental analysis and director of the Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability, about Amazon’s 2024 strategy in the Los Angeles Times

“Black maternal mortality and infant mortality has become sexy to talk about, but not as sexy to invest in.”

—Alicia Bonaparte, professor of sociology and scholar of Black midwifery, about midwifery startups in the Guardian

“If I’m going to be able to help these kids, I have to figure out how to collaborate with their parents, how to help them with their own anxiety, and help them learn to not get in the way of their kids’ treatment and ultimately support them. I need to help them be almost like co-therapists. If we’re going to help kids build lives worth living ... they need collaborative problem-solving with their parents.”

—Marcus Rodriguez, associate professor of psychology and director of the Global Mental Health Research Lab, about supporting youth who are suffering from chronic invalidation on the "Little Help For Our Friends" mental health podcast on VoiceAmerica

EASY PZ

Some green facts and figures about the Pitzer community

3
Pitzer’s ranking in Princeton Review’s 2024 category “Green Matters: Everyone Cares About Conservation”

40
Percentage of sustainability-related features (including green roofs, permeable concrete, storm retention basins, drought-tolerant plants, and green-belt areas) that have been incorporated into the design of Pitzer’s residence halls.

>50%
Percentage of field groups at Pitzer now offering sustainability-related courses (see story, p. 18) as part of their curricula

<50%
Percentage of water usage reduction in campus bathrooms thanks to the implementation of low-flow shower heads, faucets, toilets, and other features

$1.8 million
Size of grant awarded to the Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability to study agroforestry—the practice of installing solar panels on farmland (see story, p. 30)
Pitzer Receives Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement

Pitzer College is the recipient of a 2024 Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement, which acknowledges a deep commitment to community engagement and effective collaboration with community partners in substantial and impactful ways.

“We recognize these institutions for their exceptional commitment to community engagement and their work to transform knowledge into meaningful action,” said Timothy Knowles, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in a statement released by the foundation to announce this year’s recipients.

Pitzer is among 466 institutions across the country holding this designation and has held this special classification since 2006, when the program was first established to recognize the public service of higher education institutions. Classifications are awarded following a process of extensive self-study by each institution, which is then assessed by a national review committee.

“This is an honor to have Pitzer’s efforts in serving the public honored with this prestigious designation again this year,” said Tricia Morgan ’08, who directs Pitzer’s Community Engagement Center (CEC) and served as the lead on the Carnegie application. “This work is made possible by the dedicated faculty, students, and community partners of Pitzer College.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the American Council on Education oversees the entire selection process.

“Community engagement is woven across the academic experience at Pitzer. Through the Department of Natural Sciences, we provide the hub for science training for students from Pitzer College, Scripps College, and Claremont McKenna College (CMC). We are currently transitioning out of the department to operate its own science programs,” said Morgan.

A key feature of the department’s approach to science education is providing science majors with intimate classroom experiences and opportunities to work closely with faculty. The department offers majors in biology, chemistry, or physics along with interdisciplinary majors in biology-chemistry, neuroscience, environmental science, and more.

Community engagement is woven across the academic experience at Pitzer. Though the College does not have a institutionally sanctioned definition of community engagement, noted Morgan in the application, Pitzer does espouse a “holistic, centered approach to community engagement, embedding these practices across multiple curricular and co-curricular areas of the institution.”

That decentralized approach includes—but isn’t limited to—the work being done by the CEC, Critical Action Social Advocacy, the Justice Education Initiative, and the Robert Bednarz Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability.

In addition to the name change, Morgan said that the faculty and staff of the Department of Natural Sciences are awaiting another highly anticipated change for the department later this year: completed construction of The Nucleus. The 70,000-square-foot building, which is located just west of the department, will expand science resources and facilities for faculty and Pitzer and Scripps science students. The Nucleus is expected to open in the fall.

President Launches Initiative to Encourage Dialogue on Challenging Issues

In response to a cultural climate that often turns conversations on important issues into yelling matches, President Strom C. Thacker has launched the Pitzer College Presidential Initiative on Constructive Dialogue. Earlier this year, Thacker convened a campus organizing committee to plan events and facilitate related programming.

In a message to the community, Thacker described the initiative’s goal to support “the development of a vibrant and inclusive campus culture where individuals feel heard, respected, and empowered to engage in meaningful conversations that contribute, as well as personal and collective growth.”

As of publication, the initiative has sponsored several events this spring. Author Anna Malika Tabbs visited campus to discuss her book, The Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation (co-sponsored by the Melvin L. Oliver Racial Justice Initiative with Interim Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students Jan Barker Alexander and Bee Joyner ’24).

Thacker moderated “How Do We Talk About Israel and Palestine?” —a conversation between Muslim Public Affairs Council Co-founder Salam Al-Marayati, and Sokatch, he hopes the initiative will demonstrate how it’s possible to “agree to disagree agreeably” on sensitive topics and to learn from each other in the process.

Visit www.pitzer.edu/participant to read more about the presidential initiative and watch videos of the events with Tabbs, Al-Marayati, and Sokatch.

Thacker’s initiative seeks to counter the false notion that civil dialogue requires giving priority to politeness over frank and often passionate discussions. As Thacker explained during the event with Al-Marayati and Sokatch, he hopes the initiative will demonstrate how it’s possible to “agree to disagree agreeably” on sensitive topics and to learn from each other in the process.

“I am thrilled to see Pitzer recognized once again this year as a top producer of Fulbright recipients,” said Thacker. “I am honored by this recognition of our College’s leadership in this realm and so proud of our students and the outstanding faculty and staff who support them. They will continue to support this mission and values, and with this support, we will be able to make an even bigger difference in the world.”

Pitzer College

Named a Top Fulbright producer in 2023–24

Pitzer College is one of the top producers of Fulbright students in 2023–24, according to a U.S. Fulbright announcement released this week. This marks the 15th consecutive year that Pitzer has been recognized for this achievement.

The Fulbright is a highly competitive program administered by the U.S. Department of State to promote cultural and intellectual exchange between the U.S. and some 140 countries worldwide.

During its grants, recipients study, work, conduct research, and live with people from their host country to gain a deeper appreciation of other beliefs and cultural perspectives.

Top producer schools are divided into two categories: those with the most Fulbright scholars (which refers to faculty members or other professionals) and those with the most Fulbright students (which applies to undergraduates). With nine Pitzer students awarded for 2023–24, Pitzer places among the top 13 institutions in the baccalaureate category.

For President Strom C. Thacker, who was a Fulbright scholar in Mexico, the College are continuing success as a top producer enhances its global reputation.

“This is a lovely acknowledgement that Pitzer is truly a leader in the field,” said Morgan.

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Dressing Up in Sustainable Fashions

When she started PZ Threads in 2019, Tasha Gardiner-Feldman ‘23 had a clear purpose. She wanted to educate her classmates and others on the value of the clothes already hiding at the bottom of their closets.

PZ Threads challenged the popularity of “fast fashion,” a term referring to the ethically questionable practices behind the clothes, promoted by the apparel industry. That includes the considerable waste of resources and the exploitation of an underpaid labor force, all to keep up with demand for the hottest new trends.

Gardner-Feldman’s club started out as a Pitts-centric effort that produced a magazine and hosted fashion shows and bazaars to foster excitement about vintage clothing and its stylish possibilities.

Though there was uncertainty that PZ Threads would continue after Gardner-Feldman’s graduation, it is thriving today and has expanded into a 5C-wide club. This year, the club’s leadership includes Co-President Tasha Gardiner-Feldman ‘23 and Bella Hottenrott HMC ‘26.

“When I began running the club with Bella after brainstorming a bit about what to name the club, we renamed it THREAD5 with the number 5 to keep the club with Bella, after Gardiner-Feldman’s graduation, it is thriving today and has expanded into a 5C-wide club. This year, the club’s leadership includes Co-President Tasha Gardiner-Feldman ‘23 and Bella Hottenrott HMC ‘26. Harris explained, “We talked to our members, and everyone felt that it was only appropriate to emphasize that we are open to students from all the 5Cs.”

Harris said the club has more activities planned for this year, the club’s leadership includes Co-President Tasha Gardiner-Feldman ‘23 and Bella Hottenrott HMC ‘26.

Flowers for an Iconic Landmark Return

On a late afternoon last December, Spencer Skaling ’27 (pictured) found an easy way to clear his mind after studying all day for finals. He stood in the freezing waters of the fountain on Pellissier Mall.

Just a few months before, that wouldn’t have been possible. The fountain, which was completed in 1969, had been deactivated for seven years due to ongoing drought conditions in Southern California. But with the implementation of a recycled water system, the fountain is running again. It was reactivated last October as part of the celebratory festivities for Storm C. Thacher’s inauguration as Pitzer’s seventh president.

The reactivation was made possible after receiving approvals from Pitzer’s Student Senate and Sustainability Committee.

The fountain employs a recirculating system to use water responsibly. Falling water is captured in a catch basin hidden under the base, which is constructed of local rocks (affectionately known by some as “Claremont potatoes”). The fountain also recirculates fresh water, not gray or wastewater, which means that the fountain serves as an “ideal spot for students to gather on hot days or, in Skaling’s case, to take an unexpected (and chilly) study break.”

An Iconic Campus Landmark Returns

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Can a river be reimagined or redirected? Acclaimed environmental artist Lauren Bon thinks so. The exhibition, “Lauren Bon and The Metabolic Studio: Bending the River,” hosted in fall 2022 by Pitzer College Art Galleries, gave visitors a glimpse into Bon’s project to draw water from the Los Angeles River and distribute it in surrounding communities. She has described this effort as “an infrastructure artwork” that takes water from that river, which in its current concrete form serves as a flood channel moving wastewater to the sea, and restores it to its original nourishing purpose. Bon’s Metabolic Studio has worked with local communities and government agencies to make it possible to divert 106 acre-feet of water annually to irrigate some 50 acres of land in the historic core of downtown L.A. The Pitzer exhibition culminated with Bon delivering the annual Murray Pepper and Vicki Reynolds Pepper Distinguished Visiting Artist Lecture.

See more photos like this one from the exhibition at www.pitzer.edu/participant.

At the River’s Edge

Environmental artist Lauren Bon’s exhibit, “Bending the River,” imagines a watershed moment for the L.A. River

Can a river be reimagined or redirected? Acclaimed environmental artist Lauren Bon thinks so. The exhibition, “Lauren Bon and The Metabolic Studio: Bending the River,” hosted in fall 2022 by Pitzer College Art Galleries, gave visitors a glimpse into Bon’s project to draw water from the Los Angeles River and distribute it in surrounding communities. She has described this effort as “an infrastructure artwork” that takes water from that river, which in its current concrete form serves as a flood channel moving wastewater to the sea, and restores it to its original nourishing purpose. Bon’s Metabolic Studio has worked with local communities and government agencies to make it possible to divert 106 acre-feet of water annually to irrigate some 50 acres of land in the historic core of downtown L.A. The Pitzer exhibition culminated with Bon delivering the annual Murray Pepper and Vicki Reynolds Pepper Distinguished Visiting Artist Lecture.

See more photos like this one from the exhibition at www.pitzer.edu/participant.
Deep Roots

Seeds sown 60 years ago are bearing fruit in Pitzer's focus on sustainability

By BRIDGETTE RAMIREZ
In the spring of 1976, Professors Carl Herrett and Paul Shepard immersed six students in Baja California’s desertscapes of native shrubs and rolling hills colored in purple, orange, and sepia. It was a special experience: By day, they roamed through majestic archaeological sites. They sat around the campfire late into the night to talk about nature. They took a boat to a remote island in the Gulf of California to study birds.

In the three-week field trip was part of Hertel and Shepard’s course, The Desert Colloquium, and it was a formative experience for their student Paul Fautlich ’79. Fautlich later became a professor of environmental analysis at Pitzer College (he retired in spring 2023). Hertel and Shepard’s class was so inspiring that, as a professor, Fautlich adapted that class for his students. He called his class The Desert as a Place, an interdisciplinary exploration of arid environments that included multiday camping field trips and studies in anthropology, art, and literature. This class is still taught at Pitzer. “Environmentalism and sustainability permeate so many of the disciplines and courses,” said Fautlich. “It’s flowing throughout the curriculum.”

That flow, in fact, is something many institutions in higher education are trying to develop now. Climate consciousness is rising among colleges and universities according to a recent report from the Chronicle of Higher Education. After a devastating 2018 wildfire near California State University, Chico, the Chronicle noted that “43 faculty members in more than 35 disciplines across six Cal State campuses revamped 75 courses to incorporate climate issues.”

Sustainability and the environment have also become top of mind for many students. Inside Higher Ed, College Pulse, Kaplan and recently for many students. According to Princeton Review’s 2013 student surveys, Pitzer’s comprehensive approach to its curriculum along with a deep integration of sustainability-related features in campus life has earned the College a ranking of No. 3 in the area of “Green Matters: Everyone Cares About Conservation.”

The College also achieved a gold rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) in 2013. The AASHE is considered the gold standard in sustainability education; it is a nonprofit associated with colleges, universities, businesses, charitable organizations, government agencies, and K-12 schools all over the world working to create a sustainable future through higher education.

According to Pitzer’s latest AASHE report, more than half of the College’s field groups offer sustainability courses. From literature to art to STEM, faculty continue taking the coursework to the next level.

“I have so many of our fields addressing sustainability is not coincidental,” said Omoto. “It’s the result of intentional planning and institutional commitment. It shows you how deeply Pitzer cares about this. In fact, this emphasis and course offerings will expand. We are in the process of hiring new faculty across the College, and by design, many of them will have expertise and research interests related to climate change and sustainability issues.”

“Environmentalism and sustainability permeate so many of the disciplines and courses. ... It’s flowing throughout the curriculum.”
—Paul Fautlich, professor emeritus of environmental analysis

The Academic Planning Committee (APC) has been fundamental in this process and has especially provided “vision and planning” for further integrating sustainability and the environment across Pitzer’s curriculum, according to Professor Amanda Lagji, who chairs the Curriculum Committee of the APC. Lagji described several faculty expansion lines “that clustered around environmental issues,” said Lagji. Searches are now underway.

Professor Claudia Strauss, who chairs the APC this year, said that Pitzer’s Board of Trustees created an exciting opportunity when they approved six new faculty positions. Pitzer faculty were interested in clustering their hires in a cluster hire, which makes hires in different fields based on the same theme. The environmental analysis field group and Pitzer’s Robert Redford Leadership Center for Northern California Sustainability proposed the cluster hire with climate crisis as the theme. “The primary topic that emerged as the focus for a cluster hire was the climate crisis because it is one of the most pressing issues facing the planet,” said Strauss.

As last year’s APC chair, Professor Emeritus Daniel A. Segal helped move the proposals forward. Strauss pointed out how transdisciplinary climate crisis education is illustrated in the proposals that APC approved, including “a media studies professor specializing in ecodrama, a math professor specializing in climate modeling, and an Africana Studies professor specializing in environmental justice.”

With current courses, such as Environmental Economics, Ethnomicroscopy, and Nature and Society in Amazonia, students have many ways to learn and live environmental values even if they aren’t majoring in environmental analysis or a related field.

“Students who are exposed to different disciplinary approaches to the same issue can think about it more flexibly and see new connections,” said Strauss.

Pitzer’s course offerings are already becoming more robust with the hiring of new faculty just this academic year. Lagji has seen this happen firsthand; more sustainability-related courses are on the way.

Pitzer’s Environmental Education Origins

That threading of environmental awareness throughout the curriculum dates to Pitzer establishing an environmental studies program in 1976. Pitzer was one of the first colleges in the nation to do so. But even before that, Pitzer faculty wove the environment into the curriculum.

In 1968–69, Herrett, who was a professor of art and environmental design, taught the Environments and Happenings Seminar, which was described as a “seminar in ‘the new art.’” Professor of Sociology Thomas E. Carrol also taught Urban Environment. The next year, Professor of Political Studies John R. Rodman taught Contemporary American Problems: The Environment and Environmental Policy. Rodman spearheaded environmental consciousness not only in his classes but in Pitzer’s landscape. He facilitated creating the arboretum and Outback Preserve in the 1980s as safe havens for native vegetation and as living laboratories for classes in creative writing, art, anthropology, environmental studies, and more.

“John Rodman had this vision of environmental studies being like a tree,” said Faustlich. “The branches would reach out into different avenues and the roots would build deep to our commitment to place. He had that vision of creating a landscape that is sustainable and facilitates teaching about sustainability.”

Unexpected Examples

On a weekday afternoon you might see activity out in the garden next to the Office of Black Student Affairs (OBSA) on Seventh Street. It’s an unexpected example of Rodman’s vision of a branching tree.
It would be easy to assume the students trimming the plants and taking care of the yards are biology or botany students. But they’re members of Professor Laura Harris’ class, B(L)ack to Nature: Poetry & Theory. Writing and gardening? They’re far more intertwined with ideas of Blackness, nature, and creativity than one might think, Harris said.

Harris described her course “as a creative writing course centering 20th-century Black feminist poetic forms and themes, specifically nature poems and environmental justice themes at the intersections of Blackness, gender, class, and queer sexualities.” Students kept a reading journal as they delved into Ntozake Shange, Claudia Rankine, and other authors. Then they wrote poetry, from haiku to spoken word.

“The course provides a poetic historical context to environmental knowledge in Black artistic expression,” said Harris. “In some Black aesthetic traditions, the garden is a poem.” Harris’ class made this point literal by developing and tending to the OBSA garden, based on a plot of land offered by OBSA Dean and Director Lydia Middleton. As they felt the sunlight from above and the soil below, students became environmental stewards of what Harris terms “a Black culturally relevant student space.”

“A garden project provides a tactile opportunity for a creative writing class to ‘put hands to dirt’ as both resonating with and part of creative process,” said Harris.

A Hands-On Approach

Combining poetry with gardening is not the only way that sustainability creeps into unexpected corners of Pitzer’s curriculum. Professor Sarah Gilbert’s Sustainable Sculpture class trains students in the foundations of art creation and also takes pains to emphasize the creative and ethical use of found materials—from carving a broken bookshelf to scavenging and replanting seeds from food scraps.

“At an art supply store, you decontextualize where your wood comes from,” said Gilbert. “We’re thinking of how extraction works globally and locally.”

As a resource- and labor-intensive art form, sculpture requires collaboration. This is a regular practice for Gilbert’s students, who focus not just on individual success but forming a collective.

“The first goal is building community in our classroom,” said Gilbert. “The second is to take stock of the ecologies of the 5Cs and materials that are just being thrown away. We’re thinking of community not just in terms of humans but the plants and animals we rely on.”

“The course provides a poetic historical context to environmental knowledge in Black artistic expression. ... In some Black aesthetic traditions, the garden is a poem.”

—Laura Harris, professor of English and world literature and Africana studies

Top: Professor Sarah Gilbert (front row, far right) with her Sustainable Sculpture class at the Julia Bogany Talking Circle. The site design was completed during this academic year by Gilbert, students, and Bogany’s relatives.

Far Left: Back in 1994, a 12,000-square-foot parking lot was transformed into the Pitzer Student Garden. It was established in part thanks to the efforts of a committed group of stakeholders, including students, faculty, donors, and staff.

Left: Olivia Frakt SCR ‘27 prepares her hanging sculpture as part of an exhibit for Professor Sarah Gilbert’s Sustainable Sculpture class.
“As Julia [Bogany] was quick to point out, Tongva history is also Tongva futurism. We can feel this with Julia’s legacy being so present and visible here at Pitzer and throughout the region.”

—Sarah Gilbert, assistant professor of art

Last fall, her class also worked with Tongva community members for a Talking Circle installation that honors the late Tongva elder Julia Bogany. Gilbert’s class installed a sculptural glass sign and a native plants border designed with Bogany before her death and later with her granddaughter and great-granddaughter. A dedication ceremony took place in November.

“In her meetings with students and her generous sharing of Tongva culture, Julia focused on reciprocal relationships with the environment,” said Gilbert. “As Julia was quick to point out, Tongva history is also Tongva futurism. We can feel this with Julia’s legacy being so present and visible here at Pitzer and throughout the region. The glass sculpture bearing her name is part of a larger installation that contributes to this visibility by highlighting and activating interactions with the environment as it reflects the light, trees, and sky.”

More Than Just the Facts

While professors in many field groups are pursuing similar approaches to sustainability integration, Pitzer’s interdisciplinary education is apparent in the environmental analysis program. In 2011–12, the College changed the environmental studies major to environmental analysis. Now, the major comes with four tracks: environmental science, environmental policy, environment and society, and sustainability and the built environment.

In every track, the major draws from the social sciences, arts and humanities, and natural sciences to build creative solutions for environmental problems. Additionally, all environmental analysis majors complete a semester-long intensive internship that takes them beyond the classroom and into the community.

Faulstich, an environmental analysis field group member for over 30 years, believes combining passion with transformation is what makes Pitzer’s environmental education unique.

“Environmental analysis isn’t just about understanding the facts,” said Faulstich. “I don’t know a place that does better than Pitzer in merging intellectual engagement with on-the-ground living.”

Other Branches

Rodman’s vision of sustainability touching almost everything can be seen in other complementary features at Pitzer. These features vary from Pitzer’s LEED-certified residence halls to green roofs to a gym powered by people’s workouts. The Green Bike Program (founded in 2001) promotes cycling and provides free loaner bikes. McConnell Dining Hall participates in community composting. The Pitzer Student Garden hosts workshops in planting, pruning, and caring for the chickens. Pitzer’s roots in sustainability, in other words, have borne a lot of fruit.

Pitzer has also had several firsts in sustainability in higher education. The Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability, founded in 2005 and features collaborative resource management, human and tropical ecology, and more.

The Firestone Center for Restoration Ecology in Costa Rica has provided intercultural explorations of environmental stewardship since 2005 and features collaborative resource management, human and tropical ecology, and more.

The Adelanto Water Justice Coalition joined Pitzer’s Community Engagement Center, Redford Conservancy, Department of Natural Sciences (Keck Science), and CASA Pitzer to collaborate in science and activism with students, faculty, and local partners about water quality in the city of Adelanto.

Of course, the greenest jewel in Pitzer’s sustainability crown is the Redford Conservancy. The Conservancy advanced environmental justice in the Inland Empire through mapping warehouse growth, climate adaptation planning, academics, and other initiatives (more on the Conservancy, see the profile on p. 30).

The Future

Despite the increased attention that many higher education institutions are paying to climate change, there is room for these schools to do more. At Pitzer, the challenge has been keeping up the momentum. As they demand change, students are playing an important part in this momentum. Last fall, for example, in Professor Barbara Junisbai’s Organizational Theory class, students produced a podcast sharing student activists’ assessment of environmental education at Pitzer and how the College should do more.

For Faulstich, keeping up momentum shouldn’t be a problem. The beauty of sustainability efforts at Pitzer is that they are not limited to one building or major. Every innovation made for greener living and learning is a new leaf sprouting forth, reaching for a brighter and more resilient world.

“What sustainability means in a practical way is being a leader with visionary environmentalism,” said Faulstich. “I do think that Pitzer is that. It is fostering an awareness of environmental concerns that all students are exposed to and are able to translate from awareness into action.”

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Check out the Environmental Sustainability timeline: www.pitzer.edu/timeline/environmental-sustainability/
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Fast-forward to 2023. I never expected to see images on the news of my hometown covered in orange-gray haze from wildfires burning in Canada. It didn’t seem possible that the smoky skies I’d experienced at Pitzer could ever happen there. Our planet is on fire. It’s not an overstatement to say that. There are relative pockets of safety and calm, but in reality, a socio-ecological crisis is surrounding us everywhere.

Our students understand that. If only that was the sole thing they had to worry about. But today they’re confronted by so many issues: absurd U.S. politics, the explosion of surveillance capitalism, AI, and crushing student debt with relief that was stopped by the Supreme Court. That isn’t all: There are floods in Pakistan and heat domes in the Pacific Northwest; melting sea ice; the sixth mass extinction (which is being caused by human activity); wars raging in Yemen, Sudan, Ukraine, and Gaza; and hundreds of thousands of climate refugees fleeing drought and crop failure as emissions calculators and carbon concentration meters tick up.

An Uphill Battle

When I talk to Pitzer students now, it’s clear that being a socially responsible, critical thinker today can be overwhelming for them. It doesn’t surprise me.

And yet, sitting in my office at Pitzer’s Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability and watching the sage grow and listening to the bees hum and birds chirp, I feel a terrible cognitive dissonance. It’s something that I share with so many in The Claremont Colleges community. Life can be beautiful here. It grows slowly and regenerates. We are here in Claremont to share knowledge and plan for our future, but what awaits us beyond the safety of this moment? I’ve been working since I was in high school to create spaces for solution making, but sometimes it feels like an uphill battle.

Our students are not immune to this upsetting reality. They’re facing it in their own way in the Claremont bubble and challenging each other to do something about it. But the rich and powerful seem determined to drag us off a climate cliff regardless of our activism or our science.

Climate Optimism in Challenging Times

To prepare students to engage with environmental complexities, educators must help them find hope in the face of difficult future scenarios.

By ARTHUR LEVINE ’14
Applied Research Fellow, Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability

I n summer 2009, I was drawn to sunny Southern California because it was as far from my hometown of New York City as I could go for school and because of Pitzer’s beautiful campus and core values. I left behind a summer of activism and didn’t consider myself naive when I got to Pitzer—not after spending two years in racial and environmental justice work in the Gulf Coast and working with community gardens and urban farms in New York. But nothing could have prepared me for emerging from my dorm on my second day of college and seeing black skies, a red sun, and falling soot. I expected idyllic California skies, but I was greeted instead with the first of many wildfires I’d experience on the West Coast.

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I’ve had chances to talk with some students about things like the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005), which proposes four future environmental scenarios that are possible for our world. These scenarios are Order from Strength, Global Orchestration, Adapting Mosaic, and Techno Garden. I tell them that it feels like we’re experiencing a perverse hybrid of all four in which nations spend more on militarism, border walls, and surveillance than on climate finance to maintain order; where global orchestration around big issues is facilitated by the United Nations yet co-opted by fossil fuel interests; where AI, renewable energy, and the Internet of Things are at once our best hope for solving complex problems and digging us deeper to the point of no return.

Adaptation is happening, but are we working together or simply vying for top position in a changing geopolitical landscape?

A Thin Veneer of Safety
For anyone on campus, these big questions can seem far from the classrooms or the Grove House. Everything still seems OK here. And yet the veneer of safety and calm isn’t so thick that students can’t see past the citrus grove into a complex and challenging landscape. Even within our regional context, the same global patterns are being replicated. Our little corner of the world is in fact a node in a massive system of diesel emissions and globalized trade and distribution across webs of e-commerce. Students are at once activists pushing for change and consumers driving more mining, industrial processes, shipping, and ultimately the disposal of cheap goods.

We are all tied up in this system. The question is, now that we know we are, what will we do about it?

Southern California’s Inland Empire region, which extends from Claremont to Nevada, reflects the larger world. Our region has some of the most diverse populations and some of the worst air quality and living conditions in the U.S. It is also home to billionaires and infrastructure for Amazon and other Fortune 500 companies to make their profits. Warehouses and truck traffic dominate the soil, water, and air and push aside native plants, animals, and lands. The climate is heating, drought is increasing, and the population is growing, even though the region faces increasing vulnerability.

The Inland Empire gives us a picture of what’s coming for many other communities as the global climate patterns shift toward hotter, dryer ones. It’s also a microcosm of what students will face after college. Whether they stick around, like I have, or go anywhere else, they are likely to encounter similar complexities. At the Redford Conservancy, we are intimately involved in communities outside of the 5Cs because that is where our mission is realized. Our crucial role is connecting our students with the challenging work that’s needed to make changes happen. We show them how opposing the displacement of biodiversity by warehouses, supporting environmental justice struggles, using mapping and data to advocate for community benefits, and participating in regenerative projects like community gardens or agrivoltaics is part of turning despair into action.

Small Steps Still Matter
Our students have avenues to get involved in transitioning to an ecologically sound society. As a member of the Redford Conservancy team and a broader member of the 5Cs community, I feel like this is my biggest contribution to them. When students feel cynical about the future and their contribution, they want to give up. That’s exactly where fossil fuel, big tech, and big pharma want them to be.

The Redford Conservancy may be a small organization in the grand scheme, but we prepare students to avoid falling into this trap. Whether they stick around, or go anywhere else, they are likely to encounter similar complexities. Through all our projects, we are showing them a pathway through despair to the future. If students feel that they can plug in and get to work making the world a better place, that is a victory. It matters. Reminding them how to do this is one of the most important victories we can strive for as educators.

Arthur Levine ’14 is an applied research fellow at Pitzer’s Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability. He has a Master of Science in Regenerative Studies, sits on the advisory boards of Riverside Food Systems Alliance and Agroecology Commons, and is a steering committee member for the Inland Southern California Climate Collaborative.
Rewiring Society’s View of the Environment

Pitzer’s sustainability research efforts are thriving—and one reason is the Robert Redford Conservancy

By LISA BUTTERWORTH

 tucked into a quiet Claremont neighborhood just north of Foothill Boulevard is a nondescript chain link fence set among the houses. The winding driveway it secures leads to a veritable oasis—a recently renovated LEED-certified and zero-energy building on grounds teeming with native plants abuzz with pollinators, the home of the Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability.

“I always say we’re the environmental center of Pitzer,” said Susan A. Phillips, a professor of environmental analysis and the Conservancy’s director since 2020.

Yet much like the fungi studied in the on-site mycology lab, the beneficial impacts of the Conservancy are proliferating throughout the region thanks to strategic collaborations with students, faculty, and community partners.

Warehouses: A Billion-Foot Problem

“The first thing I wanted to do as director was create an animated map of warehouse growth in the Inland Empire, because the 20 years I’ve been at Pitzer College have been absolutely pivotal in terms of the footprint of this industry on the region, just swallowing up land,” Phillips said.

With the help of a student fellow, Graham Brady ’21, the Conservancy created a rudimentary map, published in the Los Angeles Times, which showed warehouses counting for more than a billion square feet in the Inland Empire. The exponentially increasing sprawl has an immense environmental impact in terms of air, noise, and light pollution, disproportionately affecting disadvantaged communities.

Mike McCarthy, an atmospheric scientist fighting a proposed development in his own backyard as a member of Riverside Neighbors Opposing Warehouses, contacted Phillips after seeing the map and partnered with the Conservancy to create a user-friendly app, Warehouse CITY, that visualizes and quantifies the data, making it easily accessible.
“Communities have lived experience that [warehouses are] degrading their quality of life, but they can’t put that into technical language,” McCarthy said. “My goal was to try to enable conversations that include and facilitate community engagement with the public planning process in a way that is not available right now just because of the asymmetry in information and knowledge that’s inherent in the process.”

Now used by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, the tool has helped in litigation cases in both Riverside and Inland Empire counties and supports the work of local groups addressing environmental injustice. It continues to gain traction, and the Conservancy recently applied for a California Environmental Protection Agency grant to create a version for the state’s Central Valley.

An Appeal to the Governor

Phillips, along with representatives from the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, contacted the Attorney General’s Office of the California Air Resources Board and the Air Quality Management District for more information about the tool and the website it provides. The result was a meeting with Rob Bonta, California’s attorney general.

To discussions with developers, city council members, and an upcoming effort has earned the Conservancy a seat at the table, including invitations until the full environmental impact could be ascertained.

Newsom’s office. The report was accompanied by a letter asking the Times Guardian, and the report was sent to California Gov. Gavin Newsom's office. The report was accompanied by a letter asking the governor to declare a halt on the construction of new warehouse space until the full environmental impact could be ascertained.

As of publication, that construction continues, but Phillips said the effort has earned the Conservancy a seat at the table, including invitations to discussions with developers, city council members, and an upcoming meeting with Rob Bonta, California’s attorney general.

“We did this thing that I like to teach and do,” said Phillips, “which is a blend of activism and scholarship.”

A new app tracking warehouse sprawl encourages more “community engagement with the public planning process in a way that is not available right now.”

—Mike McCarthy, atmospheric scientist

Making Farming More Attractive

That ethos guides much of the Conservancy’s work, including its interest in regenerative agriculture. San Bernardino and Riverside counties are losing farmland faster than any other area in California and are in the top 12 counties of the nation in terms of farmland acreage loss, according to a recent report by American Farmland Trust.

“This farmland is this precious asset, it’s part of food security, it’s part of climate resilience, it’s part of ecosystem support and stewardship and we’re paving it over,” said Arthur Levine ’14, a Pitzer grad and a Fellow in Applied Research with the Conservancy who is focused on sustainable agriculture.

One way to address this issue is to make farming more appealing, economically viable, and multifunctional. The Conservancy was recently awarded a $1.8 million grant from the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research to study agrivoltaics—the practice of installing solar panels on farmland over crops. This gives the crops (and farmworkers) shade while preserving water and producing energy.

This three-year project, which will include three-quarter-acre research plots, is the first of its kind in Southern California and will employ the expertise of soil geochemists and microbiologists, crop and climate scientists, as well as students who will be involved in the research.

Dual-use farming—also known as agrivoltaics—pairs solar energy production with agricultural production on the same land. The Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research awarded Pitzer College $1 million to study the impact of pollution on animals and ecosystems in Southern California funded by a gift from Pitzer trustee Harold A. Brown (learn more about that gift on p. 40).

“We're also creating a lot of interactivities to engage people in a learning experience that allows them to think about the data in a way that informs their decision making,” Phillips said. “The dashboard is showing everything together,” Phillips said. “We have an incredible data set to share and [the dashboard] is just giving people access to the data, it’s giving people a taste of what a liberal arts college can do in terms of thinking and situating data in real-world ways that matter for real-world, everyday people.”

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—Susan A. Phillips, director, Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability

Under Threat: Local Habitats

Students are playing a large role in another of the Conservancy’s major projects: an interactive dashboard that looks at the impact of pollution on animals and ecosystems in Southern California funded by a gift from Pitzer trustee Harold A. Brown (learn more about that gift on p. 40).

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She sees the dashboard, which launched this April, being used in advocacy efforts by environmental groups, in planning and development, in an educational capacity for students from kindergarten through college, and by the average person looking to make informed decisions.

“We're also creating a lot of interactivities to engage people in a learning process that we hope will create a paradigm shift in terms of how people view this problem and the urgency of making change,” Phillips said.

For Levine, such efforts demonstrate how even small organizations can produce a larger beneficial effect.

“The Redford Conservancy is small but mighty,” he said. “We have a very ambitious portfolio of things we’re working on. We’re excited to share it, and we’re excited for people who want to be involved.”

With a small staff and 15 student fellows a year, the Conservancy is working to move mountains, or, more specifically, preserve them, while ushering in a change of consciousness in Southern California and beyond.

“What we need is a fundamental rewiring of society, and that’s what we’re interested in at the Conservancy,” Phillips said. “We’re really interested in that big picture.”

Read more about the new Conservancy interactive dashboard and Trustee Brown’s support on p. 40.

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My whole life I’ve worked on little farms. When I was young, my mom sent me to a co-ed overnight camp in Massachusetts, which, to this day, provides the brightest memories when I’m feeling nostalgic about my childhood. I would wake up surrounded by about 25 other sleeping children my age and make breakfast with the other early risers for everybody on the farm. Each day varied, but, as an animal and crop farm, generally we would do farm maintenance and take care of all the sweet animals. We did not have electronics at the farm, so in our spare time we told stories, made crafts, walked the lovely trails on the property, and more. It was idyllic.

When I outgrew camps, I got my farm fix through World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF); I was alone in the big world to gain independence in an agricultural setting. If you haven’t heard of WWOOF, it’s an organization in which people who own farms allow visitors room and board in exchange for farm work.

Last year, during some dreary winter days in Claremont, I allowed myself to dream of the upcoming summer. I feared, though, with all my potential plans, I would finally out-farm myself, and I would be too weary of the early mornings and manual labor.

But that wasn’t the case. In fact, when summer started, my love for the agricultural world grew. In spades! But I never can explain my love for farming without a jumble of praises, so I’ve finally taken the time here to carefully delineate some of the most important experiences and lessons I’ve had.

Waking Up Early

I’ve always been an early riser, but few people rise as early as a farmer. I am never-endingly amazed when I wake up at 6:30 a.m., thinking it must be the middle of the night, and the head farmer has already been up for two hours doing likely the most back-breaking work in recorded history. Eventually, I came to realize that spending time with others resulted in our sleep schedules beginning to align. And when my elder-farmer idol and I started to get up at the same time, I certainly took notice.

Waking when farmers do made me feel like I got an extra day within each existing day. I was able to do more, and it made me realize that prior to this improvement in my circadian rhythm, I could never have made the most of each day because I just wasn’t awake enough to do so.

Along with the ability to add more substance to my days, I also had the opportunity to enjoy life slowly. Waking earlier meant I could eat breakfast leisurely; suddenly I had time to track the leaves outside the window that were whisked away by a spontaneous gust of wind. I sat with the farm dogs and gave them the love and attention they deserved (and begged for). Few things now are as important to me as taking it slowly. Admittedly, in college, it’s hard to slow down. The world is moving so quickly around us, and if we take a step back, we risk being left in the dust. Due to this pressured pace, I value (and do sometimes hate—because I am only human) my long walks to classes at Pomona College that are built into my days. I get to spend 23 minutes listening to the bustle of ever-busy students and watching how different seasons are reflected in the environment around me.

Helping One Another

When living on the farm, possibly the most pivotal culture shock was being asked, “How can I help you?” Hello?! I never expected anyone to just offer themselves up to help me right after finishing all of their chores. And the craziest part is, I started to reciprocate with that question! I’m sure the guilt of feeling like the least kind person on the farm would have gotten to me if I didn’t offer. I truly think that offering up your services to work together in such a beautiful collective effort, even when your own work is finished for the day, is one of the kindest and most rewarding things that a person can do.

The give and take of offering and accepting creates a community that can, and does, rely on each other, creating a community that can, and does, rely on each other, creating a community that can, and does, rely on each other, creating a community that can, and does, rely on each other.

Living Communally

In a college setting, we’re incredibly lucky because we mostly live walking distance from all our peers. Opportunities for such a lifestyle dwindle impressively after and away from college. There is something special about places where you can see your peers at all hours because you get to experience when they’re not performing—when they’re sleepy or stressed or emotional or uncontrollably happy.

Farms provide that environment; typically, in this setting, members of the community will cook together or for one another, take care of anybody who is sick (sometimes with some incredible plant-made remedies), and just generally spend almost every second together.
“The land is what grounds us. We were born on it, and it’s where we’ve lived our whole lives. Working on farms has given me an understanding and appreciation of nature, and all the environmental concerns and issues you hear about every day, in a completely unexpected and intimate way.”

—Wynne Chase ’26

### Talking to Animals, Trees, Bugs, Yourself

As much as I’ve stressed the community on farms, sometimes there are no many people there. Sometimes you work alone and sleep alone and wake up alone. This lifestyle can take some getting used to, but it can be too large. The level of cuts in greenhouse gas emissions that are needed is on a scale that’s just too large.

At the end of each day on one of the farms, I had chicken excrement coating every inch of my shoes and pants. My hands were perpetually dirt-covered, and one day a bird actually thought my hair looked like the most robust journal that I still look back at now and cry while reading.

### Giving Back to Nature

The land is what grounds us. We were born on it, and it’s where we’ve lived our whole lives. Working on farms has given me an understanding and appreciation of nature, and all the environmental concerns and issues you hear about every day, in a completely unexpected and intimate way.

I realized, on a farm in Maine, that my closest friend might be the llama I was trying to win over. He would sway away from me, on the opposite side of the pasture, and mirror my movements like an incredibly adept boxer circling the perimeter of the ring. I finally decided to start talking to him in the way he does with animals you’re trying to befriend.

I used a high, soft voice and reassuring phrases. I didn’t realize that what I really wanted was to talk to somebody. Eventually, as time went on, the llama warmed up (slightly) to me. I giggled (assumably with him) when a chicken flew up and sat on his back. I talked to him a lot; he listened to many speeches about the potential symbiosis of our friendship.

Talking to him made me feel like I had company.

I also talked to myself through the form of journaling. I use my journal mostly as a way to recall the events of my days, instead of a place to describe emotions. I journaled so much during those days, and I found moments every day about what I went from just needing a friend to talk with to having a llama partner who sort of liked me and having a robust journal that I still look back at now and cry while reading.

### Getting Absolutely Disgusting

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If grim predictions about climate change come true, what then? Would Mars serve as a good alternative to Earth? In a new New York Times bestseller, Zach Weinersmith ’93 and Kelly Weinersmith offer a sometimes tongue-in-cheek off-world investigation of these questions. Equipped with charming cartoon illustrations and humorous anecdotes, their book fearlessly probes the ethical and scientific concerns of space settlement. Can you make babies in space? Should corporations govern space settlements? What about war? Their book considers the possibility of human colonization and Mars settlements, and both are daunting options now. The authors don’t rule out life in space, but, as Kirkus Reviews points out, their timeline “is centuries rather than decades” despite the “optimism of SF writers and the current crop of adventurist billionaires.”

2. BREAK AND FLOW: HIP HOP POETICS IN THE AMERICAS (UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA PRESS)

Visiting Assistant Professor of Spanish and Portuguese Charlie Hankin evokes hip hop as a means of empowerment, resistance, and creative expression for rap artists around the world. Hankin draws from song archives and ethnographic fieldwork in Cuba, Brazil, and Haiti to uncover shared Afro-diasporic poetics and transatlantic yearnings. In a recent review, UCLA Professor Adam Bradly says the book “showcases the poetic innovation and political impact of rap artists responding to colonial legacies, present-day political circumstances, and their own aesthetic imperatives.”

3. I LOVE YOU SO MUCH IT’S KILLING US BOTH (SOFT SKULL PRESS)

Set in the suburbs of L.A. and New York City, the debut novel by Mariah Stovall ’19 is an immersive journey into the life and mind of Khalil Oliver, who’s perennially trying to disappear into codependent relationships and the profoundly difficult task of recovery. Kirkus Reviews describes Stovall’s story as “a powerful testimony to the enduring violence of harmful relationships and the profoundly difficult task of recovery.”

4. GRANDMA’S HANDS (TREADMILL PUBLISHING)

In 1971, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame musician Bill Withers wrote the song “Grandma’s Hands” in honor of his maternal grandmother. The heartwarming musical tribute reached No. 18 on the Best-Selling Soul Singles chart and No. 43 on the Billboard Hot 100. Fifty years later, Joel Harper ’93 and Marcia J. Withers ’74 have adapted the song as an illustrated book for children. Harper also recently scribbled another children’s book, "Grandma’s Hands: A Loving and Moving Story for Your Child’s Heart and Soul.”

5. BIRTHING JUSTICE: BLACK WOMEN, PREGNANCY, AND CHILDBIRTH (ROUTLEDGE)

In the second edition of this widely taught staple, editor (with Julia Chavyere Oparah) and Professor of Sociology Alicia Bonaparte offers six new chapters on birthing justice, Black infant health, and other aspects of childbirth in Black communities. Birthing Justice serves as a seminal text for those interested in maternal health care, reproductive justice, health equity, intersectional racial justice, and how to fix a broken maternal care system.

6. THE NEUROSCIENCE OF YOGA AND MEDITATION (SINGING DRAGON)

In this “must-have” for any yogi, Britanny Fai ’19 presents a comprehensive review of scientific research on how yoga and meditation affect the brain. Fai also offers useful tools for lay readers to interpret scientific jargon as well as exploring the current limitations in studying these practices. According to an advance review by physical therapist Kyleigh Mulheyer, Fai’s book is for anyone with an interest in examining “the mind-body connection through an evidence-based, Western lens.”

7. ROOTS OF RESISTANCE: A STORY OF GENDER, RACE, AND LABOR ON THE NORTH COAST OF HONDURAS (UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS)

The treatise by Associate Professor of Chicano/a-Latino/a Transnational Studies Bryan Portillo Villalobos ’96 has been hailed as a first-of-its-kind study of the working-class culture of resistance on the Honduran North Coast and the radical organizing that challenged U.S. capital and foreign intervention at the onset of the Cold War. The book looks at the intersection of gender, race, and place and received the 2021 Sara A. Whaley Prize of the National Women’s Studies Association.

8. CAMILO PESSANHA’S MACAU STORIES (MACANESE PUBLISHING)

Poet Camilo Pessanha is the subject of a new biography by Christopher Chu ’04 and Maggie Hoi. Pessanha was a leading figure in Macao, symbolism on the strength of a single published work, Clipesulas, which appeared six years before his death in 1936. “Pessanha is a relatively well-known person in Macao, but at the same time he’s not,” Chu explained. Their book aims to correct that ambigious situation.

9. DEVIL HOUSE (MACMILLAN)

From bestselling author and musician John Darnielle ’95 comes a gripping novel about murder, truth, artistic obsession, and the dangers of storytelling. Darnielle chronicles the efforts of a true crime author working on an unsolved double homicide with satanic overtones. According to Dwight Garner writing in the New York Times, the book, which is now available in paperback, is “a confident, creepy, and soulful page-turner."
Brown Gift Supports New Interactive Dashboard on Environmental Threats

A digital tool that enables the public to view Southern California environmental and climate data on everything from pollution and food security to habitats and coastal vulnerability was launched this spring with the support of a $100,000 gift from The Eileen and Harold Brown Foundation. Harold A. Brown is a member of the Board of Trustees of Pitzer College. This is the second gift the Browns have given in support of the Conservancy. The gift was used to complete the Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability’s Dashboard Project, which is viewable at socalearth.org. The new data tool—titled “So Cal Earth”—offers an online interactive approach to raising public awareness about the importance of climate first and community-first decision-making in the region.

The dashboard features several mapping and data visualization entry points as well as an “Interactivities” section. Stories, illustrations, and data vividly bring to life the plight and power of many plant and animal species in a format accessible for non-scientists.

As lifelong supporters of environmental awareness efforts, the Browns saw an opportunity to become involved with the Conservancy’s work through this project, which encourages users to think more deeply about the world ways that matter to everyone.

—Redford Conservancy Director Susan A. Phillips

FUND UPDATE

Women of the Sixties Fund Targets Student Emergencies

The Women of the Sixties Endowed Emergency Fund is the new name for an endowment whose purpose is to help students whose families experience a sudden financial change affecting the student’s ability to continue at Pitzer. Pitzer’s Advancement team and the alumnae behind the fund are seeking support in the form of gifts of cash, stock, donor-advised funds, and other planned giving vehicles involving bequests for the fund. Once the endowment is complete, Pitzer sophomores through seniors will be eligible to apply.

For more information, contact Assistant Vice President of Advancement Yulanda Davis-Quarrie at Yulanda.Davis-Quarrie@pitzer.edu.

FUNDRAISING MILESTONE

A Record Season of Giving Thanks to Alumni and Family Support

Pitzer closed 2023 with a record-setting season of giving campaign that marked a major milestone in Pitzer’s recent fundraising history. Funds will be used to help current and future students in three areas: scholarships, internships, and support in the areas of greatest need. Propelled by many alumni and families, along with several special challenges, Pitzer netted more than $1.1 million during the campaign, which started with Giving Tuesday on Nov. 28 and ran through Dec. 31.

In 2022, the Season of Giving campaign raised about $500,000. The 2023 total not only doubled that amount, it also surged past its goal of enlisting 65 donors, reaching 718.

The Pitzer Advancement team attributed its success to a significant number of alumni and families who responded to appeals and contributed during the monthlong campaign. About 46% of Pitzer alumni and 33% of current families gave gifts in support of the campaign. Several special challenges incentivized the Pitzer community to participate. These included the President’s Challenge, which was sponsored by Strom and Isabelle Thacker and promised a gift of $10,000 when 500 donors contributed to the campaign (that goal was reached). A challenge organized by the Board of Trustees resulted in unlocking an additional $175,000. Other successful challenges were issued by the Alumni Board, Family Leadership Council, John and Janie Barman P'16, P'20, and Lape and Alvaro Cardenas P'22.

“A culture of philanthropy is vital to any school’s fundraising efforts,” said Shannon Spaccarotelli, senior director for alumni and family engagement and annual giving. “Our success this year is a strong sign that such a culture is thriving and growing in our community.”

San Manuel Grant Will Enhance Native and Indigenous Outreach

Pitzer College has received a $60,000 grant from the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians in support of the College’s efforts to support Native and Indigenous students and communities through cultural education, archives, oral histories, internship opportunities, and relationships with local tribes. The grant will provide funding to the Native & Indigenous Initiatives at Pitzer College, a program that is housed in the College’s Community Engagement Center (CEC), and to a new oral history project of Pitzer’s CASA (Critical Action & Social Advocacy) community center and community-based research program.

The $60,000 grant, which was awarded last fall, is the latest example of San Manuel’s long history of supporting Pitzer’s efforts to support Native and Indigenous populations.

“Pitzer’s Native Indigenous Initiatives programs align with San Manuel’s giving pillars of ‘inspiring our future through Education’ and ‘Preserving Cultural Traditions,’” said Lynn Valbuena, Chairwoman of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. “It is important to collaborate with local communities in this work, and we are pleased to be able to assist Pitzer on an important initiative that will benefit Native and Indigenous students in this region and beyond.”

GRANT

Inside-Out Program Receives $25,000 to Support Students After Incarceration

Pitzer’s trailblazing effort in the area of prison education has received a boost with a gift of $25,000 from the San Simon Charitable Foundation in support of the Inside-Out Pathway-to-BA program and reentry help for formerly incarcerated students.

The foundation, which creates pathways out of poverty for many individuals and helps to support animal welfare efforts, made the gift to establish the San Simon Foundation Scholarship.

For Director Susan A. Phillips, the completion of this project with the Browns’ support marks an exciting new development for the Conservancy’s educational outreach strategy.

“How this tool is really exciting,” Phillips said. “We have an incredible data set to share with all of Southern California. We’re not just giving people access to the data, we’re giving them a taste of what a liberal arts college can do in terms of thinking and situating data in real-world ways that matter to everyone.”

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By TOM JOHNSON

For Shinara Sunderlal ’17, protecting the environment is personal. In her work for the last two-and-a-half years as education outreach manager for the Billion Oyster Project, she’s spread the word to hundreds of New York City schoolkids about the nonprofit’s goal to reseed the harbor with oysters (that “billion” is no exaggeration) by 2035.

One of the people Sunderlal recently connected with wasn’t a New Yorker, but he evinced an intense interest in the Billion Oyster Project nonetheless—Britain’s Prince William. “I got looped in a couple of days before he visited. It was a visit I came to find out had been in the planning stages for two years,” Sunderlal said.

The prince regularly comes to New York City for the Earthshot Prize, which is a £1 million prize awarded each year to a deserving nonprofit.

“They stumbled across us because they wanted to visit a nonprofit as he was promoting the prince,” she said. “The prince ‘came straight from the airport. Our boat picked him up at JFK and he got off at Governor’s Island in the harbor south of Manhattan. That’s where I received him.”

The prince spent about an hour on the island before being motored up the East River and over to Brooklyn Bridge Park. He was hardly in a spectator’s position; Sunderlal and her colleagues had the prince actually wade into the water to view the oyster reef.

“We put him in waders, and he explored the little critters with some middle-schoolers,” she said. “He left, and here’s the beautiful connection with the environment—that’s what they were doing getting people connected with the environment. I really learned a lot and changed my mind on how I felt about zoos and aquariums.”

Although Sunderlal said she hadn’t visited an aquarium since she was a child and only went for the interview, the job turned out to be a “lucky break.” “I was there through the pandemic, and I didn’t get laid off as most informal educators did during that period.” Soon after, she transitioned to the Billion Oyster Project.

“In addition to restoring the vibrancy of New York Harbor’s oyster population, Sunderlal said the organization wants to connect with a million New Yorkers. “That’s where my job comes in,” she said. “I work with teachers and student audiences as communications manager and event coordinator, mostly K–12, but I also work with pre-K through grad school. My main focus is to train teachers and inspire them to get their students outdoors and figure out what they can be doing on the waterfront.”

New York Harbor was once the U.S. capital for oyster harvesting and was teeming with oyster beds. According to Sunderlal, the beds were functionally extinct until the reseding began. The oysters are a viable keystone species here; they create reefs, which attract a multitude of positive impacts on the city.

“Oysters are very resilient,” she said. “Natural populations were found that we didn’t even reintroduce in places like the Gowanus Canal, which is a toxic superfund site, so go figure!”

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School of Culture, Education, and Human Development.

“The jobs I was getting out of college I was really overqualified for because I had already learned a great deal during my time at Petzer,” she said. “The policy degree wasn’t giving me the recognition I needed in my field, so I ended up going to grad school, which was one-and-a-half years.”

Sunderlal’s first job after grad school was at Wildlife Conservation Society, a global nonprofit, followed by a stint at the New York Aquarium in Brooklyn. “It was pretty structured in the aquarium world,” she said. “They knew what they were doing getting people connected with the environment. I really learned a lot and changed my mind on how I felt about zoos and aquariums.”

As long as there is oxygen and food for them, oysters can survive even in high-nitrogen waters.”

“In my case, it’s just getting students to realize that the harbor exists. Most students don’t think of it—that they live on an island. To let them know of all the life in the harbor and that it’s the healthiest it has been in decades is real-world stuff that they can take part in.”

Looking back on the prince’s visit, Sunderlal said that reporters were everywhere and that she had never been remotely part of something like that. “I was basically in charge of talking about our education work,” she said. “I think they gave me six minutes. The prince seemed like a very genuine guy and good at what he does. He was present and asked insightful questions. It really felt like he was listening. He’s also very tall and kind of looming over you.”

Sunderlal said that her “walk and talk” with Prince William can serve as an object lesson for all of us in connecting with the environment.

“We all get caught up in life and sometimes forget to take pauses,” she said. “Just taking a 20-minute walk outside can affect decisions you might subsequently make for the betterment of our natural world.”

For Sunderlal and the rest of us, that just might be the pearl in the oyster.
New Board Members Demonstrate Expertise in Communications, Education, Entrepreneurship, and Research

Six new members have joined the Alumni Board of Pitzer College, which is tasked with serving and engaging the Pitzer community by fostering lifelong relationships between alumni and the College:

Linda deBaun ’68 worked as a drama and English teacher at Yucaipa High School, retiring after 40 years in 2020. She serves on the board of directors for the Yucaipa-Calimesa Educational Enrichment Foundation. She earned her bachelor’s degree in English literature from Pitzer and went on to earn a master’s in English from Claremont Graduate University in 1972 and a master’s in theater from Cal State Fullerton in 1999.

Susan Warren ’78 has been developing, inspiring, teaching, and directing children and educational research, curriculum, and courses for more than 45 years. In 1980, she co-founded (on Pitzer’s campus) and still directs Project Think, a nonprofit organization committed to supporting and enriching the lives of children through excellence in STEAM—science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math—education. She earned a bachelor’s degree in organizational studies and psychology at Pitzer and holds a doctorate in urban leadership from Claremont Graduate University.

Leeshawn Cradoc Moore ’87 serves as the director of institutional research and assessment at Pitzer. She earned her bachelor’s degree in psychology and Spanish from Pitzer and holds a doctorate in higher education from Claremont Graduate University. She has also served at Pitzer as an associate dean of admission and associate dean of students and is a former director of institutional research at two other institutions.

Meena Duguay ’93 is a 12th grade English teacher at California Online Public Schools. She earned her bachelor’s degree in theater from Pitzer and a master’s degree in teaching and learning from the University of La Verne. She has served as an assistant director of musicals for the Ontario-Montclair School District for the past 14 years and is a current cast member in the children’s television series “Learn With Me,” a project made possible through a collaboration between the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools and PBS affiliate KVCR-TV.

Brandi Redick ’01 is a social media director at Carol H. Williams Advertising, one of the largest, independent, and female-owned communications agencies in the U.S. She earned her bachelor’s degree in English world literature and gender studies from Pitzer and a master’s in education from USC.

Jumane Redway-Upshur ’01 is the founder and executive director of My Black History Calendar and the My-BHC mobile app. He earned his bachelor’s degree in organizational studies and media studies from Pitzer and an MBA in sports marketing and a JD degree from the University of Oregon. He also serves as a community ambassador and social equity partner for the Bay Area-based cannabis company STIIIZY.

Returning to the board this year are Mark A. Cunningham ’89, P’25, who is serving the first year of his two-year term as president; Diana Bob ’02, former board president; Derric J. Johnson ’95, Race and Justice Committee chair; Elijah Pantoja ’18, secretary; Josue Pasillas ’17, Reunion Committee chair; Paolina Cuevas ’20; Kyle K. Dalrymple ’17; Steven Liang ’10; Jai Phillips ’02; and Angela Sanbrano ’75.

A Message From the Alumni Director

Dear Pitzer Alumni,

I am thrilled to share the remarkable progress we’ve made together in my first year as the director of alumni programs. The Alumni Listening Tour— including the regional gatherings — has been at the forefront of our achievements with your stories taking center stage.

Thank you for giving your work, wisdom, and wealth to Pitzer College. Your financial contributions have been the backbone of our success, driving positive changes across the College. Your service to the College as a volunteer has also been critical to our success. Your generosity in all ways ensures that Pitzer remains a beacon of excellence for current and future students.

The Race and Justice Committee, with its commitment to fostering inclusiveness and social justice, has flourished in its first year thanks to your dedication. The Reunion Committee has helped us achieve great results with Alumni Weekend 2024 and will very soon start planning Alumni Weekend 2025. The festivities will take place April 25–27 and will celebrate all class years ending in 0s and 5s.

Here’s to the next chapter of shared success and impactful collaboration!

With immense gratitude,

Justin Baker
Director of Alumni Programs

CLASS NOTES ARE AVAILABLE ONLY VIA THE PRINT ISSUE OF PARTICIPANT.
Carolyn Bergson O’Brien ’71
Psychology

Carolyn O’Brien passed away last October in Natick, Massachusetts, and received 17 honorary degrees.

As a graduate student at Middlebury College, she began a career in the human service field.

After graduation, she married a man who was a social work professor at the University of Vermont.

Her areas of expertise included counseling and personal growth.

During her tenure at Pitzer, she was involved in various community and service projects.

As a small college student, she was a co-founder of the Public Housing Project, a group that advocated for affordable housing for all.

At Pitzer, she also served as a mentor for other students and helped to organize a peer counseling program.

During her time at Pitzer, she also became involved in the local community and participated in various volunteer activities.

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Taking on a Towering Issue

How one alum welds together feminism, environmentalism, and social justice in her art

By MARGUERITE ELLIOT ’71

It’s been an honor to have three of my environmentally themed “Sentinel” sculptures installed at Pitzer. Fifty-plus years ago, I lived in Holden Hall in my freshman and sophomore years, so it is now very fitting that my sculptures are standing on that space, which is now Holden Gardens. When I was an undergraduate, we didn’t have an art department. But being part of The Claremont Colleges still gave us an opportunity to study at other schools in the consortium. At the time, a member of the Scripps faculty was Paul Soldner, one of the great ceramists of the 20th century. His work emerged as ceramics was moving from a craft to an art. I had a chance to study with him.

I soon became enamored by ceramics. The transformation of wet malleable earth into a solid form was life changing. The intense heat of the gas-fired kiln changed the chemistry of the clay and made it rock hard. Today, I work with steel. At 3200 degrees Fahrenheit temperature of my welding torch makes the steel soft and malleable. Remove the heat and, voilà, it’s rock solid again! I was in love with the transformative process.

After graduating, I immersed myself in the feminist art movement in Los Angeles in the early 1970s and created large-scale public installations at prominent locations including City Hall, all of which garnered widespread media coverage. Today, living in Northern California, I’ve become a welder and create large-scale environmentally themed public art. Taking art out of the gallery makes it available to everyone.

The sentinels in Holden Gardens are part of the “Sentinels—Protectors of Wild and Beautiful Places” series. They stand watch and witness what is happening to our environment.

Five years ago, when I was an artist in residence staying in the Arctic Circle in northern Finland, I learned that the Arctic was warming much faster than the rest of the planet. I took a three-day solo drive to the farthest reaches of Finland and Norway. I drove through miles and miles of vast forests, and wildlands. No towns, no other cars, nothing. I can still find a connection between my welding work and my Pitzer experiences. Welding has always been treated as a man’s job. But every time I weld steel, I feel that I’m making a statement. I see it as a feminist act.

“Welding has always been treated as a man’s job. But every time I work with an electric welder, gas torch, and heavy steel, I feel that I’m making a statement. I see it as a feminist act.”

At Pitzer I learned to combine activism with art. And even though I didn’t start welding until much later in my career, I can still find a connection between my welding work and my Pitzer experiences. Welding has always been treated as a man’s job. But every time I weld steel, I feel that I’m making a statement. I see it as a feminist act. Activism and art go hand in hand, and in sculptures like my sentinels, the many kinds of activism that are important to me—feminism, women’s rights, environmental and social justice—have come together thanks to heavy steel, a torch, and the transformative power of fire.

The flame also stands for hope and purification.

Environmental Sustainability: Support for the Annual Fund enables Pitzer to continue its commitment to environmental stewardship and preserving the planet for future generations.

Interpersonal Understanding: Through scholarships, programs, and initiatives, Pitzer promotes intercultural understanding and diversity so that students thrive in an interconnected world.

Interdisciplinary Learning: Your help supports student development of critical thinking skills that transcend boundaries.

Student Engagement: At Pitzer, engagement inside and outside of the classroom provides opportunities for leadership, community service, and meaningful connections.

Social Responsibility: The Pitzer community embraces its responsibility to create positive change in society, championing social justice, equity, and inclusion as fundamental values.

Join us now in preserving and advancing these core values through Pitzer’s Annual Fund. Together, we have the power to nurture and advance these values, ensuring that Pitzer remains a beacon of excellence and innovation.

Visit www.pitzer.edu/give to make your contribution today.

Marguerite Elliot ’71 works on a Medusa Tree sculpture in the same studio where she created her “Sentinel” series.

Strengthen Pitzer’s Core Values With a Gift to the Annual Fund

What five key areas have guided Pitzer since 1963?

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Pitzer College

named a top Fulbright producer for the 15th consecutive year

See page 13 for more!