



FIJI MEDICAL MISSION LEAVES LASTING IMPACT ON LOCALS & STUDENTS

by Ally Romanes

From March 19-29, 23 students and two nursing professors from Pacific Union College traveled to Mana, Fiji, for a medical mission trip. Accompanied by physicians, dentists, and nurse practitioners from Loma Linda University, they treated 271 medical patients, 101 dental patients, and 53 optical patients.

During their 10 days in Mana, the most needed service was dental care. Jeff Joiner, associate professor of nursing and emergency services, shared that their team could have seen twice as many patients in dental appointments as they did. In addition to dental care and exams, PUC students had the opportunity to conduct medical screenings, treat skin infections, and provide eye exams and corrective lens fittings. They also educated and treated over 100 patients with acute and chronic pain and provided home visits to local residents.

Going on this mission trip was a meaningful opportunity for these PUC students. Not only did they witness the impact of their mission of care and service for the people of Mana, but it also changed their

perspective as nurses, teaching them the importance of cultural humility and relationship-centered care, and prompting them to consider their future careers in nursing and global health.

Since returning stateside, PUC student Andrea Kaylie Liwang has had an unbelievable experience that they described as “very eye-opening.” “I believe this experience has impacted me deeply,” she said. “It has inspired me to actively search and volunteer for mission projects such as this one in the future.”

Joiner hopes his students gain satisfaction from these mission trips, especially in remote environments, which he says is a unique experience that not every nurse or healthcare worker encounters in their career. “The opportunity to continue the healing ministry of Christ by providing healing or comfort to all patients, no matter how remote they are, is something satisfying, and I hope it triggers these young nurses to want to do it again!”

While these students chose to spend their spring break volunteering abroad to help change others’ lives, the mission trip also left a lasting impact on them. Through their acts of service, they gained a worthwhile, moving experience, showing how transformative these mission trips are for them and their careers. 🌱



PUC FILM STUDENTS SHINE AT SONSCREEN

by Ally Romanes

From April 9-12, students from the visual arts department at Pacific Union College attended the annual Sonscreen Film Festival in Loma Linda, CA, to celebrate their work with other fellow filmmakers from Adventist colleges and universities. This year, nine films by PUC students were showcased, with one student winning their category and another receiving film funding again.

Senior Kateryna Popravkina featured her film *Albedo* in the dramatic short category, which received financial support last year at Sonscreen through a pitch competition. As the North American Division hosts the festival, they have committed to funding Popravkina again for her film festival run.

Double-major film and communication sophomore student Jacob Capiña won the Special Jury Award for Musical Storytelling for his short film, *Phantom's Lament*. This is the third time that Capiña has been selected for a Jury Award. He also had the opportunity to present two of his other films, *Dying Garden* and *A (Not So Great) Christian Film*.

PUC alumni Josue Hilario, Fabiola Ixcot, Malachi Dyson, and current student Sam Birky showcased their short 16mm black-and-white film, *The Owl Man*. Dyson also presented his films *Onyx: A Narrative EP* and *The Killing Tree*, while alum Javad Karimabadi showed his films, *Father Time* and *Solomon*. PUC student Nils Anderson also had the opportunity to present his film *Untitled Visual Poem*.

"Watching my students create their films out of

thin air over the last year, knowing the dedication and, sometimes, literal blood, sweat, and tears that it took them to bring their films to the big screen, made for a very rewarding experience watching them with the audience at Sonscreen," expressed Professor of Film Melissa Henry Pratt. "There were moments when the audience audibly gasped, talked back, or was visibly moved, which created a tangible lesson in how powerful a medium like film is and what kind of effect they can have on people as filmmakers and artists. Suffice to say, I was very proud!"

PUC students had their classmates' support every step of the way— from writing and starring to directing and editing their films. The department's faculty, staff, and students were a constant pillar as they brought their vision from paper to the big screen, applauding their work and creative process and giving these students the credit they so richly deserve. By presenting films and connecting with other student filmmakers, Henry Pratt hopes her students leave Sonscreen feeling rewarded and inspired to continue their craft. 🍷



PUC PSYCHOLOGY PROFESSOR CONNECTS CLASSROOM AND COMMUNITY

by Marina Maher

Throughout the 2025-2026 academic year, Pacific Union College Assistant Professor of Psychology Libna Arroyo invited guests to her psychology courses to give students real-world experiences through the college's experiential learning opportunities.

For the Child Development class, Professor Arroyo invited two families, one of whom is PUC Assistant Professor of Kinesiology Matt Evans' family, with children under five, to participate in age-appropriate activities with college students during a child development lab.

The Social Psychology course featured a 93-year-old Holocaust survivor, Anita, who was a hidden Jewish child during World War II, and Jonathan Arroyo, a National Association of Veterans Affairs (NAVAC) Board-Certified Chaplain and Air Force Chaplain, who spoke to the students about altruism.

Arroyo invited two families from the community who have adopted children through foster care in California to her Adolescent Psychology class to share their experiences with their children who experience trauma, how they have interacted with professionals who work with their children, such as social workers, school counselors, and teachers, and to provide tips for family interactions in their future careers.

Arranging a panel for the Cultural Diversity course, Asian American and African American faculty and staff from across PUC shared their cultural experiences with students, as well as Jovannah Poor Bear-Adams, a member of the Lakota Tribe from the Iowa-Missouri Conference, which helped open the world to different people with different backgrounds and a safe space to discuss their views on various cultural issues.

In the Psychological Testing course, Dr. Corinne Gomez, a Napa County school psychologist, shared her over 20 years of experience in psychological testing and the duties of a school psychologist at the K-12 levels, exposing students to the field of school psychology.

Lastly, for Physiological Psychology, Arroyo invited Dr. Kahlilia C. Morris-Blanco, an assistant professor in the departments of cell and developmental biology and neurology at the University of Pennsylvania, who shared her research on strokes and answered questions about the path to becoming a neuroscientist working in a research laboratory.

“Learning from other people who are in the field and who have gone through a specific experience brings a rich learning environment for the students,” said Arroyo. “You cannot truly understand the experience until you hear a story from somebody who has lived it firsthand.” 🌱



PUC LAUNCHES A.A. IN HUMANITIES DEGREE

by Ally Romanes

Through the collaborative efforts of those within the School of Arts, Humanities, and Professional Studies, Pacific Union College is thrilled to announce that its new Associate of Arts degree in Humanities has been approved and will officially be open for enrollment in fall 2026.

A highlight of this newly created degree is its flexibility, allowing students to tailor it to their academic schedules. This degree has been carefully designed, from foundational education to specialized humanities, to offer students a two-year structured program that challenges them in cultural literacy and in critical and ethical thinking. Students may also pursue this major as a double major or minor if they are interested in deepening their understanding of the humanities as it relates to their career.

“The program affirms Pacific Union College’s identity as a liberal arts institution, while also serving an important completion and retention function for students whose academic trajectories shift during their time at PUC,” said Milbert Mariano, dean of School of Arts, Humanities, and Professions. “We are responding to the needs of our students who can design and construct their own individualized emphasis (with guidance). This is not a major you would normally see at other Adventist institutions.”

This Humanities degree is just one of the several programs PUC has been working to make available. With over 70 programs already at the college, they continue to work to provide the best higher education by continually enhancing their programs to support students in achieving the best possible education and preparing them for the ever-changing jobs in today’s society. PUC hopes to announce more news as it works to expand its degree offerings. 🌱

For more information about PUC’s Humanities degree, please visit
puc.edu/academics/degrees-programs



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PUC FORWARD NEWTON HALL REMODEL

The Pacific Union College Forward Campaign brings forth necessary change to an important pillar on campus—Newton Hall, a home away from home to generations of men at PUC. The building was historically named after Myron Wallace Newton, a well-respected PUC science and mathematics professor who was esteemed as the “Grand Old Man of Howell Mountain” for his four decades of faithful involvement in academia, music, and several other roles throughout the college.

Today, this men’s dorm serves not only as a residence hall but also as a space for Pioneers to connect, make lifelong memories, and live impactful lives. Newton Hall’s common areas and private facilities are ready for a well-deserved upgrade to continue matching the quality of life students deserve, and to honor M. W. Newton for contributing to the real meaning behind being a PUC Pioneer.



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