

ViewPoint

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PUC'S FILM DEPARTMENT WINS AWARDS & RECEIVES FUNDING AT SONSCREEN

by Ally Romanes

The film department from Pacific Union College had a lot to celebrate at this year's Sonscreen Film Festival at Loma Linda University. From April 3-6, PUC film students presented their work, networked with fellow filmmakers, and returned to campus with awards.

PUC film students Josue Hilario (*A Better View*), Fabiola Ixcot (*What If...*), Alex Parriott (*This is Real*), Nils Anderson (*Decisions*), Jacob Capiña (*Second Self*), and Melaney Klinedinst (*Ego*) showcased their films, alongside alum Melody Park who also presented her film, *The Bard of the Mountain Valley*.

Watching Park's thesis film brought a special moment to the weekend as she spoke about her work with former PUC Chair and Professor Rajeev Sigamoney. "It's an ambitious and heart-warming project," said Melissa Pratt, assistant film professor. "Many in the audience were moved to tears and inspired by her dedication, art, and storytelling."

Capiña won the Special Jury Award for Mise-en-Scene for his film *Second Self*, while Klinedinst received the Special Jury Award for Visual Storytelling for her film *Ego*. For the Pitch Competition, Katya Popravkina came in second place for her film *IT*.

When Popravkina pitched her movie on stage, PUC's film department sat in the front row to cheer her on. "She had worked so hard on her pitch," said Pratt. "It was very rewarding to watch her inhabit that moment on the stage."

Popravkina was awarded \$1,500, with an additional \$3,000 from Sonscreen to go toward her film and contribute to her work. This \$4,500 funding will support the production of her thesis film, *IT*.

"We have a very special group of students," said Pratt. "I felt incredibly proud seeing their work on the screen, hearing their composed and thoughtful responses during the Q&As, and watching them support one another throughout the event." 🍷



Q&A

30 YEARS AT PUC: A REFLECTION WITH DEAN MILBERT MARIANO

by Ally Romanes

From being a professor to an academic dean and now the dean of arts, humanities, and professions, do you have a favorite memory from working those jobs?

As a professor, one of my favorite—and most unexpected—memories was when a student proposed to his girlfriend in my classroom. He left her a note that said, “Meet me at the place where we met,” and transformed the space into a romantic setting with lights and a dinner setup. Moments like that remind you how much life happens in our classrooms.

As a dean, some of my favorite memories have come from board meetings. I’ve come to really value the thoughtful engagement of our board members, many of whom serve as ambassadors and friends of the college.

Your role has evolved over the years. What initiatives or projects are you the most proud of?

I’m proud of growing the Publications Workshop into a meaningful, student-centered event that introduces high school students to storytelling and design. I’m also proud of helping departments like aviation and many others continue to grow and innovate, contributing to the development of several of our master’s programs, and helping many of our programs become more relevant as the higher education landscape continues to evolve.

What are the biggest lessons you’ve learned from your time at PUC? How have they influenced your professional development?

Listen more than you speak. Create space for other people’s ideas. And always lead with clarity and kindness. These lessons have shaped how I mentor, build programs, and work with faculty and students alike.

When you reflect on the last 30 years at PUC, what memories stand out most?

Senior exhibitions, moments of academic breakthrough, and a lot of laughter with colleagues. I’ve also been choked up more than once while calling students’ names at graduation—knowing how far they’ve come and what they’ve sacrificed to get there. Those stories make my heart swell.

What keeps you at PUC?

The potential and the people. While we all (Higher Ed and Adventist Education) have our challenges, I believe this is still a place where new things can take root. I also feel honored to be part of its legacy and the amazing community that surrounds this place. The students keep me grounded, and the faculty keeps me hopeful. 🌱

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PUC HONORS NURSING PROFESSOR NICOLETTE PIAUBERT AS 2025 EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

by Marina Maher



Pacific Union College awarded Assistant Professor of Nursing and Student Success Coordinator Nicolette Piaubert the 2024-2025 Educator of the Year Award during Community on Thursday, May 22. Surrounded by proud faculty members and inspired students,

Piaubert wore a cape commemorating her years of service and her famous million-dollar smile.

Piaubert joined PUC as a family nurse practitioner in 2021, bringing extensive experience in the nursing field. She has always been deeply passionate about nursing, using the opportunity to serve others as a reflection of her love for God.

“My mission as an educator is to create a space where students feel loved, seen, safe, and supported—because when they believe they can succeed, they do,” Piaubert expressed.

Dean of Nursing and Emergency Management Kimberly Dunker proudly spoke about the impressive educational background Piaubert holds, highlighting her dedication to being a partner in her students’ and community’s success.

“The PUC nursing faculty and staff are incredibly proud of Nicolette. She exemplifies the spirit of excellence that drives our program, inspiring both students and colleagues to strive for greatness in healthcare,” Dunker said.

In 2011, Piaubert founded the Gab-Nic Excelsior Nursing Tutoring Center to help struggling students attain nursing degrees by implementing creative educational tools and faith-based instruction. Two years later, she founded The Talented Tenth Highlanders Summer Camp to help serve youth members in underprivileged communities.

Piaubert is also a published author of *Becoming*, *How To Beat a Rigged School System: 13 Steps to 100%*, and *The Light We Are*.

She holds a compassionate attitude inside and outside of the classroom, inspiring students to find who they are in God, “so they can empty themselves of the fear, shame, and negativity that hinders their learning, and step into the fullness of who they are called to be.” Piaubert believes that nurturing the spirit alongside the mind is when transformation happens.

“I’m grateful for this recognition and even more grateful for the students and colleagues who make the work meaningful every single day.” 🌱



PUC ESTABLISHES MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION ONLINE PROGRAM

by Ally Romanes

Pacific Union College is proud to announce a new online Master of Arts in Communication program.

Tara Hargrove, PUC chair of the Departments of Communication and World Languages, is excited about this new degree program. “I am especially looking forward to possible collaborations with other departments, institutions, and organizations,” she said. “Courses are designed by industry professionals and faculty to include real-world experiences and applications, including a study tour experience—location pending! I love that this program is asynchronous and accessible for a wider range of students to add to their skill sets.”

The degree has three emphases: Communication Research, Strategic Communication, and Health Communication. The program also offers four certificates that can be stacked or taken individually: Communication Research, Strategic Communication, Health Communication, and Communication.

The program is for working professionals who want practical skills in digital communication, media strategy, leadership, and analytics. It equips graduates to excel in dynamic communication roles across industries, including healthcare and denominational employment.

Dean of the School of Arts, Humanities, and Professions Milbert Mariano said this new online program means PUC can reach students beyond campus. “We are adding to our list of online graduate programs providing much-needed training for busy professionals who want to advance their careers through master’s degrees,” he said. “It also means we can collaborate with our MBA program to introduce a new MBA Emphasis in Strategic Communication.”

The MA in Communication joins the four other online degrees PUC offers. For Information on the master’s and online degrees, visit puc.edu/academics. 🌱



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