

## CONVERSATION

The Music Club performed their second "PUC on Broadway" showcase. Learn about what it was like behind the scenes.

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## CAMPUS

Six freshmen in the 2023 Frontiers class brought new charging stations to campus. Hear how they turned a pitch into reality.

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## THE ARTS

Our film critic Keegan Malan reviewed the 2023 film "Society of the Snow." Read his analysis of the film's merits and its message.

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# Academy Basketball Tournament Breaks Records, Builds Bonds



PUC Prep Senior Sarah Mendoza is celebrated by junior Morgan Kendall after a successful shot.

## By Charlie Kefalos & Colin Russ

From Wednesday, Jan. 24 to Saturday, Jan. 27, PUC hosted 17 academies and prep schools from across the nation in the 2024 Pioneers Invitational Academy Basketball Tournament. It was the biggest turnout in the history of the tournament, with over 400 student-athletes in attendance, alongside families, fans and coaches.

The substantial turnout necessitated adjustments to the typical format of the

tournament, according to PUC Prep Athletic Director Matthew Lee. Rather than organizing teams into multiple pools and gradually merging them into a single bracket, this year the 32 boys and girls teams competed in single brackets from the get-go. Over the course of four days, each team was guaranteed an opportunity to play at least four games.

A three-point shooting contest on Friday and an awards ceremony on Saturday

complemented the programming and ensured plenty of opportunities to celebrate teams and players that did not place in the tournament.

The PUC Prep Falcons took second place in the boys bracket, falling to a Napa Christian Knights team that had dominated the competition. The Newbury Park Gators came in third, cruising to victory against the Rio Lindo Spartans. On the girls side, the Loma Linda Roadrunners narrowly

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Hey PUC,

I have this beautiful fireplace in my living room that I've been learning to use this winter. Some of you may laugh, but it's been a bit of a steep curve for this lifelong Southerner. My first few fires (and indeed, at least one of my last few fires) simply went up in smoke, the blasted rain keeps soaking my woodpile, and I once accidentally used an important document as kindling (a lateral move from "the dog ate my homework"). I singed holes in my carpet, and I inhaled so much soot that it turned my boogers black. I'm starting to get the hang of it now — how to stack the wood without suffocating the flame, how to preserve the hot coals to reignite the blaze. Most importantly, I'm learning how not to get burned.

Like that fireplace, there's something about the start of winter quarter that can make me feel a little like a failure. I don't know if it's the long nights, the gloomy weather, the holiday comedown or simply the fact that February feels so far away from both the beginning and the end of the

school year, but motivation can be hard to come by. I know I'm not the only one who has made some mistakes in this new year.

But someone once told me that it's best to fail as fast as you can, so that you can begin to improve just as quickly, and to try not to make the same mistake twice. In this issue, we present stories about people who stumbled, who struggled, whose plans didn't always pan out. They persevered, and they learned from their mistakes — sometimes, they even surprised themselves. My hope is that you, too, can forgive yourself for your failures this quarter and put them behind you. Wear your burns proudly, not only as cool scars but as lessons. And always keep a fire extinguisher handy, just in case you fail in a big way. Trust me — that's a mistake you'll only make once.

*Cheers,  
Charlie Kefalos  
Editor-in-Chief*



## CONVERSATION

# PUC Music Students Take to the Stage



Tessa Hutzkal as Flounder and Jalexis Herman, Abby Mayan, Paw Ka Du, Kaitlyn Nakanishi and Leila Beltran as the Mersisters in "She's in Love" from "The Little Mermaid."

**By Charlie Kefalos**

On Saturday, Feb. 3 and Sunday, Feb. 4, the PUC Music Club took over St. Helena High School's stage to exhibit the second annual "PUC on Broadway" showcase. Student singers and dancers organized to perform some of their favorite Broadway hits, showing off their skills and collecting donations for the music club. Admission was free, and attendees braved strong winds

and heavy rainfall to take advantage of the opportunity.

Co-directors Leila Beltran and Kaitlyn Nakanishi guided a cast of 23 through 16 songs in two acts, presenting a mixture of ensemble numbers and solo performances. Songs were drawn mostly from popular contemporary shows like "Hamilton" and "Waitress," but a few classics, such as "Show Off" from "The Drowsy Chaperone,"

rounded out the program. The co-directors each arranged a medley — Nakanishi drew from "The Greatest Showman," while Beltran chose "Hadestown" to mash up — that opened and closed the show, respectively.

**"Broadway is community,  
Broadway is connections ... You  
feel less alone, because someone  
has felt the same way you feel  
and put it into words."**

Nakanishi also choreographed the entire program. Performances were accompanied on the piano alternately by junior Mika Palitang and by music professor Ronnie Zanella. Various students assisted behind the scenes, including Olivia Brown, who received special thanks for learning stage management specifically for this show, and Hannah Mauth, who did all the performers' makeup.

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## COMMUNITY

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defeated Rio Lindo 45-42 to take home the trophy, with Hawaiian Mission Academy rounding out the podium in third place.

“We played well the first three games, but in the championship we did not display all the growth we achieved,” said Samuel Alaniz, a senior at PUC Prep. “But overall it was a great experience.”

“I think it was a good experience to get better at basketball, and ultimately these games helped our team development,” added Isaac Diaz, also a senior on the PUC Prep boys team.



**PUC Prep sophomore Grayson Chaffee evades two Escondido Hawks defenders with a jump shot.**

The tournament brought immense energy and activity to a campus that is often sleepy during the winter quarter. At times, games took place on all three courts simultaneously, requiring intense concentration from players and organizers, as it could be difficult even for spectators to be sure where buzzers and whistles were sounding from. The level of coordination required to bring an event as complex as this to life was often daunting for those in charge.

“It is a lot of work on the Prep side and on the college side just to make it all happen, to bring 400 people onto campus for a few days,” said Lee.

Hernan Granados, PUC’s athletic director and a key contributor to the organization of the tournament, was surprised by how smoothly the tournament ran.



**A defender gets tangled up with PUC Prep senior Sarah Mendoza.**

“I feel like, in spite of all the things that are going on that are new, everything’s working out well,” he said, “and that says what a great team we have. We’re all working together as one unit. Between enrollment, Prep and PUC Athletics, I think they’ve all been working together really well.”

While Lee spearheaded the creation of the bracket and assumed the leading role in the tournament, Granados provided support by ensuring that logistics like student workers, scoreboards, player statistics and bleacher set-up and tear-down were taken care of.

**“... it’s a tournament and they’re here for basketball, but they also want to connect and to talk to somebody about the college experience.”**

The Howell Mountain Pathfinders also showed their support by running concession stands as a fundraiser, where they prepared nachos, tacos and hot chocolate for attendees.

“It was very involved, and PUC and

everyone made an effort and made it enjoyable,” said Kaleigh Lemmond, a junior at PUC Prep.

Many of the players and attendees cited this community-building opportunity as a crucial element of the tournament’s purpose. Meeting fellow student-athletes in healthy competition, from Monterey Bay all the way to Maine, produced a unique and exciting camaraderie between young members of the Adventist community. Opponents helped each other up after collisions, and groups of traveling students took to exploring the PUC campus together.

“Our kids wanted to get to know other kids,” said Lee, “and on PUC’s side, they want to bring kids on campus to see what a great campus it is. It’s a benefit for both PUC and for Prep.”

“The PUC basketball tournament was a great opportunity to connect with other schools and play new teams,” said Megan Eckhart, a senior member of the PUC Prep girls team. “This year especially, there were a lot of new schools who came to the tournament and I really enjoyed playing them.”

PUC students and faculty also participated

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**CAMPUS**

# PUC In Charge: Frontiers Freshmen Innovate

By Colin Russ

At PUC, we can all be in charge, whether it's grabbing a snack at the Grind, studying in the library or simply living in places like Newton or Winning Hall. Now, thanks to six freshmen students, we can stay charged, too, with 13 new device charging stations rolling out in key locations across campus.

The chargers took the top prize in the 2023 Frontiers pitch contest, a TED-Talk-meets-“Shark Tank”-style project that challenges students to develop and present ideas for improving life on campus. The goal is to design a pitch that aligns with the WISDOM standards introduced in the class: wholeness, integrity, service, diversity, our Adventist heritage and maintenance of lifelong goals. The class votes after the presentations, and \$500 is allotted to fund the concept that wins the most votes.

For their pitch, students Paulina Lozano, Danielle Tarango, Valeria Perez, June Eo, Mickyas Beyene and Ranz Carvajal identified a common issue — running out of battery on their devices, and having nowhere to charge them. The group saw this issue as more than just an inconvenience to brainstorming; it was a hindrance, keeping students apart and presenting an obstacle to academic focus.

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**“The charging stations bring us together and help us work better.”**

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After brainstorming, they unanimously agreed. Charging stations were the way to go. They are everywhere in the outside world, so why not bring them onto campus?

“Group Eight,” as the students became known, framed their pitch around the ideas of service and integrity. They believed having charging stations would make it easier for everyone to stay connected and relieve a little bit of stress. Nevertheless, the group was still concerned that their proposal might not resonate with everyone.

“I was surprised when our pitch got selected,” recalled Eo.

Academic Dean Lindsay Hayasaka, who



The Grind is one of the places where charging stations have appeared.

taught the 2023 Frontiers class, knew that the idea had legs.

“All of the supervisors were really surprised and could absolutely see the benefit of these in shared spaces,” she said.

It was easy for the group to find the chargers they were looking for online. “They are easy to find,” Eo reported, “and [easy to] distribute around campus.”

And just like that, with the stations ready to go, the next step was implementation. When the stations were finally installed, it was an electrifying moment. Now, students can charge up their devices in heavily populated spots like the Grind, the library and the dorms at ease. It was a game-changer, and students were quick to express their gratitude.

“It’s so much easier now to keep my phone charged between classes,” remarked one student.

“The charging stations bring us together and help us work better,” agreed Hayasaka.

Now in its second year, Frontiers is a college-readiness course offered in the fall to incoming freshmen. The focus of the class is building community and unlocking the potential of the college experience.

“Part of college success is community,” emphasized Dean Milbert Mariano, the original champion of the Frontiers class.

The chargers are the second project to come out of Frontiers. The year prior, the winning pitch resulted in complimentary

umbrellas that were purchased and placed throughout campus for student convenience.

Reflecting on their journey, Group Eight felt a sense of pride. They realized that their project wasn’t just about charging stations — it was about elevating campus life and energizing the community.

Students at PUC will continue to explore new frontiers of community and service, reminding us of the importance of teamwork and innovation. The charging stations aren’t just about powering devices. They’re about powering connections and making campus life better for everyone.

Through their project, the students not only addressed a practical need but also nurtured a culture of collaboration and responsibility among their peers. As PUC evolves, initiatives like this serve as reminders of the collective impact that students — yes, even freshmen — can have when they come together with a shared purpose. Take charge, Pioneers! ■



The three deans Aimee Wyrick, Kimberly Dunker and Milbert Mariano observe the Frontiers pitches.

**CONVERSATION**

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The cast and crew of “PUC on Broadway” on stage at a rehearsal.

The showcase took place in the auditorium at St. Helena High School, atop the set the school has constructed for their upcoming production of “Grease.” The cast made the most of the half-built set behind them, creatively utilizing curtains and scrims to delineate different spaces. During the performance of “Travel Song” from “Shrek the Musical,” Jai Almaraz and Milton Perez even brought the show down off the stage and into the delighted audience.

Over 100 guests attended opening night on Saturday, with an additional 120 watching the performance via livestream. They brought an unexpected energy and enthusiasm, creating an atmosphere that was, according to Beltran, “a little chaotic.”

“We actually started early,” she said, an unusual feat in the world of stage productions. “All of us were nervously ready on stage at 6:50 p.m., and our stage manager saw us there and just raised the curtain ... One person was in the bathroom, and they missed the whole first number!”

Beltran thought that the second performance ran a little more smoothly but felt that audience turnout was greatly affected by the strong storms that swept through the valley on Sunday. Those who weathered the wind and rain were rewarded with a slightly more polished production.

Nakanishi developed the “PUC on Broadway” showcase last year, intending it as a light-hearted counterpart to the mature themes portrayed in the spring production of “Jericho Road.” However, the once “silly” showcase seems to be gaining serious momentum, as more students auditioned this year than last.

The organizers encouraged anyone and everyone to audition, an approach that attracted several first-time performers like Almaraz, as well as several freshmen. Freshman Samuel Camacho, who, according to Beltran, “dropped out of the sky” to take part, dazzled in the leading roles of Aaron Burr from “Hamilton” and Orpheus in “Hadestown.”

The co-directors compiled the program from a mixture of their favorite numbers, songs suggested by the performers and songs picked to match specific performers who auditioned. The discovery of “Caitlyn and Haley,” a dueling sisters’ duet from the musical “Edges,” inspired Nakanishi to perform the number with her real-life younger sibling, Natalie.

The music club held auditions for the showcase two weeks before Thanksgiving Break, but according to Beltran, “[t]he real work started when we got back. We had a bootcamp during MLK weekend, and we ran stuff from like 10 in the morning until like 2 or 3 in the afternoon.” Rehearsals took place faithfully, if somewhat erratically, over the next few months.

“Unlike a real production, where you have to have a regimented schedule so you can finish the product on time, we adapt[ed] the schedule to the performers,” Beltran continued. She cited scheduling as the biggest challenge the organizers faced while putting the show together. Difficulties in coordinating rehearsals necessitated creative solutions, like recording and distributing audio guides so that performers could practice their parts at home. But the experience proved an invaluable test

of Beltran and Nakanishi’s capability for leadership and flexibility.

“It’s the same thing with coaching or being a teacher, even; it’s about recognizing how to get everyone to the same spot,” Beltran explained. “It’s just meeting people where they’re at.”

Will the showcase return next year?

“Absolutely!” said Beltran, adding, “[After Nakanishi graduates], the choreography might go from a 10 to a 2, but who knows? Maybe a choreographer will drop out of the sky, too.”

Ultimately, the music is important because of the shared space and acknowledgment that it creates between the performers and the audience.



Mika Palitang as Timon, Jayda Hamilton as Simba, and Natalie Nakanishi as Pumbaa in “Hakuna Matata” from “The Lion King.”

“Broadway is community, Broadway is connections,” Nakanishi said as the company reset between numbers. “You feel less alone, because someone has felt the same way you feel and put it into words.”

But above all else, showcases like “PUC on Broadway” can simply encourage people to try new things. “I liked musicals before, but I wasn’t really a ‘theater kid.’ Now I have Broadway playlists on Spotify!” Beltran said. “I’m excited to take the training I have, and help other people catch the bug.” ■

## CONVERSATION

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by turning out in support of their old schools. Nyllah Safotu, a junior who attended HMA, put together a “spirit squad” of fellow HMA alumni to cheer on her former team with signs and shouts from the sidelines.

“The seniors now were freshmen when I was a senior there, and they’ve come a long way,” Safotu said. “I’m super happy and stoked for them.”

The event even reached members of the PUC community at large, drawing them in from all over the state. Jeni Keszler, a singer and florist who attended PUC from 1997 to 1999, drove from Carmel-by-the-Sea to support a friend’s daughter who plays on the Pine Hills team.

“The gym kind of looks the same,” she joked.

Next year, Granados wants to pour even more resources into developing and maintaining these connections. He recalled hosting visitors from Pine Hills for lunch on the Sabbath and seeing the interactions between parents, academy students, and



PUC Prep junior Andrew Saunders faces off against Escondido Hawks senior Jonathan Lister.

PUC students and faculty.

“Sometimes we forget that yeah, it’s a tournament and they’re here for basketball, but they also want to connect and to talk to somebody about the college experience,” he said. “So connections between high school and college are key, and connections between the [high] schools, too. They’re happy to make friends with someone from Hawaii, with someone from Mile High in Denver ... To create that would be something special.”

Ultimately, the tournament offered something for everyone in attendance, and supplied a send-off to remember for any student-athletes who will soon be leaving their high school years behind.

“I’m so proud of my team and the energy we brought to this tournament,” said Eckhart. “I thought that it was a great way to end my senior basketball season!” ■

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## THE ARTS

## “Society of the Snow” Review: Making a Miracle



Photo of the real survivors.

*Courtesy of Time Magazine.*

## By Keegan Malan

Netflix’s “Society of the Snow” tells the harrowing story of the 1972 Andes flight disaster that left passengers stranded in the South American mountain range for 72 days. There, they had to reside in the remnants of their crashed plane and contend with harsh weather and the threat of starvation. “Society of the Snow” is a triumph — brilliant in every technical aspect. Sure, the film may be about 10 to 15 minutes too long, but otherwise it is perfect in every way, shape and form.

A film like this is truly a special one. Usually, you can tell when a film is going to be good within the first 10 minutes, but rarely do you know a film is going to be great by that time. With “Society of the Snow,” you know this the very second that the plane crashes. The terror you feel is powerful, gripping you and not letting go. And then, like the characters, you are left stranded in the unforgiving conditions of the Andes.

You will never feel colder than when watching this film. The weather is itself a character; it comes and goes, but the

threat of it always looms large over the film, sometimes confining the survivors to their wrecked plane. Consequently, the claustrophobia becomes immense. The characters may be free to walk about, yet this does not alleviate the feeling that there is nowhere to go, because there is nowhere to go. From start to finish, you are, like the characters, held in the environment’s cruel hand.

And perhaps most importantly, the ensemble cast is superb. Each actor conveys the growing sense of despair and hardship and the will to live that drives them through it all. There are a lot of characters — sometimes you might find yourself forgetting their names, but that is not a problem, for it does not matter. The film is more about the human will and drive than it is about these characters and their backstories — not the kind of will or drive in “Rocky” or any other similar film, the drive to succeed or to prove something. The drive here is simply the drive to continue on in the face of adversity. These characters do not conquer the environment (for it is

unconquerable), nor do they prove anything to themselves. They simply want to live and they will themselves to live, resorting to terrible means in order to do so. Eventually, that will seem to pay off in the form of a “miracle.”

“Society of the Snow” poses the question of what, exactly, a miracle is. That word gets thrown around a lot and has always been associated with the Andes disaster. But the characters themselves do not see what happened as a miracle. “What miracle?” one of the characters even responds, when told by his own mother that the rescue was one. That is because the term “miracle” seems to imply a force beyond oneself — divine intervention, if you will — that imposes and exerts its own will on events.

The characters do not subscribe to this. Instead, they believe that the only reason they did survive was through their own will and friendship. But maybe that in itself is the miracle. Maybe miracles can happen, not with divine intervention alone, but also with action. Was it a miracle they survived so long? Maybe, maybe not. Was it a miracle they found help the way they did? Maybe, maybe not. Why can’t it be both? Maybe that is the way miracles happen most of the time and we just cannot see it because we think that we had to do something for it to happen. Maybe the human will is itself a miracle, a will that drove these people to simply live, to survive. And maybe everything accomplished in the film is a miracle: the will, the human spirit, the brotherhood, the love. All of that which sticks with you by the film’s end, all in the face of insurmountable adversity and despair; all of that which the characters experienced more so than any of us possibly could unless we ourselves were in such a situation — all of it grew and remained. The miracle, then, of “Society of the Snow” is the human spirit, divinely touched. ■

**CALLING  
ALL ARTISTS!**

Showcase your art in the Campus Chronicle. Now accepting submissions in graphic design, visual art, photography, poetry and flash fiction (~500 words). Hybrid pieces are also welcome! Send us your best work for a chance to share your creativity.

Instagram: [@pucchronicle](#) | Email: [chderr@puc.edu](mailto:chderr@puc.edu)

## UPDATES

### JOB OPENINGS

The **Custodial Department** is hiring students to help set up chairs for graduation in June. Pay is **\$17.00/hour**, and hours are flexible. If interested, please contact Jonathan Aguilar — [joaguilar@puc.edu](mailto:joaguilar@puc.edu).

### QUICKSILVER

**Quicksilver**, PUC's student-run literary magazine, is now accepting submissions in the genres of fiction, poetry, painting, photography, graphic design and mixed media. Hybrid works are also welcome. Please send your best work and a short bio to [chderr@puc.edu](mailto:chderr@puc.edu) to be considered for publication.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Bad Poetry Night**  
Friday, Feb. 16 at 4 p.m.  
Alice Holst Theater

**Gallery Opening**  
"More Than Here"  
Saturday, Feb. 17 at 6 p.m.  
Rasmussen Art Gallery

**Spirit Week**  
Monday, Feb. 19 through  
Friday, Feb. 23

**Men's Volleyball vs. Park-Gilbert**  
Thursday, Feb. 22 at 6 p.m. in the Gym

**Winter College Days**  
Friday, Feb. 23 through  
Monday, Feb. 26

**Paulin Center for the Arts**  
"Think Spring" Recital  
Sunday, Feb. 25 at 12 p.m. and 2 p.m.  
Paulin Recital Hall

### FIND THE ANSWER, WIN FREE COFFEE



Find the answer hidden somewhere in the paper. The first person to DM us on Instagram @pucchronicle will win a free drink at the Grind!

This week's question is:  
**When did the Music Club hold auditions for "PUC on Broadway?"**

### PITCH IT!



Are you taking a class that more students should know about? Have an idea for a campus story that must be discussed? Make your voice heard in the PUC community — send your pitch to the *Campus Chronicle*! Contributing writers are always compensated for their work and receive a publication credit in the issue.