



PACIFICA
GRADUATE INSTITUTE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

INSTITUTIONAL UPDATES – FEBRUARY 2024

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Dear Pacifica Community,

As February unfolds, a month filled with the celebrations of Valentine's Day and Black History Month, we are reminded of the diverse expressions of love and resilience that have shaped our nation. In honor of the remarkable strength and enduring resilience demonstrated by our Black community members across generations, from the past to the present, I invite you to explore our website's rich tapestry of stories, achievements, and contributions of our Black students, alumni, and faculty. Their voices and experiences are integral to the fabric of our institution and serve as sources of inspiration for us all. Join us in celebrating Black History Month by learning more about their impactful work and the enduring legacy they continue to build.

Looking back at the recent atmospheric river that swept through Santa Barbara is a powerful reminder of nature's ability to reshape our environment profoundly. As many in our region worked to protect their homes or find alternative shelter, memories of the 2018 Santa Barbara mudslides were reignited, underscoring the unpredictable nature of our surroundings. While this experience is specific to our area, it reflects a universal human challenge: the need to confront and adapt to life's uncertainties.

Despite the many advancements of our society, these events encourage us to reflect on the same question our ancestors did: Will we survive the darkest night, the awesome and sometimes violent force of nature? Life's ongoing cycles of change and renewal suggest that the challenges we face, like the winter storms, can be interpreted as metaphors for the personal and collective transformations that are part of the human experience. They invite us to consider deeply the values of care, connection, and community.

Pacifica's evolution, transformation, and growth are a constant reminder of the critical need to embrace change and cultivate personal development and community enrichment. Our response to life's challenges—marked by mindfulness, empathy, and a readiness to learn—reflects the strength of the connections that support us through all of life's seasons. I call on each of us to recommit to uplifting and cherishing one another, creating a space where all share inclusion, respect, and recognition.

With another storm forecasted for Santa Barbara this weekend and early next week, let us take a moment to appreciate the serene beauty of today. Looking out at the Pacific Ocean, shining in the sun's soft glow, it hits me: It's time to stop for a moment, breathe deeply, and just be here together. I invite you to join me in this moment of reflection to appreciate the beauty that surrounds us and the strength and unity it symbolizes for our community.

Progressing into 2024, energized by insightful discussions with the Board of Trustees, the inaugural "Breaking Bread with Dr. Lee" sessions, and with so much great progress across all areas of the Institute, I am eager to share the latest updates from our vibrant community with you.

Academic News

2024 is a significant year in Pacifica's relationship with our primary accreditor, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), as we reaffirm our accreditation. The first step was the submission of our Institutional Report at the end of January, and we are now preparing for an off-site review with their visiting committee in April, followed by an on-campus visit in October. Thanks to so many who contributed to a successful report, particularly our accreditation steering committee led by Dr. Loraine Devos-Comby (VP of Academic Affairs, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness & Accreditation Liaison Officer), Lauren Lastra (Director of Student Services & Accreditation Deputy), and Vanessa Conte (Institutional Effectiveness Associate). We will continue to update the community on this process as we progress.

Winter quarter also marks the final quarter of coursework for many Pacifica students, including those third year cohorts from the MA Counseling tracks and students in the DJA and DCH tracks. Depth & Creativity (DCH) program students recently delivered graduation presentations, and MA Counseling students are preparing for final session rituals and celebrations, as well as upcoming thesis presentations. To all these students closing out their time on campus as cohorts in residential sessions, may this time be a meaningful and soulful culmination of your studies and time together.

It is hard to believe, but our 2024 commencement is approaching. Commencement will again be held on Saturday of Memorial Day (May 25) at the Hilton Santa Barbara. Students eligible to attend and walk at commencement as graduates will soon receive an invitation from our Registrar's Office, and official information about commencement can be found on our [Commencement webpage](#), with more updates to come.

Our Pacifica Extension programming continues to offer rich and engaging content to the public and Pacifica community. Following the success of December's joint conference with the IAAP on Psychedelics and Individuation, Pacifica Extension recently started

another enrollment in its popular Eco-psychology certificate. Other upcoming certificates include memoir writing, Archetypal Astrology, Applied Mythology, and Eco-therapy. To read more about certificate programs, Lunchtime Learning Series and other Pacifica Extension offerings, including discounts/scholarships for staff, faculty, students, and alumni, visit: <https://retreat.pacifica.edu/>. For more insight about the December conference on [Psychedelics and Individuation, you can read a recent interview with Monica Gangwar](#), a first-year student in the Counseling program, who was one of four students awarded a scholarship.

Student and Employee Support & Wellness

I was pleased to engage in a recent conversation with two of our program chairs, Dr. Juliet Rohde-Brown (DPT) and Dr. Dylan Hoffman (DJA), on the topic of employee burnout from the depth perspective. You can read this two-part interview here: [Part I](#) and [Part II](#).

In January, we spotlighted the work of two students in our DPT program for healing work they are doing in their communities: [Grace Hiu Phong \(Human Trafficking Prevention Month\)](#) and [Lindsay Fautleroy \(Mental Wellness Month\)](#).

As we continue to expand our support offerings for students, we recently piloted a new program to enhance resources and structures for our students in their dissertation phase. Thirty-seven students recently completed the Dissertation Success Curriculum through NCFDD and a new space for forums and live meetings housed on D2L, our learning management system.

Let us all continue to stay mindful of our physical wellness. Our campuses have not been immune to the recent cold, flu, and COVID season spiking. We have a few reminders for the health and wellness of our community. We must continue to maintain a strong focus on cultivating a culture of care, safety, and respect for our peers, and we ask that everyone do their part to help protect themselves and others. Please see our updated webpage regarding [illness and COVID-19 guidance](#). If you have questions regarding this information, please get in touch with safety@pacifica.edu.

Institutional Health

Pacifica has seen healthy enrollment for this 2023-2024 academic year, with a 5.2% increase from fall 2022 to fall 2023 quarters and a 32% improvement in first-year student retention. Continuing to see strong cohorts that stay together across their time greatly adds to the educational experience, and we appreciate the commitment of our students, faculty, and staff to one another and our work together.

On February 1, we hosted a virtual Pacifica Experience Day with over 100 prospective students in attendance for the main session, breakout groups with faculty, and a Student Services panel. Along with our Interim Provost, Dr. Loraine Devos-Comby; our VP of People, Culture, and Belonging, Dr. Anselmo Villanueva; and recent DPT alum, Dr. Winsome Alston, I was moved by the opportunity to engage with Pacifica students about the future and what our shared vision for their experiences, goals, and campus culture would look like. Our next Pacifica Experience Day will be on April 5, 2024.

As part of ongoing engagement and transparency, we are planning an upcoming Town Hall to review fiscal, enrollment, and other health indicators of the Institute.

2030 Strategic Plan: Onward Together

Collectively, we work hard to shape that future through several key strategic initiatives. A significant focus has been on formalizing shared governance at Pacifica to aid our decision-making and inclusion of perspectives. We recently developed and approved a Shared Governance Statement outlining our Institute's main structures, commitments, and philosophies around shared governance. We will communicate this in more detail shortly, along with other updates on that process related to institutional committees and a decision matrix.

Other strategic initiatives have also seen significant progress. The recommendations from our faculty compensation and workload study will soon become operationalized through new faculty structures. A similar study is underway for staff compensation and recommendations for the effective design of the organization. The report from our Campus Utilization Study is also in, with recommendations currently under review for how we can better utilize our campus space for learning, calendar usage, work environment, and future planning. I extend appreciation to the literal hundreds of you who have engaged in these processes in some fashion over the previous months.

The November Retreat with the Board of Trustees was spent in dialog on the latest institutional progress and strategizing on our future. We were pleased to have representatives from across leadership, staff and faculty there to share their perspectives. There was also time to share how we and members of the Board felt they contributed positively to Pacifica over the past year. You can view a compilation the Board put together of those responses [here](#).

Regional Engagements

A critical aspect of my role as President and CEO is building positive relationships in the outside community that serve Pacifica's mission and future vision. Last month, I was pleased to teach a workshop at Saybrook University in their Department of Humanistic Clinical Psychology. I also recently published an article in *Forbes* on a [Depth Psychological Approach to Transforming Higher Education](#).

Inside our community, I enjoyed the launch of the "Breaking Bread with Dr. Lee" series, having now had a chance to host sessions with students, staff, faculty and alumni. This monthly time together serves as a form of "office hours," where community members are free to join and participate as they wish to share their dreams, viewpoints, stories, and unique perspectives. I enjoyed getting to know many of you better and appreciate the openness you brought to these sessions. Please look for the monthly invites as we continue this monthly time together.

Pacifica SOUL Promise

In the first half of 2024, our efforts will concentrate on securing a mix of donations, gifts, and grants from individuals, foundations, and governmental agencies, engaging our community in our vision for transforming mental and behavioral health education and

care. Concurrently, we will advance faculty and student-led research through partnerships such as Boyd Grants, enhancing our academic impact.

By October, we will unveil new graduate certificates that respond to both regional and global demands for mental and behavioral health expertise, enriching our educational offerings with advanced knowledge and skills for professionals. With a [dedicated platform for tax-free contributions](#), we invite collective participation in our mission. We are immensely thankful for the ongoing support from all sectors of our community, united in shaping a future where mental and behavioral health education drives community healing.

BHM posts on Pacifica News

February is Black History Month, and we celebrate those in our community making history with their work. Alisa Orduña, a graduate of our CLIE program, spoke about ["Sacred Gifts to Humanity: The Lived Experience of African Americans" \(two parts\)](#), and Isha Lucas, a second-year student in Depth Psychology with a specialization in Integrative Therapy and Healing Practices, spoke on [her psychotherapy practice and "Woman of Light,"](#) the tarot deck she created.

In the midst of life's storms, let's carry with us the thought that our love is like rain for a thirsty world, essential for nourishing the soul and weaving the bonds of care, connection, and unity. May we tread onward with hope for safety and a deep-seated dedication to the well-being of soul.

Joyfully Serving,



Dr. Leonie H. Mattison, Ed.D, MBA

President and CEO

