



## January/February 2026

### *Message from the Dean*

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome back to the energy and momentum of a new semester. I hope you were all able to find rest and renewal during the break.

I want to acknowledge that many in our community are navigating personal challenges and losses. As always, I encourage everyone to be present for each other, with care, compassion, and grace. A quick conversation standing in someone's office doorway, a shared laugh, a cup of coffee – these small gestures by individuals are what make the CLASS environments supportive and welcoming.

As we began the spring term, there are several highlights that we should also share. We welcomed more than 300 transfer students into our CLASS Bronco family! We opened Room 5-262, a completely renovated space featuring innovative technology designed to support collaborative student learning. And of course, the kudos below list all the recognitions and accomplishments of our faculty, staff, and students over the past months remind us of the meaningful contributions happening in our college.

As the days grow longer and warmer, I'm reminded that no two semesters are ever the same, and with each comes new opportunities to grow. Before long, the students we have helped nurture will be crossing the stage in May, stepping forward to pursue their dreams as CLASS alumni while we prepare to welcome a new class to their collegiate home. Until then, we have so much to accomplish together.

As we encourage our students, please take a minute to review the spring syllabus below and put all the events and opportunities on your calendar.

Kind regards,

Cami

## Kudos

### Communication

**Keara Fellers** ('26, Communication), an aspiring entertainment lawyer, engages in friendly banter with [Let's Make a Deal \(S17, E52\)](#) show host Wayne Brady before trying her luck on Winfall mini-game for the chance to win a \$10,000 cash prize.

**Kaia James**, ('27, Communication), was featured in an article on [Local News Pasadena](#) focused on the intersection of rising living costs and minimum wage, pointing out “many young people...surviving on the lowest wages” are especially vulnerable and shouldn’t have to “choose between paying bills and preparing for the future.”

**Victoria Mejicanos** ('25, Communication) was featured in [Time](#) magazine, where she wrote an op-ed about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and shared how the law shaped her development growing up as a child with cerebral palsy.

**Shaina Ostroff**, ('03, Communication) founder of [Reach Public Relations](#), was featured in a Voyage LA Magazine interview titled "Inspiring Conversations," discussing her 20+ year career in public relations, specializing in natural food and healthy lifestyle brands, her leap to start her own agency in 2014, and her passion for helping innovative companies tell their stories. She highlighted her work with brands like Upton's Naturals, Calbee America, and Local Hive Honey, emphasizing her dedication to clients' missions.

**Denisse Vásquez-Guevara**, Communication professor, was recently featured in a [Cal Poly Pomona article](#) celebrating her authentic, student-centered approach to mentorship. From Cuenca to California, Vásquez-Guevara draws on her experience as a decorated professor in Ecuador to foster the supportive, student-first culture CPP is known for, while continuing to publish books, bring Forbes-recognized entrepreneurs to campus, and innovate on social media as she meets students where they are. In addition, Vásquez-Guevara recently published [“Using AI Arts-based Audience Personas for Deepening Audience Analysis Incorporating DEI”](#) in the Journal of Public Relations Education, exploring ethical, multicultural audience analysis and the use of AI-enhanced, arts-based pedagogy in Communication classrooms.

### English and Modern Languages

**Dewey W. Hall**, English professor, published his new [monograph Materialist Romanticism: The Matter of the Marbles](#).

**Valerie Sky**, English & Modern Languages professor, has been selected as one of four honorees for CAFÉ's 2026 Wall of COOL (Celebrating Outstanding Opportunities for Learning), which recognizes exemplary technology-enhanced course development by Cal Poly Pomona faculty. She was honored for her course *ENG 4212: Language Acquisition*.

## Geography and Anthropology

**James J. A. Blair**, Geography and Anthropology professor, appeared in the latest episode of [\*EcoJustice Radio\*](#) alongside CPP colleague Ali Sharbat and several community partners to discuss geothermal lithium development at the Salton Sea, highlighting diverse perspectives on the environmental, social, and regional implications of this emerging industry.

## History

**Fang Yu Hu**, History professor, contributed the entry “Girls’ Education in Japan and Taiwan, History of” to [\*The SAGE Encyclopedia of Education and Gender\*](#), which was published in October 2025 by SAGE Publications.

**Kevin Nasser** ('23, History) was featured in [\*a Denver-area news article\*](#) about his teaching and his efforts in creating an inclusive learning experience for his students.

## Music

**Racquel Chance**, Music department coordinator, completed the Advancing Racial Justice & Cultural Humility Learning Series in Fall 2025.

**Jessie M. Vallejo**, Music professor, was selected for two awards in recent months: the [\*ICTMD Best Article Award\*](#) for scholarship examining the impacts of COVID-19 on Latinx and Mariachi communities, and the California Music Educators Association’s [\*Ernest R. Yee Illuminating Culture Award\*](#), to be presented next month. These recognitions highlight the department’s work and showcase potential career and research pathways for students, particularly those in education and general studies.

## Philosophy

**Alex Madva**, Philosophy professor, is featured across multiple media outlets discussing [\*Somebody Should Do Something\*](#), a book he co-authored that offers a hopeful call to action. A Dec. 7 review in [\*The Conversation\*](#) highlights the book’s argument that individual choices, when connected across communities and systems, can drive meaningful social change, while additional discussions appear on the [\*From Nowhere to Nothing\*](#) podcast (Dec. 12) and [\*The Preamble\*](#) podcast (Dec. 3).

## Political Science

**Jarred Cuellar**, Political Science professor, has been named a [2026 Emerging Scholar](#) by *The EDU Ledger*, a national honor recognizing 15 scholars under 40 for excellence in research, teaching and community service. His [Cal Poly Pomona/Caltech study](#), is cited in a new federal court battle over California's newly voter-approved congressional map under Proposition 50.

## Sociology

**Gabriele Plickert**, Sociology professor, was recently featured in a [CPP news story](#) written by our Fall CLASS Interns (Chazz Escobedo, '25, Communication; Joanne Chung, '26, Communication), for bringing lessons beyond the classroom by connecting students with real-world research, community engagement, and hands-on experiences that prepare them for graduate study or the workforce.

## Theatre and New Dance

**Javier Zamudio**, Theatre and New Dance student, contributed to the 2026 Sweepstake Award Winning Cal Poly Rose Parade float.