

PAU IMPACT

A QUARTERLY SHOWCASE OF PAU PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS WINTER 2026

New Beginnings, Bright Future

PAU Turns 50!
A Message from President
Farouk Dey

Love By Design

How alumna Sara
Nasserzadeh is refining
what it takes to build
thriving relationships

About PAU IMPACT

PAU IMPACT Magazine is Palo Alto University's quarterly magazine, highlighting the people, ideas, and impact that shaped our community over the past quarter.

Launched during PAU's 50th anniversary year, it reflects our legacy and looks forward to the future of mental and behavioral health education and practice.

Have a PAU story to share?

If Palo Alto University has played a meaningful role in your life, we'd love to hear from you. Email us at communications@paloaltou.edu or scan the QR code to share your story and help shape future issues of PAU IMPACT Magazine.

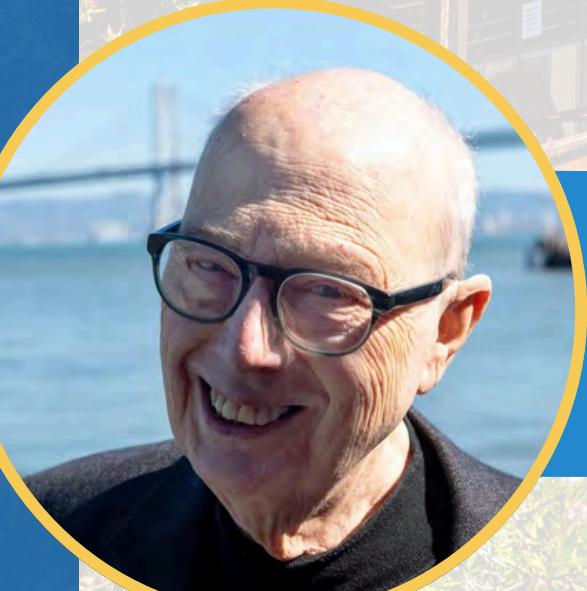


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A Message from the President

Farouk Dey, PhD



Dear Palo Alto University Community,

This year has been a powerful reminder of what makes Palo Alto University distinctive: a singular focus on mental and behavioral health, a deep commitment to evidence-based education and clinical training, and a community that shows up with purpose. As we mark PAU's 50th anniversary, we are not only reflecting on a proud legacy, but also recommitting ourselves to the work ahead at a moment when the world urgently needs thoughtful, well-prepared behavioral health professionals.

This magazine highlights many of the defining stories and accomplishments of the year, but more importantly, it captures the spirit behind them. Across our classrooms, clinics, research labs, and partnerships, PAU continues to advance academic excellence, expand student support, and strengthen its impact in the communities it serves. In Silicon Valley, innovation is often measured by speed and scale. At PAU, we measure innovation by its impact: what improves human well-being, what expands access to care, and what enables our graduates to meet the complexity of the human condition with skill, judgment, and compassion.

My first six months as President have been shaped by listening and learning. I have spent this time engaging deeply with students, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, and partners to better understand what PAU does exceptionally well and where we must evolve. What I have heard consistently is pride in our mission, respect for our academic and clinical rigor, and a shared desire to strengthen how we support students, faculty, and one another in a rapidly changing environment. These conversations are informing an ongoing visioning process that will guide PAU forward, grounded in a clear and enduring purpose: improving the human condition through education, research, and practice in mental and behavioral health.

As we look ahead, this visioning work will focus on aligning mission, performance, and sustainability; deepening our academic and clinical strengths; and thoughtfully integrating technology in ways that enhance, rather than diminish, our human-centered approach. The goal is not change for its own sake, but clarity of direction, coherence of effort, and impact that is both measurable and meaningful.

I am deeply grateful to President Emerita Maureen O'Connor for the leadership that helped shape many of the accomplishments you will read about in these pages. Her commitment to excellence in teaching and faculty development strengthened the academic core of PAU and elevated our culture of learning. In that spirit, we have renamed the Center for Educational Excellence as the Maureen O'Connor Center for Teaching and Learning, honoring her enduring legacy and reaffirming that teaching and learning remain central to our mission.

I also want to thank our Board of Trustees for its stewardship, strategic guidance, and steadfast commitment to PAU's long-term vitality. Their leadership has been especially important as we navigate both celebration and transition, ensuring that our 50-year legacy serves as a foundation for future growth and innovation.

The year ahead holds tremendous promise. Demand for behavioral health services continues to rise, and the need for well-prepared professionals has never been greater. PAU is positioned to lead in this next chapter by strengthening our academic portfolio, expanding high-quality access through innovative modalities, and using data and technology to improve outcomes across the student experience. We are building a university that honors its history while embracing a future where human understanding and technological advancement reinforce one another.

Thank you for being part of the PAU community and for the many ways you contribute to our mission. I hope this magazine leaves you proud of what we have accomplished together over the past 50 years and energized by the vision we are shaping for the years ahead.
With appreciation,

With gratitude,

Farouk Dey, PhD
President, Palo Alto University

[Web](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

Love By Design



*PAU Alumna
Sara Nasserzadeh, PhD,
Offers a New Definition of Love*

PAU alumna Sara Nasserzadeh, PhD, is a world-renowned social psychologist, psychosexual and relationship therapist, author, and speaker whose work bridges science and human connection. She earned a master's degree in Research Methodology and a PhD in Social Psychology from Middlesex University (London), followed by post-graduate studies in Couples Counseling and Psychosexual Therapy at Relate Institute and University in East London. In 2020, she completed her second master's degree in Marriage and Family Counseling at Palo Alto University.

"I help people make sense of their relational spaces from the most intimate to the most public because I believe world peace can be created one thriving relationship at a time," says Dr. Nasserzadeh. "Clinically, I mainly focus on couples, because when there is peace between partners, it ripples outward to their children, families, communities, and workplaces."

Based between Los Angeles and London, UK, Dr. Nasserzadeh works with clients online from all over the world. For more than two decades, she has worked with hundreds of clients across more than forty countries, helping them cultivate connection, compassion, and intentional love.



When couples thrive, their peace ripples into families, friends, and communities.



Submergent Model of Love

Her global practice inspired her to look deeper into why some relationships thrive while others quietly fade. Over ten years, she analyzed clinical notes from 312 couples to understand how cultural narratives shape our definitions and practices of loving relationships. After that, she teamed up with Dr. Pejman Azarmina to study a sample of 159 US representative couples to validate her findings. She discovered that many couples subscribe to what she calls a submergent model of love, where two people “fall” in love, merge completely, and lose their individuality in the process. The early intensity can feel exhilarating, but when the dopamine-driven chemistry fades, the absence of deeper alignment often becomes painfully clear.

Then in the process of making sense of the situation and regaining themselves, they push each other away in conscious and subconscious ways which create resentment and drifts.

Her research led to the development of the Emergent Love Model, introduced in her award-winning book “Love by Design: 6 Ingredients to Build a Lifetime of Love.” The model identifies six essential ingredients that enable partners to maintain meaningful, evolving relationships while preserving their individuality: Attraction, Respect, Trust, Compassion, Shared Vision, and Loving Behaviors.

When love is built only on sexual chemistry, the foundation is too fragile to last.

Emergent Model of Love

Dr. Nasserzadeh’s work was honored with the Clark Vincent Award by the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT). The award recognizes outstanding literary or research contributions that advance the field of psychotherapy and deepen public understanding of relational dynamics.

In addition to her clinical and research work, Dr. Nasserzadeh is a member of various professional organizations and contributes to the wider community through her social media platforms and training courses. Her educational and consulting projects have taken her from the United Nations to universities, media and professional associations worldwide.

There are many benefits to the emergent model of love. Nasserzadeh says that it is an abundant model in that each individual takes care of themselves, communicates boundaries, and reaches out for support when needed; therefore, they are able to offer love to their partner from a place of wholeness. This creates more space for things outside the couple, such as children, pets, and family members, as well as achieving bigger goals in life.

Through her writing, teaching, and direct client work, Dr. Nasserzadeh continues to help people build intentional, resilient, and compassionate relationships, creating ripples of peace that begin, as she says, “one relationship at a time.”

Sara Nasserzadeh’s Non-Negotiable Relationship Ingredients

1. Attraction
2. Respect
3. Trust
4. Compassion
5. Shared Vision
6. Loving Behaviors

Opening Day 2025

Launching PAU's 50th Year with Innovation, Connection & Design Thinking

The air at the Mountain View Community Center on September 8 carried the unmistakable energy of a new chapter. Faculty and staff from across Palo Alto University came together for Opening Day 2025, marking both the start of a new academic year and the official launch of the university's 50th Anniversary—a milestone celebrating five decades of learning, leadership, and impact.

From the moment attendees arrived, the energy was contagious. Colleagues reconnected over breakfast and coffee, sharing stories and welcoming new members of the community. Each person received a 50th Anniversary swag bag—a commemorative T-shirt, gold pin, and other keepsakes—small tokens symbolizing shared pride and belonging.

This year's theme, Innovation, set the tone for the day. More than a word, it represented a design mindset—one that encourages curiosity, empathy, experimentation, and collaboration as Palo Alto University looks toward its next fifty years.



A Presidential Call to Human-Centered Innovation

In his Opening Day address, President Farouk Dey invited the Palo Alto University community to embrace innovation not as technology alone, but as a human-centered way of thinking and leading.

Speaking about the rise of artificial intelligence, he encouraged faculty and staff to explore “the other side of AI”—the distinctly human skills of empathy, creativity, and connection.

His words echoed the spirit of design thinking—centering people first, experimenting boldly, and building solutions with compassion and intention. The address set the tone for the 50th Anniversary year: one of imagination, inclusivity, and purpose.

Design Thinking



Honoring the Past, Designing the Future in Need

The morning opened with remarks from Trustee Karen Scussel, who officially launched Palo Alto University's 50th Anniversary year. Her reflections of Palo Alto University's history reminded the community that innovation begins with reflection—understanding where we've been to imagine where we can go next.

The morning also included a warm welcome for new faculty and staff, whose introductions highlighted the growing depth of Palo Alto University's academic community. Each new voice represented a fresh perspective, an essential element of any design process.

After a morning of inspiration, the community shifted into practice through a hands-on Design Thinking workshop led by John Armstrong, an educator and facilitator known for his work with Stanford's Design Program.

Using IDEO's five-stage framework—Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test—faculty and staff worked in small groups to explore opportunities for collaboration, efficiency, and student success.

Each table came alive with conversation and color as participants built prototypes from markers, pipe cleaners, and felt. One team visualized new pathways for student engagement; another crafted a symbolic model of connection and belonging.

The exercise encouraged everyone to see challenges from new perspectives—listening deeply, testing ideas quickly, and learning from one another. By the end of the session, the room was filled with sketches, prototypes, and possibilities: tangible proof that innovation thrives when creativity meets empathy.

The prototypes developed during the session will continue to evolve, with teams invited to refine and present their ideas throughout the academic year—ensuring that the day's momentum carries forward into lasting impact.

Looking Ahead: Designing the Next **50** Years

As Palo Alto University begins its 50th Anniversary Year, Opening Day 2025 set a powerful tone for what's ahead. It was more than a celebration—it was a design session for the university's future.

Through shared purpose, empathy, and imagination, the Palo Alto University community is building the foundation for the next fifty years—continuing to educate, connect, and innovate in ways that change lives.

[Learn more about Palo Alto University's 50th Anniversary.](#)

Unified Student Orientation

Building Community, Inspiring Connection

On Tuesday, September 9, Palo Alto University (PAU) welcomed its newest students with the Unified Student Orientation, a day built entirely around connection, community, and the shared excitement of beginning a new chapter. Students from every PAU program came together under one roof, meeting the classmates, peers, and mentors who will shape their journeys in the years ahead.

In collaboration with the Office of the Provost and the Department of Student Success, this effort was led by Dr. Samiyah Wright, Director of Academic Operations and Chanel Matta-Ortiz, Associate Dean of Student Success. Now in its second year, Unified Student Orientation has grown into a signature PAU experience, one that reflects the university's belief that community is not just something students find over time, but something they should feel from the moment they arrive.

Building Connections from Day One

The day began with the warm buzz of new beginnings as students checked in, enjoyed breakfast, and explored swag bags filled with PAU gear and 50th Anniversary keepsakes. Energy quickly filled the room during a spirited Rock, Paper, Scissors tournament that had students laughing and cheering with peers they had only just met. It set a tone that carried throughout the event.

"This year was about deepening that sense of belonging and community among students across all programs," said Dr. Wright. "We wanted every new student to feel that they are part of something bigger, connected by a shared commitment to mental and behavioral health."

Throughout the morning, students participated in sessions and activities designed to spark curiosity and connection. President Farouk Dey opened with a message about purpose, curiosity, and human connection, encouraging students to view their time at PAU not only as an academic pursuit but also as part of a larger journey of growth and service.

Following the icebreaker, students heard directly from those already living the PAU experience during a student panel featuring representatives from multiple programs. Panelists shared honest reflections on navigating graduate school, building community, and creating balance, offering incoming students encouragement and insight from a peer perspective.

After the morning sessions, students flowed into the Involvement Fair and Lunch Social, where departments, student organizations, and university services introduced opportunities to get involved. Tables filled with snacks, giveaways, and friendly faces created an environment that felt welcoming and approachable. Students learned about academic supports, wellness resources, affinity groups, leadership roles, and even explored ideas for starting new organizations. The atmosphere was full of energy, conversation, and possibility.



This year, I saw students meeting for the first time, taking selfies together, arranging flower bouquets, and forming real, lasting connections," said Dr. Wright. "That's the magic of Unified Student Orientation."

The Start of Something Bigger

The most meaningful moments of the day were found in the spontaneous connections that formed between students, small, unscripted interactions that captured the heart of the event.

"This year, I saw students meeting for the first time, taking selfies together, arranging flower bouquets, and forming real, lasting connections," said Dr. Wright. "That's the magic of Unified Student Orientation."

Matta-Ortiz added, "When incoming students engage with current students from the very beginning, it builds a sense of community that carries forward. That foundation makes their experience more positive and their learning more meaningful."

As PAU celebrates its 50th Anniversary, Unified Student Orientation continues to reflect the university's values and the strength of its community. As the academic year begins, the 2025 orientation stands as a joyful reminder that at Palo Alto University, community isn't just a concept; it's built, celebrated, and lived from the very first day.



Palo Alto University Showcases Leadership & Community at ACES 2025

Shaping the Future of the Counseling Profession

The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) Conference held October 8-11 in Philadelphia, brought together counselor educators, researchers, and practitioners from across the country to exchange ideas, celebrate progress, and shape the future of the counseling profession. This year, Palo Alto University made an exceptional showing, with faculty, students, and alumni leading, presenting, and facilitating sessions that embodied the conference's spirit of collaboration and innovation.

Palo Alto University's Influence & Leadership

PAU's presence was visible throughout the week, reflecting the university's deep engagement in counselor education and its ongoing commitment to innovation, inclusion, and professional excellence.

PAU's influence at ACES extended well beyond its presentations. Several faculty members hold significant leadership roles within the national organization and its regional division, the Western Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (WACES), underscoring the university's growing impact on the profession.

Dr. Chi Li serves nationally as Secretary of ACES, and Dr. Donya Wallace advances equity and inclusion across the organization as the DEI Member-at-Large. In the Western region, Dr. Shreya Vaishnav leads as WACES President, with Dr. Donna Sheperis serving alongside her as President-Elect, helping shape strategic direction for the years ahead. PAU's leadership presence also includes its students: doctoral student Jennifer Kiehl represented the university as the WACES Graduate Student Representative, reflecting the strength and promise of PAU's next generation of counselor educators.



Never have I been more proud to be part of the PAU community than this year at ACES," Dr. Lamar said. "There is a lot of work being done in the field of counselor education and supervision around strengthening our professional identity, assessing our education practices, and advocating for our profession within higher education and at the legislative level."

Dr. Margaret Lamar, Professor and Associate Department Chair of Doctoral Education and a Past President of ACES, captured the pride many felt in seeing PAU so strongly represented.



Connection Beyond the Conference Hall

While the conference showcased PAU's academic and professional contributions, it also highlighted the strong sense of community that defines the university.

On Friday, October 10th, PAU hosted the ACES PAU Social at Tradesman's, a lively informal gathering just a few blocks from the conference. Nearly 30 faculty, students, alumni, and professional colleagues gathered for good food, great conversation, and a chance to unwind after a full week of sessions.

Director of Alumni Relations, Chloe Corcoran, and host of the event, described the evening as "a perfect mix of a laid-back break from an intense conference and the energy of people genuinely excited to connect."

Attendees echoed her sentiment, calling the event "a highlight of the week." One participant wrote, "It was casual, the food was great, and I loved that we had both PAU folks and colleagues from other universities, it really helped to create more connections."



Scholarship and Collaboration in Action

Throughout the four-day conference, PAU faculty and students shared research and perspectives that reflected both academic rigor and real-world application. Sessions explored topics ranging from leadership and advocacy to supervision, cultural responsiveness, and technology in counselor education.



4 days of sessions, panels & collaboration



25+ PAU faculty, student, and alumni presenters



10+ education sessions plus multiple poster & roundtable presentations



4 PAU faculty serving on the ACES Governing Council



1 community gathering - the ACES PAU Social (~30 attendees)

Looking Ahead

As ACES 2025 came to a close, PAU's contributions stood as a testament to the strength of its faculty, students, and alumni and to the university's commitment to advancing counselor education.

This year's conference also coincided with PAU's 50th anniversary, offering a timely reminder of the institution's legacy and its forward-looking spirit. For half a century, PAU has prepared professionals who lead with empathy, insight, and innovation.

From national leadership roles to meaningful conversations shared over dinner, the week in Philadelphia captured what defines the PAU community: a dedication to learning, collaboration, and connection that extends far beyond the classroom.



Palo Alto University Renames Center for Educational Excellence in Honor of President Emerita Maureen O'Connor

The Palo Alto University Board of Trustees has approved the renaming of the Center for Educational Excellence in honor of President Emerita Maureen O'Connor, PhD.

The Center for Educational Excellence will now be known as the Maureen O'Connor Center for Teaching and Learning, recognizing Dr. O'Connor's commitment to advancing excellence in teaching, evidence-based pedagogy, and faculty development throughout her presidency and academic career.

In addition, an endowed fund has been established in her honor to support the Center's work in perpetuity. The fund reflects Dr. O'Connor's deep investment in building a university culture that celebrates innovation in teaching and learning.

"President Emerita Maureen O'Connor has championed excellence in teaching, pedagogy, and faculty development long before these priorities became national imperatives," said President Farouk Dey. "Her vision strengthened the academic core of Palo Alto University and ensured that student learning remains central to our mission. We are deeply grateful for her enduring leadership and proud to carry forward her legacy through the Maureen O'Connor Center for Teaching and Learning."

A Legacy Rooted in Teaching and Scholarship

Established in 2015, the Center for Educational Excellence (CEE), originally the Office of Faculty Learning and Instructional Development, was created to strengthen instructional practice and support professional growth. Under Dr. O'Connor's presidency in 2016, CEE prioritized faculty development as a cornerstone of institutional excellence, investing in the Center's growth and expanding its scope to address the full continuum of teaching, learning, and educational innovation.

Under her leadership, CEE evolved into a hub for faculty and student workshops, course design support, and inclusive pedagogy training. It has played a vital role in enhancing the learning experience for both on-campus and online students, promoting evidence-based teaching practices, and fostering a collaborative academic community.

Dr. O'Connor's scholarly contributions mirror this institutional focus. She is the co-author of *Teaching Psychology: An Evidence-Based Approach* (1st Edition, 2019) with Jillian Grose-Fifer and Patricia J. Brooks, a seminal work emphasizing the intersection of research and practice in university teaching. Her writing and leadership have inspired generations of faculty to ground their teaching in science and reflection.

Ensuring the Future of Inclusive Excellence in the Scholarship of Teaching

The Maureen O'Connor Center for Teaching and Learning Endowed Fund will ensure that the Center continues to thrive for decades to come, supporting new initiatives in faculty development, teaching innovation, and pedagogical research.

As PAU celebrates its [50th Anniversary](#), this renaming serves as both a tribute and a commitment - honoring Dr. O'Connor's profound influence on the university while reaffirming PAU's dedication to advancing excellence in teaching and learning.



"Higher education is rapidly evolving, and we are committed to being at the forefront of that change," said President Emerita Maureen O'Connor. "The Center for Educational Excellence embodies this mission empowering faculty, staff, and students to become thoughtful, innovative educators who create inclusive and transformative learning experiences."

President Emerita Maureen O'Connor

Provost Colloquium Series 2025-26

Co-Inquiry in the Age of AI:

Rethinking Research Education at PAU

When conversations about artificial intelligence surface in higher education, they often swing between excitement and concern. Can AI deepen learning or does it risk replacing it? At Palo Alto University's Fall 2025 Provost Colloquium, faculty, students, and staff gathered to explore that question not as an abstract debate, but as a practical challenge shaping classrooms right now.

Hosted by Assistant Provost for Faculty Success [Dr. Kelly Coker](#), the colloquium continues a PAU tradition of creating space for shared inquiry and dialogue around emerging issues in behavioral science. This year's series centers on institutional value: Innovation, inviting the community to consider how evolving tools and ideas can be integrated thoughtfully and ethically into teaching and scholarship.

That conversation came into sharp focus with a presentation by [Dr. Charlotte Beard](#), Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department, Director of the Master of Science in Psychology Program, and a licensed clinical psychologist whose work sits at the intersection of psychology, technology, and digital mental health.

From Tools to Thinking

Rather than framing AI as a shortcut or a threat, Beard invited participants to see it as a collaborator, one that requires discernment, context, and strong foundational knowledge to be used well.

"AI can give us a lot of information very quickly," Beard noted, "but that doesn't mean it's always accurate or meaningful on its own."



Drawing from her experience teaching research methods and statistics, she described a familiar moment for many graduate students: drafting a first research proposal. These projects ask students to move from broad interests to precise questions, grounded in theory, literature, and ethical practice. AI tools can support that process but only if students understand how to guide them.

Beard emphasized that the real challenge isn't whether students use AI, but how they use it. Uncritical acceptance, fear-driven avoidance, or overreliance on polished AI-generated text can all undermine learning. What matters instead is teaching students to engage AI as a thinking partner not a replacement for judgment.

The Map and the Compass

One metaphor resonated strongly throughout the session. Students with strong research foundations, Beard explained, already have a map. They understand theory, constructs, and disciplinary boundaries. For them, AI can function like a compass, helping navigate efficiently without losing direction.

Students without that foundation, however, may have only a compass and no map. Without guidance, they risk heading toward overly broad projects, poorly defined constructs, or research questions disconnected from theory.

"The solution isn't to ban the compass," Beard said, "but to help students build the map." That map is constructed through mentorship, theory-driven instruction, and explicit conversations about ethics, transparency, and research integrity which are core values embedded in PAU's approach to graduate education.

Practicing Ethical Co-Inquiry

Throughout the presentation, Beard demonstrated how AI can be used to scaffold thinking rather than shortcut it: refining research questions, mapping literature funnels, identifying disciplinary silos, and generating structured tools for literature review—always with the expectation that students verify sources, read deeply, and make independent decisions.

She also addressed the importance of transparency. As journals and institutions establish clearer standards around AI use, students must learn not only how to use these tools, but how to acknowledge them responsibly and evaluate their limitations.

"AI is not a replacement for mentorship," Beard reminded participants. "Students still need people: faculty, advisors, and peers to help them think critically about what they're doing and why."



AI is such a wonderful and powerful tool that can give us a lot of information, but of course, there are also risks.

- Dr. Charlotte Beard



Dr. Beard is a clinical psychology leader specialized in the intersection between technology and psychology. She has experience collaborating with clinical and research teams in leadership positions on subjects such as digital behavioral health design, mental health ethics and research, and protocol creation and management. Her research at PAU focuses on risks and benefits of gaming, including Internet gaming disorder and the therapeutic applications of games.

A PAU-Centered Conversation

The lively discussion that followed reflected the diversity of perspectives in the room, with educators, students, librarians, and staff contributing questions and insights. Rather than seeking definitive answers, the session modeled something more enduring: curiosity grounded in care.

By framing AI as a tool for co-inquiry, the colloquium underscored a defining feature of PAU's academic culture: innovation guided by ethics, rigor, and human connection.

As the landscape of behavioral science continues to evolve, conversations like these ensure that PAU remains not only responsive to change, but intentional about how learning, research, and technology intersect.

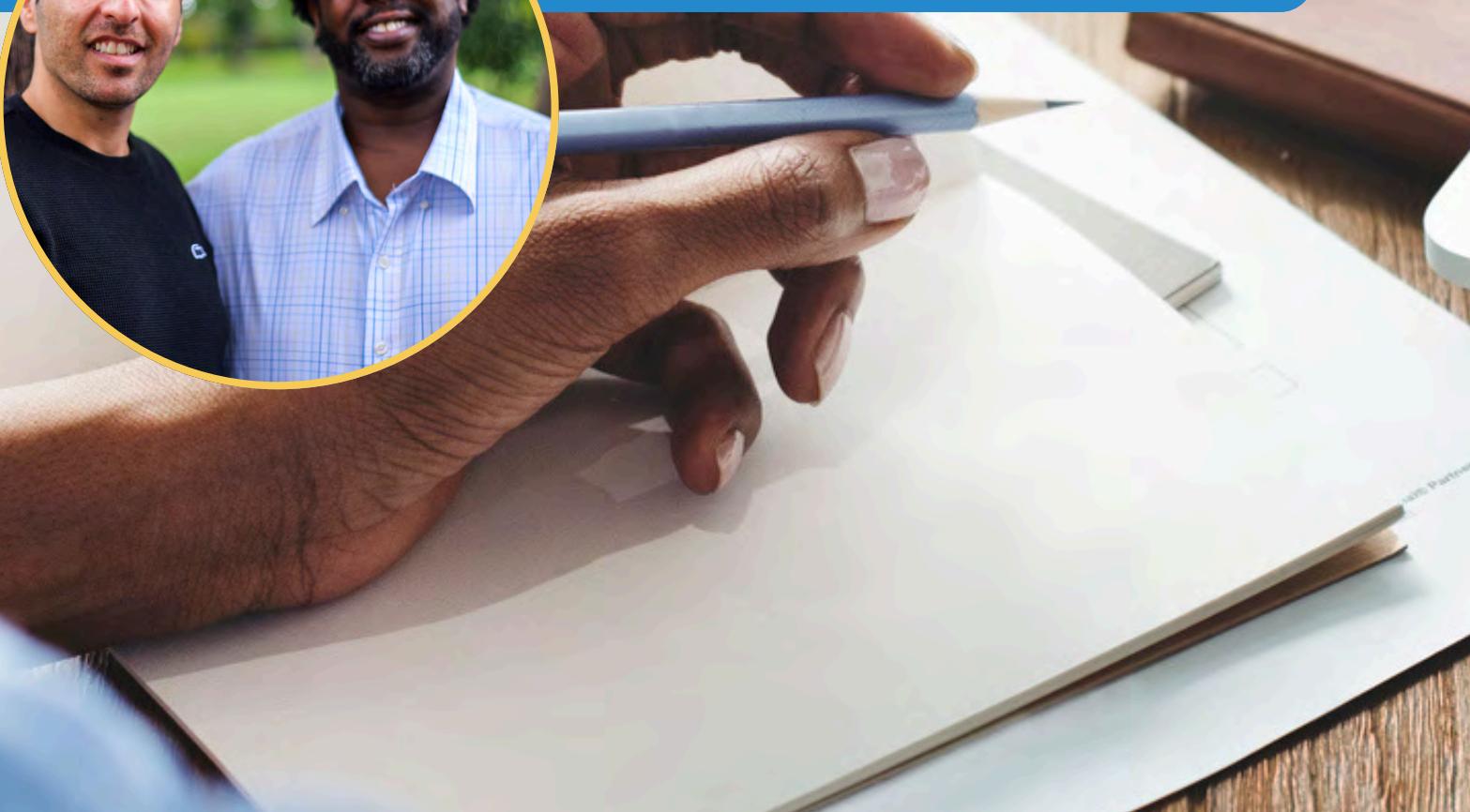


Writing Studio

WRITING MATTERS



The Writing Studio's Dissertation Boot Camp is designed to help writers break through those barriers. Across two intensive days, participants set clear goals, establish productive routines, and receive guidance and accountability from writing professionals and peers.



Writing Studio Expands Support for Doctoral Writers

The Writing Studio recently expanded its support for doctoral writers with the launch of a new Dissertation Boot Camp, a two-day, immersive virtual experience designed to provide structured writing time, targeted workshops, and personalized feedback. Co-led by Writing Studio Director, Dr. Robert Randolph and Student Support Director, Ana Castrillo, the boot camp created both accountability and encouragement at a pivotal stage of the doctoral journey.

Participants received practical strategies for building momentum, refining their research frameworks, and managing the unique demands of dissertation writing. Equally meaningful, the program fostered a strong sense of community, demonstrating that while writing can be a solitary process, the dissertation journey does not have to be, and students benefit from a space where support, structure, and shared purpose come together.



Since Dr. Randolph's arrival, the Writing Studio has expanded its vision, introducing initiatives designed to support students at every stage of the writing process. Current offerings include a Writing Discussion Group, a Workshop Series on core skills like crafting arguments and refining thesis statements, and an immersive Writing Retreat that balances quiet time for focus with group feedback and one-on-one consultations. Students are also encouraged to schedule individual appointments with Dr. Randolph for tailored guidance.

Looking ahead, the Writing Studio is developing additional opportunities to meet students where they are. Plans include a Writing Consultations Day with drop-in support, a multi-day Writing Bootcamp for intensive project work, and even an Open Mic Night, inviting students to share their writing in a supportive, celebratory space. Together, these initiatives signal PAU's commitment to nurturing strong, confident writers who are well-prepared for the demands of academic and professional life.



Finishing a dissertation is one of the most rewarding and demanding aspects of graduate study. Many students struggle not with ideas or ability, but with time management, motivation, and balancing competing priorities," said Dr. Randolph.

Robert Randolph
Writing Studio Director

Honoring Lives, Uplifting Community

PAU's Chloe Corcoran Keynotes Transgender Day of Remembrance

Chloe Corcoran (she/her), Director of Alumni Relations at Palo Alto University, served as the keynote speaker at San Mateo County's Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) on November 20, the nationally recognized annual observance honoring transgender and gender-diverse individuals whose lives were lost to anti-trans violence. Her remarks anchored an evening of reflection, remembrance, and renewed commitment to action, values deeply aligned with PAU's mission to advance mental and behavioral health education and practice.

Hosted by the County's LGBTQIA+ Commission in partnership with local and county organizations, the gathering brought together community members for a candlelight vigil, musical reflection, and a pastoral message from a local faith leader. The solemn reading of names served as the emotional center of the program, underscoring the purpose of TDOR: to honor lives lost and to acknowledge the disproportionate violence faced by transgender people, particularly trans women of color and trans people with disabilities, who experience the greatest impact of intersecting systems of harm. The gathering reflected a community-centered, trauma-informed approach that aligns closely with Palo Alto University's focus on mental and behavioral health care.

In her keynote, Chloe invited attendees to view TDOR not only as a memorial but as a call to action, one that asks individuals, institutions, and communities to move beyond remembrance toward accountability, allyship, and sustained care. Drawing from her lived experience and years of advocacy, she spoke about the daily courage required to exist openly in a world that often demands resilience from trans people simply to move through it. Her message echoed PAU's broader emphasis on equity-informed leadership, one that recognizes the role institutions play in creating systems of care, safety, and belonging both within and beyond higher education.

Chloe emphasized that honoring those lost requires intention: showing up for one another, speaking up in spaces where trans voices are absent, and recognizing that safety and belonging are collective responsibilities. She reminded the audience that allyship is not abstract; it lives in everyday decisions, in policies that protect or exclude, and in the willingness to stand with others even when doing so feels uncomfortable. Her message resonated as both deeply personal and broadly instructive, connecting individual action to systemic change.

Leadership and Advocacy Beyond the Event

As the Palo Alto University Director of Alumni Relations, Chloe's keynote comes at a time when her advocacy work continues to expand in ways that align with PAU's commitment to inclusive excellence and community wellbeing. This past Spring, she was appointed to the City of West Hollywood's Transgender Advisory Board, a body that advises the City Council, supports community programming, and advances policies related to transgender visibility, equity, and well-being. The Board focuses on public safety, inclusion in city services, cultural events, and strengthening local support systems for transgender and nonbinary residents. She was recently elected to become the Chair of the Board. Chloe is currently pursuing her EdD in Higher Education Leadership with her dissertation focused on expanding alumni engagement at PAU.

Through her work at PAU and in the broader community, Chloe helps strengthen conversations around inclusion, culturally responsive care, and the importance of building systems that support transgender and nonbinary individuals in meaningful, lasting ways.

Community Partnership and Shared Responsibility

The themes raised in Chloe's keynote were echoed throughout the evening and reinforced by the broader community partnerships that sustain TDOR year after year. Among those contributing to this work is Dr. Maria Lorente-Foresti, a 2000 graduate of PAU's PhD in Clinical Psychology program and Director of the San Mateo County Behavioral Health & Recovery Services (BHRS) Office of Diversity and Equity.

Lorente-Foresti shared that BHRS and the Office of Diversity and Equity have supported San Mateo County's Transgender Day of Remembrance events since 2015 through multiple Health Equity Initiatives, including the Pride Initiative, helping ensure the gathering remains community-centered, affirming, and grounded in shared responsibility.

She noted that transgender violence is rooted in intersecting systems of transphobia, racism, and misogyny, disproportionately affecting Black and Brown trans women, and stressed the importance of inclusive data and affirming behavioral health services in addressing these inequities. Her perspective echoed a central message of the evening: that remembrance must be paired with action, and that systems of care play a critical role in fostering safety, dignity, and belonging.

Lorente-Foresti's long-standing commitment to equity, culturally responsive care, and community wellbeing was recognized in 2024, when she was inducted into the San Mateo County Women's Hall of Fame.

To learn more about her work and this recognition, [read PAU's earlier feature on her induction](#).



Moving Forward Together

San Mateo County's Transgender Day of Remembrance gathering served as both a memorial and a moment of resolve, honoring lives lost while reaffirming a shared commitment to action, equity, and care.

Palo Alto University is proud to recognize Chloe Corcoran's leadership and the ways her work reflects the university's mission to advance inclusive excellence, wellbeing, and community impact. Through her role at PAU and her advocacy beyond campus, Chloe exemplifies how higher education leaders can engage thoughtfully with the communities they serve, pairing remembrance with responsibility, and reflection with action.

Class Notes

Palo Alto University
Alumni

Stay connected with the Palo Alto University community by sharing what's new in your life and career.

Class Notes highlight alumni milestones from professional achievements and publications to personal updates like new roles, awards, or community impact.

Submit your update to be considered for a future issue of PAU IMPACT Magazine and help us celebrate the accomplishments of our alumni community.



PAU Alumni Engagement & Connection



In-Person Events & Gatherings



Celebrate Professional & Personal Milestones

[Submit your Class Note here](#)



Fifty Years at the Forefront

Celebrating five decades
of innovation, service, and
leadership at the forefront
of behavioral health.

Palo Alto University
1975 - 2025
50
YEARS



For half a century, Palo Alto University (PAU) has been shaping the future of behavioral health. Founded with a vision to prepare exceptional providers and advance research that meets the needs of real communities, PAU has grown into a nationally recognized institution dedicated to psychology and counseling education, clinical training, and research innovation.

As we celebrate our 50th Anniversary, we look back with pride on the impact of our alumni, faculty, and students — and forward with excitement to the role PAU will continue to play in transforming the field of behavioral health.

A Trailblazing Approach

The need for behavioral health care has never been greater. More Americans are experiencing mental health challenges, while workforce shortages and inequitable access remain persistent barriers to care. For five decades, PAU has been working to close these gaps — preparing highly skilled, compassionate providers, leading visionary research, and expanding access to care in under-resourced communities.

PAU has long anticipated emerging needs in the field. From expanding culturally competent and bilingual services, to providing care for LGBTQ+ communities, to leveraging technology and new research, PAU's trailblazing spirit has consistently positioned the university as a leader at the forefront of behavioral health practice.

Join Us in Celebration

As PAU turns 50, we invite our extended community — alumni, friends, donors, and partners — to be part of this exciting milestone. Your partnership will help ensure that PAU continues its mission of preparing behavioral health leaders, advancing research, and expanding access to mental health services for generations to come.

Looking Ahead: The Next 50 Years

Our anniversary celebration is not only a time to honor PAU's legacy, but also an opportunity to boldly envision the future. Anniversary activities will include:

- **Community Engagement** — Dialogues with partners, alumni, and supporters to shape the field's next chapter.
- **Cutting-Edge Research** — Showcasing the innovation driving advances in care and access.
- **Service & Campus Life Activities** — Opportunities for our community to give back and celebrate.
- **Alumni Experiences & Storytelling** — Honoring the voices and experiences of PAU alumni across the decades.



50th Anniversary

Building a Culturally-Informed Future for Behavioral Health

PAU Launches Master of Social Work Program



When Professor Rose Wong, PhD, was five years old, her family immigrated from Hong Kong to California's East Bay. They lived in a multigenerational home with her grandparents. In that home, Dr. Wong saw the devastating toll of untreated mental illness up close: her grandmother lived with severe depression, and years later, her eldest brother would be diagnosed with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

"I took an interest in psychology when I was very young," she recalls. "Mental illness wasn't something we really talked about in my community or in my family. But I saw how it shaped the lives of people I loved."

Those early experiences planted a seed that would guide her life's work. Today, Dr. Wong is a full professor at Palo Alto University (PAU), leading the effort to create the university's new Master of Social Work (MSW) program, one designed to train the next generation of behavioral health professionals to meet California's urgent workforce needs.



A Global Journey to Social Work

Dr. Wong's path to social work was anything but direct. After earning a bachelor's degree in business from UC Berkeley and a master's in public and international affairs from Princeton, she began her career in international development. Her work took her to Brazil and Portugal, where she focused on projects that improved the lives of underserved communities.

But while living abroad in Toulouse, France, a new chapter unfolded. To stay in the country while training as a long-distance triathlete, she enrolled in a master's program in psychology. There she worked in a lab studying autism in children. The experience shifted her focus from policy to people, and she returned to California to earn both a master's and PhD in social welfare at UC Berkeley. There she worked in a lab studying autism in children. The experience shifted her focus from policy to people, and she returned to California.

At first, she imagined a career in school psychology or research. Then, a mentor encouraged her to shift into social work, a field that married her interests in psychology, community well-being, and immigrant mental health.

"Social work gave me a pathway to work directly with families who were navigating violence, trauma, and systemic barriers," she says. After earning her MSW, she worked with parents and children who had survived long-term domestic violence, and later completed a post-doctoral fellowship at UCSF focused on clinical services research.

A State in Need

It was during this time that Dr. Wong became acutely aware of a growing crisis: California faced — and continues to face — a severe shortage of behavioral health workers, particularly in the Central Valley, Central Coast, and Bay Area. Determined to be part of the solution, she shifted her career toward social work education. From 2019 to 2021, she founded and directed the MSW program at the University of the Pacific. She also authored a textbook on evidence-based practice decision-making in the context of serving diverse populations.

Building a Culturally-Informed Future

Then in 2022, she partnered with PAU to conduct a market analysis of social work education in Northern California. The findings confirmed what many already knew: the need was urgent. With support from PAU's leadership, she applied for and helped secure a \$1.5 million state grant to develop a new MSW program that would train graduates to serve California's diverse and underserved populations.

Building a Program for California

Now at PAU, Dr. Wong is focused on building a program that is not only rigorous but also deeply rooted in cultural humility and real-world needs.

"We are developing a very innovative curriculum," she says. "We have a faculty advisory committee, as well as a community advisory council composed of high-level professionals and leaders who are very knowledgeable about behavioral health practice in the public system."

The program, which welcomed its first students in 2025, emphasizes Culturally Informed Behavioral Health Practice. Students will choose one of two tracks:

- Children and Youth in School and Community Settings
- Adults in Public Behavioral Health Settings

Classes are primarily online, paired with intensive immersion residencies to foster connection and applied learning. For Dr. Wong, the program's mission reflects both her professional journey and a commitment to serving diverse communities across the state.

Integrating Research and Practice

In addition to program development, Dr. Wong's research focuses on culturally grounded clinical practice and immigrant and minority mental health. Her recent contributions to the Clinical Social Work Association's Clinical Update highlight the importance of identity, lived experience, and culturally responsive care in improving outcomes for marginalized communities — themes that now inform the MSW curriculum and training model.

The Impact of Social Work

In 2020, 11.4% of Americans were living below the poverty line.
Social workers help these individuals overcome challenges like housing and food insecurity.

In 2023, over 36 million Americans were hospitalized
clinical social workers played a crucial role in discharge planning and ensuring continuity of care.

One in four Americans suffers from a mental illness or neurological disorder that affects their daily lives.

More than 1 in 100 American adults are incarcerated.
Social workers lead initiatives to reduce crime, advance social justice, and promote community-based services.

Child Protective Services receives millions of reports of child abuse or neglect annually.
Social workers are instrumental in protecting these children and assisting families in addressing the stressors in their lives.

Looking Forward

Launching a new program is no small undertaking. Over the past several years, the MSW has gone through extensive development, including approval from PAU's Board of Trustees, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and candidacy status with the Council on Social Work Education. The program is also pursuing accreditation with the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing for school social worker preparation.



Now, the program has launched a vibrant inaugural class of 39 students — far above the expected enrollment for a brand-new program. "The timing is right," Dr. Wong says. "There's tremendous support within PAU.



The Second Phase of My Life

Alumna and student Maggie Tsai reflects on how PAU supported her pathway into counseling.

In 2020, when Maggie Tsai's children were grown, she began to reflect on what she called "the second phase of my life" and was drawn toward counseling. "I had an internal calling," she says, "an interest in serving people." Tsai came to the United States in 2011 from China, where she had a completely different career. Building from a start in journalism, a stint at the United Nations, and an editor-in-chief role, Tsai had spent 14 years running her own brand communications and marketing firm serving multinational companies in China. When she came to the United States, it was a big shift - "I was a full-time mom!" she says.

Tsai entered PAU's MA in Counseling program as a result of this desire for a new career phase. She immediately felt at home. "PAU is in the mindset of community service," Tsai says, citing the eClinic's approach to providing free support for underserved populations. "The eClinic advances grad students' skills, and also on the receiving end creates opportunities for communities" - a "two birds, one stone" approach that meets "so many needs." She applauds the school for its forward-looking initiatives that adopt this same spirit, including the bilingual certificate for Spanish and Mandarin in clinical practice, aimed toward serving multicultural populations.

She also appreciated the student-centered approach of a PAU education. "PAU staff and faculty are driven by student success," she says. PAU gives students the space and resources to enter a program and really answer the question - "what is my passion?"

She also enthusiastically gives credit to PAU's librarians, who encourage student outreach and offer a high degree of research support. "The staff really care," she reflects.

After completing her MA in 2023, Tsai continued to work on her hours for licensure and deepen her skills in areas of practice like Somatic Experiencing, Brainspotting, and Internal Family Systems. "I gained a sense for what was most important, what I wanted to pass forward," she says. During that year, Tsai continued to think about how she could develop more individually. It was this process of reflection that led Tsai to enroll in PAU's PhD program in Counselor Education and Supervision in late 2024, and became a member of the very first cohort. The degree felt like "a multiplier" for impact, Tsai says.

The variation among the seven students currently in Tsai's cohort is substantial - particularly in age - but Tsai notes many commonalities between students beyond their shared engagement in counseling. "We are all committed to teaching and research," she says, "And we are all self-driven. There is a high sense of mission - both personal mission, and mission for service." And the vast majority of students in the cohort were PAU alumni already - evidence, Tsai points out, that PAU is attractive to students - "people want to come back!" PAU's student-centered approach is also evident in the CES program, Tsai says - "It's a new program, and they are constantly reflecting on how to ensure it lives up to the highest standards. But at the same time, our program is also asking - how can we cater to your individual needs while living up to those standards?" While CES students follow the same curriculum, individual backgrounds are always considered. "I'm really touched by that thought," Tsai adds.

She gives credit to President Maureen O'Connor for her "strong imprint" on the culture and pursuit of excellence at PAU. "I could feel that the pursuit of academic excellence at PAU is very high - from the strict selection process to the very professional and skilled staff and faculty." The strength of PAU's pursuit of mission and President O'Connor's leadership, Tsai says, has made the university "more competitive - a bigger brand name in the counseling industry."



From internship placement to the significant roles her MA classmates are playing in the field, the scope of PAU's impact is increasingly clear to Tsai. And with the integration of new needs and technologies such as AI into PAU's framework, explorations of practice are "advancing day by day."

In her own life, Tsai says that her education shaped her as a parent. "My counseling studies and practice helped me understand my kids more deeply, and my way of communicating with them changed," she says. "I'm more able to understand them from their perspective and from a more humane perspective; it actually elevated my own life."

And now, Tsai is working to better the lives of others as well. In 2023, Tsai established the PAU Innovart Research Grant, which will fund research support for up to four counseling students each year across both the MA and PhD programs. "I really wanted to give back to PAU - because PAU had given me so much," says Tsai. She wanted to maximize her contributions, and "research can create a snowball effect," she says.



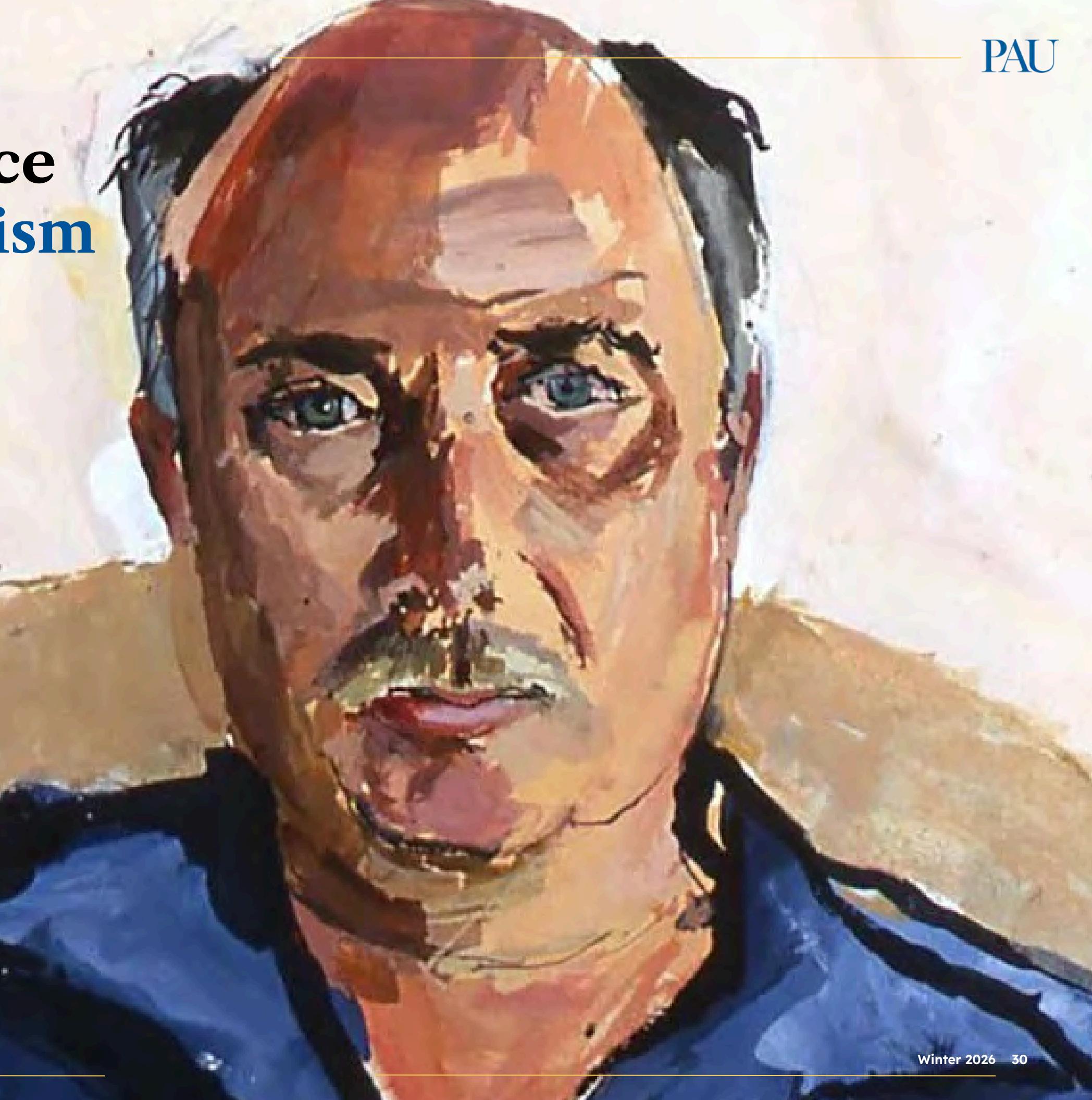
"Research projects can actually serve people in need," Tsai notes, and can also "highlight PAU's true standing within the field."

Finding the Balance Between Pragmatism and Idealism

Reflections from Dr. Peter Goldblum

Few individuals have had as profound an impact on Palo Alto University's institutional identity as Dr. Peter Goldblum (Ph.D. 1983). His ongoing legacy is evident in Palo Alto University's academic culture, approach to training, commitment to inclusive excellence, and community impact. His leadership is also broadly celebrated within the field. In 2013, he was recognized with the American Psychological Association's Division 44 Distinguished Contributions to Education and Training Award. It is telling, then, that Dr. Goldblum focuses most of his reflection on his relationships with others – and on the power of collaboration.

Goldblum's own professional path started outside the Bay Area. His mentor during his Master's work at Columbia University was Dr. Allen Bergin, one of the pioneers of evidence-based psychology and a devout Mormon. Goldblum remembers him as "perhaps the most brilliant teacher I ever had." Yet, when Goldblum prepared to apply to PhD programs with a focus on homosexuality, Bergin urged him to go back into the closet as a gay man and abandon his research. Goldblum, who was invested in the importance of defining a "healthy gay identity" at a time when mainstream psychology still pathologized non-heterosexual sexualities, refused. Bergin recommended, instead, that Goldblum consider programs in California, where more "radical" ideas might be welcomed – which is how he wound up applying to Palo Alto University, then Pacific Graduate School of Psychology (PGSP). It was in the late 1970s, a time when interviews were still held on beanbag chairs, and he began his training as part of the university's second class.





That isn't to say that the university was a unilaterally welcoming environment.

When Goldblum began at PGSP, it was still very much of its time, and he faced the same challenges that were common across the country in the 1970s and early 1980s. It wasn't a perfect place, and Goldblum remembers both covert and overt resistance to his work, but Palo Alto University "leaned toward tolerance." He recalls that one of the personal highlights of his career was being accepted into the PhD program as an openly gay student.

When he takes the long view of Palo Alto University's history he begins, as so many of us do, with its origins. He cites its unique status as being founded by a group of students and also focuses on the impact of its first president, Dr. Robert Kantor: "Bob was the chief psychologist at the Menlo Park Veteran's Administration," Dr. Goldblum remembers.

"The Menlo Park VA was a place that brought together some of the truly innovative people in the field of psychology at the time. Dr. Kantor had prestige that he brought to the school." He was both a psychologist who had a hand in the origins of evidence-based psychology, and a practitioner with "edgier" interests in transpersonal and "new age" psychology. His deep professional competency, rigor, and legitimacy coupled with a willingness to explore new, nontraditional areas of scholarship is a legacy that continues to this day at Palo Alto University. "The school has always been trying to find the balance between pragmatism and idealism," remarks Dr. Goldblum.

Goldblum returned briefly to Palo Alto University in 1989 to begin a new and innovative HIV Program that supported students financially who had an interest in HIV prevention. At the time there was substantial internal turmoil at the university. "For a university that began as a student-led institution there is an inherent tension between being a radically different school and fitting into the mold of an APA-accredited university," Goldblum notes. As a result of philosophical differences within management about the direction of the school, half of the faculty walked out; moments such as these are a bellwether of the push-pull that has always defined a school at the forefront. In his view, the challenge and opportunity of Palo Alto University's core identity is in seeking a hybrid balance between innovation and pragmatism.

After the faculty walk-out, Goldblum stepped in to direct the clinic with a promise from the school that he could begin an LGBTQ program. He left when the university reneged on that promise.

But times change and attitudes evolve. Goldblum again returned to Palo Alto University in 2004, having built a prominent career with work that made a tremendous impact during the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco, including serving as co-founder of UCSF AIDS Health Project and authoring books on both AIDS self-care and bereavement.

Dr. Goldblum had been recruited by Bruce Bongar and Larry Beutler — Palo Alto University faculty members and two of the most nationally recognized researchers in psychotherapy at the time. "Larry Beutler and I hit it off the moment we met," Goldblum says. At a time when LGBTQ issues were still controversial, Beutler's explicit support made it clear that any aggression toward Goldblum was "off limits."

"I was surrounded by some of the best thinkers and most productive people in the field," Goldblum says. "I had the support of the people I needed, including Lynn Waelde, Joyce Chu, Scott Hines, and Rowena Gomez, all of whom were great collaborators in the establishment of a culturally-competent institution." And importantly, Goldblum emphasizes, Allen Calvin himself was "a great champion of this endeavor."

 **Our legacy is still under construction!" he notes with a smile. When Allen Calvin came on board, he asked an important question: what kind of school does Palo Alto University want to be?**

"We've answered a lot of that," says Goldblum. The school maintains faculty and trains students of exceptional quality — "an embarrassment of riches." And to this day, Palo Alto University still strives toward the hybrid approach of "taking the best of what is good" from current models, yet being open to alternative pathways when existing approaches don't work.

"I will always be indebted to and hold affection for Palo Alto University," Goldblum says. "[Palo Alto University] gave me a chance, gave me resources." His legacy as a leader endures — his efforts are among those that define Palo Alto University as a university at the forefront of mental and behavioral health. Today, the LGBTQ+ program supports theoretical and clinical training in sexual and gender minority psychology. The Sexual and Gender Identities Clinic (SGIC) at Palo Alto University works to develop and provide evidence-based psychological treatment for at-risk clients.

To Palo Alto University's knowledge, 16 years after its founding by Dr. Goldblum, it remains the only dedicated clinic housed within a doctoral training program that provides specialized care to the LGBTQ+ community in the United States.

"I hope that Palo Alto University will continue to be a leader in sexual and gender issues, to train compassionate, smart clinicians who don't always go along with community notions of the day," says Goldblum, as he reflects on the politics of today. "I hope my legacy is the promotion of collaboration, helping people come together to work creatively and innovatively."

And on a personal level, he considers it a profound highlight to see his own students graduate and be successful in groundbreaking careers. It is notable that he still communicates with many of his past students, not only to offer his own counsel but also to keep abreast of new developments in psychology from their points of view.

It's fitting that, like any visionary doer, and true to the culture of Palo Alto University, Goldblum constantly refers to the power of relationships in making an impact as profound as any scientific discovery. Take Dr. Allen Bergin, Goldblum's mentor at Columbia. "In 2020, he apologized to the Mormon and LGBTQ communities for his anti-LGBTQ influence," Goldblum notes. "His change of heart came about as the result of close relationships with several Queer family members, and I love the idea that one of the most prominent proponents of evidence-based psychological practice was swayed by love, not science."





Build Your Own Adventure

Alumni Nick Grant reflects on finding his own path – and linking clinical psychology with community impact

Dr. Nick Grant is a double board-certified clinical psychologist currently serving on active duty in the United States Navy. He is currently assigned as a clinical psychology subject matter expert to the Defense Health Agency Psychological Health Center of Excellence. He previously completed tours at Naval Medical Center San Diego and Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, with deployments onboard the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and the USNS Mercy hospital ship. Nick is a 2015 alumnus of the PhD in Clinical Psychology program. In 2021, he became the first psychologist to be elected president of GLMA. He has been recognized with an APA Citizen Psychologist Presidential Citation for his LGBTQ advocacy, was named a 2021 APA Fellow for Division 44, and received the PAU Distinguished Alumni Award in 2018. He currently serves as one of the inaugural members of PAU's alumni advisory council.

My advice for anyone is to focus on doing the basics well, and then all of the innovation and creativity and opportunity and community development – all of that then comes so much more easily. We rush through the basics to get to the “good part.” But if we do the basics of psychology well, everything else comes easier.

Q Can you tell us a little bit about what brought you to PAU?

I was a first-generation college student. I had no idea what I was doing, but I knew that I felt safe in school – and it was always “easy-ish” for me. I had graduated from high school early, went to community college, went to undergrad, got a Master’s – then I decided to pursue a doctorate. I very specifically wanted to go for psychology, but I knew that I wanted to be somewhere where I could do LGBTQ research and community engagement. Ultimately, I came to PAU because of Dr. Goldblum – PAU was at the top of my list because of him.

Q You were a student at PAU from 2008 to 2015. What changed at PAU in that time?

There were a few logistical changes in that time. I think that part of my first year, we were at the old old campus. The opening of the Allen Calvin campus – the “move to the treehouse” – happened. There was also the name change to Palo Alto University from PGSP, and also, while I was there the undergrad program started.

When I think about it experientially, I think about Liz Hill in Student Affairs – she was the “mom” of the school, the person who was there for the students. PAU in general is a very student-centered educational organization, and Liz was the one who personified that for me.

She made sure everyone was taken care of, ran social things, kept people individually connected. As the school expanded, it never felt like it lost any of that – it really focused on students having a good experience, as well as quality.

Q What's your strongest memory of PAU from that time? Is there any particular day or event that stands out?

Defending my dissertation. Being a first-generation college student, I remember not really knowing if I could do it. After I passed, I remember going to my friend's house and celebrating. My friends were all there. While I was there, I laid down in my friend's guest room with my shoes on and slept for 12 hours. It was very pivotal I have another memory from after I graduated – at APA, I attended a mobile museum called “I Am Psyched!” that was an exhibit of women of color who were leaders in psychology.

I'd thought the PAU community would be interested – they ended up doing it, and held a community event on the peninsula with the exhibit and speakers. I got to come, because I was a recipient of one of the alumni awards that year! It was a cool event, and a good example of PAU bringing psychology into the community. It really highlighted the university's values.



Can you share how PAU influenced what you did next?

I credit a lot of where I'm at to Dr. Goldblum's mentorship. His saying that I have quoted many times is that "being an LGBTQ psychologist means you wear many hats, you wear your research hat, your clinician hat, and your advocacy hat." I understand that more fully in reflection. In that sentiment and in his teaching, he really showed me - taught me - what the possibilities of being a psychologist outside of being a clinician and researcher can be, the impact you can have on your community.

Because of that, I have leaned into more opportunities that I don't think I ever would have taken on. Some those include - joining the Navy at the age of 34. But I also pursued opportunities like applying to a national LGBTQ health nonprofit board and then becoming the first psychology president of that board. Or any of the other community or leadership opportunities I've had - within APA, within the Navy, in the LGBTQ space. I think that the lessons that I learned from Dr. Goldblum were really about doing the work as a psychologist to make an impact to help people and communities.



Do you have any advice for PAU graduates?

My advice for anyone is to focus on doing the basics well, and then all of the innovation and creativity and opportunity and community development - all of that then comes so much more easily. We rush through the basics to get to the "good part." But if we do the basics of psychology well, everything else comes easier.



What do you think PAU's legacy is - and what would you like to see in the future?

The community is what comes up to me so much when thinking about the legacy piece - Engaging Minds, Improving Lives - I always really liked that! I am not someone who typically wears school sweatshirts, but I really liked that one. I think the school really lived up to the motto. It provides a challenging academic experience, with a focus on how to apply your skills and education to improve the lives of people and communities. PAU brings in excellent faculty who then help students grasp the basics while you "build your own adventure."

In the future, I think it would be really cool to know more about each of the focal areas of the faculty - what is the ten-year outlook? What are they hoping for in their concentration area? How does the school expand as psychology and humanity continue to grow? PAU has always been an early adopter. I am also excited about the future of alumni engagement - there has been a significant uptick in opportunities and outreach since Chloe joined, including the creation of new avenues for connection. In the future, I'd love to see more work to connect alumni to current students.

I want to add that, as someone who graduated right before Maureen started as president, and then still stayed somewhat engaged, I have been such a fan of Maureen and everything she has done for the university. She is so authentic. She demonstrates her care through both her words and actions. I can't put metrics to it, but I think it is a massive part of what PAU has been for the last nine years. She's so intentionally looking toward how to make sure the university continues to innovate and grow. I'm excited about the university, because I know she set it up to continue moving in a positive direction.

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Every gift to Palo Alto University helps students thrive today and throughout the year.

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<https://paloaltou.edu/give-today>

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Join PAU's Legacy Society and ensure that your commitment to advancing mental and behavioral health lives on for generations.

Through the Legacy Society, your planned gift becomes part of a lasting tradition that supports students, fuels research, and strengthens PAU's mission to create a healthier, more just world.

Be remembered for what matters most.

To learn more about joining the Legacy Society, contact the Development Office at Giving@paloaltou.edu

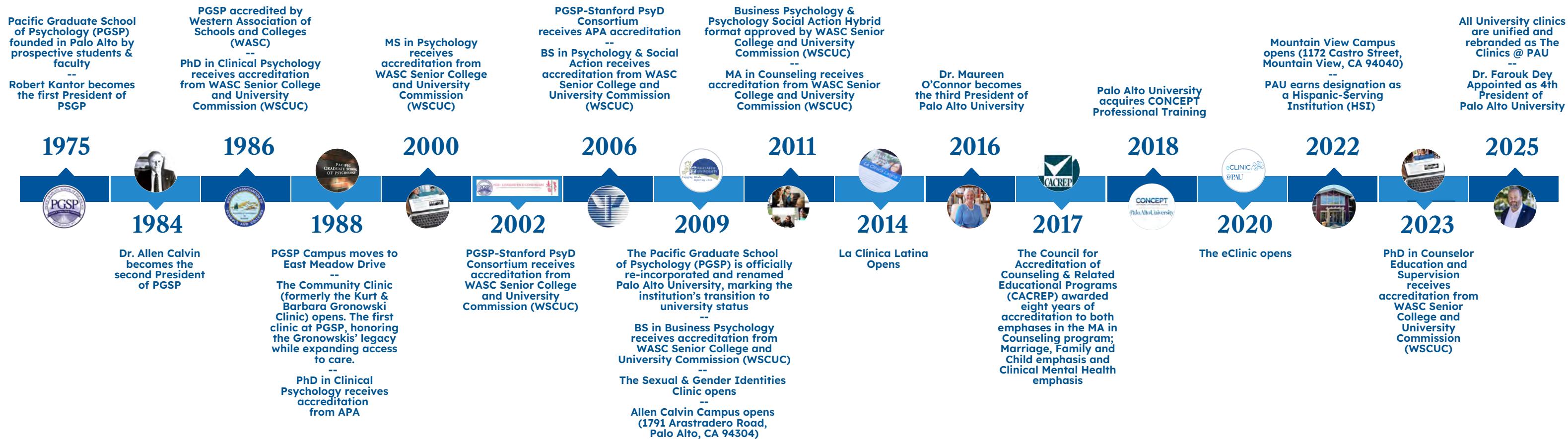


Campus History

50 Years, Many Milestones

As Palo Alto University marks its 50th anniversary, we invite you to take a walk through our history. This timeline highlights key moments that shaped our growth—from our early beginnings as the Pacific Graduate School of Psychology to our evolution into a nationally recognized university.

Each milestone reflects the dedication of our faculty, students, and alumni, and the shared commitment that has guided PAU for five decades.



Tell Your PAU Story

Alongside keepsakes, we're collecting personal stories to highlight throughout our anniversary year. Whether it's a life-changing mentor, a friendship that lasted decades, or the moment you knew you were on the right path, your memories keep the spirit of PAU alive.

Your story may be featured online, in print, and at anniversary events as part of our yearlong celebration.

Consider sharing:

- Your favorite PAU memory
- The most influential person you met here, and why
- A team, club, or project that shaped your experience
- A space or place on campus that held special meaning
- How PAU helped shape where you are today

Submit your story using the QR code.



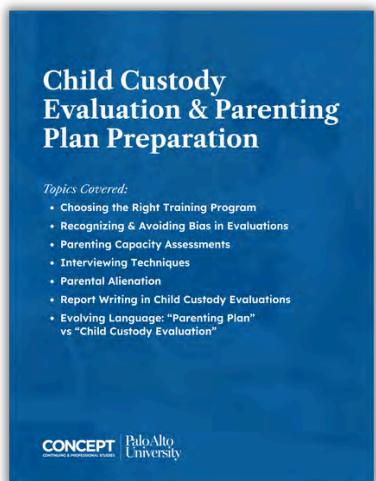
Navigating Your Future:

Your Gateway to Psychology Education, Career Development, and Professional Excellence



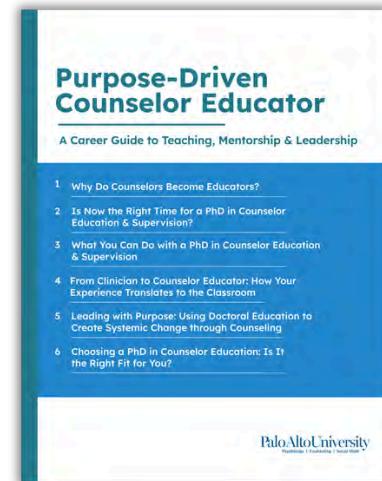
Palo Alto University's Resource Hub

Palo Alto University's Resource Hub provides a wide range of free resources created to support learning, career exploration, and professional growth in behavioral health. Grounded in academic expertise and practical experience, these materials reflect PAU's commitment to advancing human understanding and meaningful impact. The **free eBooks** featured below, along with the additional blog and podcasts, provide a snapshot of this work; many more resources can be found at paloaltou.edu/resources.



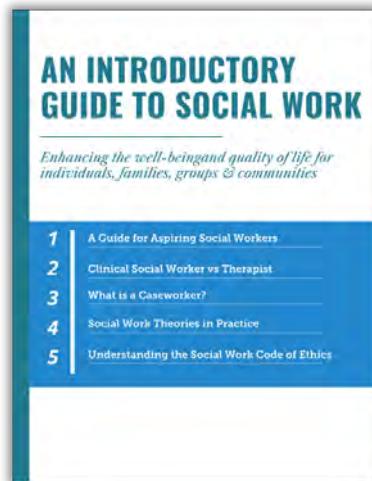
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We Hope You Find Our Resources Helpful!

Contributors for our resources include a variety of subject matter experts that share practical tips, guidance, and best practices. We strive to share the most relevant information across a variety of diverse subjects to provide a broader understanding of behavioral health.

PAU Blog Resources



A Definitive Guide to Psychology Graduate Degrees & Trending Career Opportunities

Psychology is a multifaceted field that leads to a host of careers, projects, and passionate work for those invested in mental and behavioral science.

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What Degree Should You Choose? Comparing Psychology, Counseling & Social Work

There's no single "right" path in mental health. Every degree opens up different doors depending on what you want for your future.

[Learn more](#)



5 Psychology Degrees, 20 In-Demand Career Fields & Careers You Might Not Have Considered

Build Your Future. Psychology and Counseling is a multifaceted, unique field that combines science.

[Learn more](#)

Talking Mental Health Careers Podcast

Pathways to Impact: Careers in Forensic and Correctional Psychology

Pathways to Impact — Careers in Forensic & Correctional Psychology

Join Dr. Patricia Zapf as she interviews experts Dr. Monique Coleman and Dr. Virginia Barber Rioja on their career paths and insights.

[Learn more](#)

Trauma-Informed Care: Career Insights from Frontline Mental Health Experts

Trauma-Informed Care: Career Insights from Frontline Mental Health Experts

Join Dr. Maureen O'Connor as she interviews experts Dr. Lisa Brown, Dr. Jessica Walsh, and Dr. Flora White-Cooper on their career paths and experiences.

[Learn more](#)

Career Paths & Mental Health in the Digital Age

Career Paths and Mental Health in the Digital Age

Build Your Future. Psychology and Counseling is a multifaceted, unique field that combines science.

[Learn more](#)

The Thoughtful Counselor Podcast

AI in Counseling Practice

How AI Can Enhance Your Counseling Practice

Dr. Sheperis highlights how counselors are using AI and emphasizes the rapid adoption of AI compared to past technological shifts.

[Learn more](#)

Lift as You Rise: Leadership & Advocacy

Lift as You Rise: Getting Involved in Counseling Leadership & Advocacy

Drs. Derek X Seward & Megan Speciale sit down with Dr. Carlos Hipolito-Delgado re: his personal journey into counseling leadership & professional advocacy.

[Learn more](#)

Walking Alongside Marginalized Communities

Dr. Amy Ritterbusch shares her experiences with global participatory action research & describes her personal journal of liberation.

[Learn more](#)

50 Years of Impact

50th Anniversary Celebration Week | June 8–13, 2026

In June 2026, Palo Alto University will mark its 50th anniversary with a reimagined Celebration Week that will bring together our campus community and partners. Honoring PAU's legacy while looking ahead, the week spans learning, service, recognition, and celebration, culminating in the Commencement ceremony.

MONDAY, JUNE 8

PAU Masterclass

A featured learning session to open Celebration Week, spotlighting the work, ideas, and impact that have shaped PAU for 50 years.

TUESDAY, JUNE 9

Community Lunch

A community lunch will take place as a moment for connection, reflection, and celebration across PAU.

Annual PAU @ the SF Giants Game

PAU will gather at a San Francisco Giants game for an evening of community, fun, and PAU pride.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10

Community Service Day

PAU will host a Community Service Day focused on giving back and strengthening connections through service.

PAU Stars Celebration

An annual event dedicated to students, each year we recognize student achievement, leadership, and the impact students make within and beyond our community.

THURSDAY, JUNE 11

Investiture for President Farouk Dey

A formal ceremonial milestone recognizing President Farouk Dey's investiture and marking PAU's next chapter.

50th Anniversary Gala

An anniversary fundraising gala bringing the PAU community together in support of students, scholarships, and the future of mental and behavioral health.

FRIDAY, JUNE 12

Employee Awards Celebration

PAU will recognize employees for their dedication, leadership, and contributions to our mission and community.

SATURDAY, JUNE 13

2026 Commencement Ceremony

Commencement will celebrate the Class of 2026 and honor the graduates, families, and future mental and behavioral health leaders they represent.