

President's Message



Deborah Seiler

President

The Renaissance Society
of Sacramento

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Renaissance Website:
<https://csus.edu/rensoc>

Key Dates

Monday, Dec. 2

Board of Directors Meeting, 10 am

Friday, Dec. 6

*Final Forum with President Wood
and Deborah Seiler*

Friday, Dec. 6

*First Friday Envelopes, Holiday
Party*

Friday, Dec. 13

Program Leaders Workshop

First Week of Jan.

At a Glance Schedule Mailed

Friday, Jan. 17

Orientation & Open House

Monday, Feb. 3

*Renaissance Spring 2025 Classes
Begin*



Holiday Gifts

As we say goodbye to our Fall 2024 semester, it is gratifying to reflect on the many wonderful seminars, one-time presentations, shared interest groups, and Forum presentations we have enjoyed.

We also reflect on wonderful social occasions. Courtesy of our social organizers, Allan Keown and Deanna Hanson, we enjoyed a Fall Social at Urban Roots and a New Member Dinner at Twin Lotus Thai. We look forward to a Holiday Dinner at Engrained restaurant in the university union on Dec. 6. Allan recently vowed it will be “kicked up” this year and his enthusiasm is infectious. Our First Friday pizza parties in the university Round Table restaurant were well attended, with laughter and robust conversation.

Our hard-working volunteers continued to ensure high quality and more diverse programming, careful fiscal management, consistent communication tools, excellent interaction with students, and generous philanthropy. Our membership is up slightly from last year at this time, though our diversity is still a work in progress. The retreat in August spawned concrete suggestions for improving our retention of members, bolstering our leadership team and continuous improvement of our learning programs.

Our staff members, Amber Korb, Lorene Sarne, and Sandra Ward excel in serving our members and supporting leadership and program leaders.

I have been told privately that our standing with the university is at an all-time high. This includes recognition by the ASI Food Pantry and meetings with the new Vice President for University Advancement, Michael Reza. As a member of the “President’s Circle,” I have been fortunate to meet the President and his leadership team on various occasions when I have felt warmly welcomed.

For me, these are true holiday gifts.

I wish all of you a loving holiday season and hope for 2025.

Deborah



SPRING MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Give a Gift of Membership

Are you wondering what to give family and friends for the holidays? Most of us don't need more "stuff" but we always need to learn, connect, and share. And now is the time to get a good holiday bargain.

For the remainder of the Fall 2024 semester and the entire Spring 2025 semester, the cost is only \$60. As always, the Summer Program is free and open to the public. Please be sure to attend our Orientation and Open House on Friday, January 17 at 10 am in the Hinde Auditorium and bring your new member.

Spring classes begin on February 3.

**Membership for the Spring 2025 Academic Semester is
\$60.00 per person.**

There are two ways to **renew, sign up, or give a gift** of membership:

- 1) **Online** with a credit card payment or
- 2) **By Check** and mailing it in with the print-friendly form available here: <https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/renaissance-society/membership-open.html#apply-on-paper>

Registering online is the fastest, most efficient method and saves us administrative costs. The paper version is available if your online access is limited.

Do not complete the online registration information more than one time because your credit card will be charged each time. If you think your payment did not go through, phone the Renaissance Office at (916) 758-5133 or email renaissa@csus.edu.

Note: Instructions for purchasing parking permits are available at <https://tinyurl.com/RSparking>. Parking Permits cost \$42 and are valid through June 30, 2025.

Go to the UTAPS online parking portal at https://sacstate.t2hosted.com/cmnauth_ext.aspx

You can also get a permit in person by visiting the UTAPS parking office which is located next to the Welcome Center on State University Drive.

Free 30 minute parking is available and the staff are friendly and helpful.

Share your Renaissance experience with a friend!



Volunteer Highlights
Mike Agron and Laurye Brownfield

By Deborah Seiler



Mike Agron throws himself into everything he does with excellence

Mike is well known to many members for the music seminars he leads to packed rooms and Zoom audiences. His classes cover Sinatra to Brill

Building artists to Motown and, currently, to songs about transportation. He is renowned for his musical selections, his smooth precision in presenting them, and his good humor after many hours of work. He expertly tracks and surveys what his audience prefers, solicits their feedback, and adjusts accordingly.

When Covid shut down our in-person operations, Mike was the key to our success in transitioning quickly to save us. With his professional webinar expertise, he led Renaissance into the brave new world of online presentations, keeping our society alive when all the doors closed. He then schooled other program leaders on ways to use Zoom and, as we gradually returned to campus, on ways to present classes effectively in “hybrid” mode, both in person and Zoom.

For our 2023 Summer Program, Mike spent hours helping us with the technology to present an amazing documentary on rock legend Little Richard, much to the delight of an attentive audience.

Mike never stops working or thinking. As I write this, Mike, along with a colleague from the East Coast, is helping Renaissance use techniques to help us better understand our membership and programming. How can we tap our membership database to identify and reach out to new members to query their satisfaction? How can we reach out to non-renewing members to learn what we might do better?

In short, Mike is showing us ways to use what we do know to find out what we don't yet know to improve our organization.



Laurye Brownfield provides true leadership with a gentle hand.

Laurye is one of those people who might happily go under the proverbial radar.

She's a compelling speaker but prefers to stay away from the

microphone. She quietly assists high profile program leaders such as Mike Agron, Bob Lang, and Jack Jennings with their ever-popular music programs and Jack's Friday Diversity Series to make their sessions successful and available for Zoom audiences.

She has also organized a class to teach us about music and entertainment venues which entailed extensive research and commitment.

Above all, Laurye is a leader.

She has served for four years as Chair of the Scholarship Committee, retaining a devoted group of committee members with almost no turnover. As Chair, she completely professionalized the manner in which scholarship recipients are selected, maintained precise records of the proceedings, and led her committee to depart from a manual system to an automated one that saved time and energy both for the committee members and Sac State staff with whom the committee works.

She tirelessly reviewed over 100 scholarship applications last spring and corralled busy student recipients to submit short videos and attend the Annual Meeting.

But her expertise and past life as a CA State Project Manager has led her also to organize Renaissance Tech Hosts, so vitally important for most of our program leaders.

Thank you, Laurye!



December Forum

All Forums occur on Friday afternoons in Mendocino Hall 1005 from 3 to 4 pm when no other Renaissance seminars, Shared Interest Groups, or presentations are offered.

December 6

Deborah Seiler: Fall Semester 2024, A

Retrospective

President Seiler will offer an overview of the Fall 2024 semester. In addition, Sacramento State President, Dr. Luke Wood, will speak about current campus initiatives, including the new Black Honors College.



This Forum will also honor Dr. Dianne Hyson, Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies. Dean Hyson, who has served as our liaison with Sac State, will step down as Dean at the end of this Fall semester.



The event will be followed by a Holiday Dinner at Engrained Restaurant in the University Union.



SACRAMENTO
STATE

Sac State Theater & Dance Usher Volunteers

By Carol Barake

The Sac State Theater Department has provided opportunities for Renaissance members to serve as ushers at the Fall performances underway. A new link has been provided to Renaissance members to sign up for a specific performance time and date.

The SignUp portal will help the department streamline the process of coordinating with our members who wish to volunteer. Note that only three (3) Renaissance volunteers per performance will be allowed on the portal. Here's how it works in 3 easy steps:

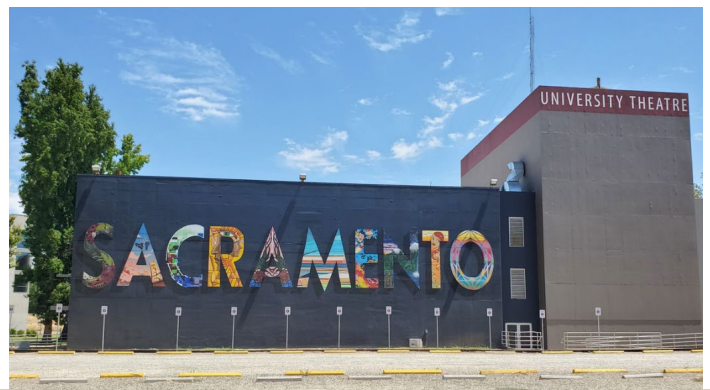
1. Click this link to see our SignUp: <https://signup.com/go/qwxkoMq>
2. Review the options listed and choose the spots you like.
3. Sign up!

It's easy! You will NOT need to register an account or keep a password on SignUp.

Currently, the Theater Department has loaded the performance dates and times for *Bulrush* by Eisa Davis. You can learn more about this production, as well as ticket purchase and parking information on the Sac State Theater Department website.

Free parking is NOT available for ticketed events on campus, including volunteers.

Links to purchase parking permits is provided on the Sac State Theater website: Theatre & Dance | Sacramento State



Did You Know?

By Deborah Seiler

The Dept of Physical Therapy provides multiple services to Renaissance Society members.

SPRING SEMESTER

Adult Neurologic Clinic

This clinic is part of a 2-semester adult neurorehabilitation course sequence and is offered free of charge in the spring semester. The clinic consists of 8 visits, which are offered on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, over the course of a month. The first visit is held via Zoom, and all other visits are in person. Volunteers with a neurological diagnosis provide their own transportation to campus and commit to all 8 visits. Common diagnoses are Stroke, Traumatic Brain Injury, Parkinson's disease, Spinal Cord Injury and Multiple Sclerosis. The clinic includes an examination, hands-on treatment and preparation of a home exercise program. Clinical care provided by student physical therapists is supervised directly by a faculty supervisor.

For additional information about this clinic, contact Dr. Mattern-Baxter at (916) 278-5766.

YEAR ROUND

The **Regional, Equitable, Accessible, Community, Health (REACH) Community Clinic** at CSUS is the Physical Therapy Department's newest pro-bono community clinic. We strive to reduce barriers to health care access by providing quality physical therapy care to our community free of charge. Our goal is to provide accessible physical therapy, wellness, and health to the uninsured/under-insured members of the community in the Sacramento area. Student physical therapists work alongside licensed physical therapy faculty to provide free physical therapy services. The clinic takes place in person at Folsom Hall, 7667 Folsom Blvd, room 1055. The clinic schedules clients throughout the year. For clinic availability, please contact us at ptclinic@csus.edu or call 916-278-6564.

Did you know?

We are a 99% volunteer organization. Yes, we have three wonderful staff members, but they are limited to 19.5 hours per week. This is because they are officially employed by our fiscal sponsor, University Enterprises, Inc.

Dining Together December

By Cheryl Nelson

Dining Together will meet at
Seasons 52

Arden Fair Mall, 1689 Arden Way,
(seasons52.com/locations/ca/sacramento/sacramento/4534)

at

5:30 PM on Wednesday, December 11, 2024.

A maximum of 20 members may attend.

Dining Together members who wish to attend should RSVP to Cheryl Nelson:

slynnsearch@yahoo.com, or, (916) 421-0407
no later than December 10, 2023.

Separate checks will be provided. Parking is available.



This means we need to harvest all the amazing talent in this organization. Tap your inner interests and check out our various committees. What can you do to help ensure this organization thrives?

We need members to consider serving as members at large and committee chairs. If you are interested contact susan.brackenhoff@gmail.com

Did you know?

An enjoyable and helpful volunteer opportunity is to serve on one of the first two Fridays of each semester at our Help Desk. This is a fun way to meet members, help them find their classes, get their badges, advise them on first Friday events as well as good places to join Renaissance members for lunch. If you are interested, please contact Peter Clive Mundy at pcmundy@ucdavis.edu



Indigenous Teachings for Our Times

By Allan Keown and Al Striplin

Human life and experience have always been explained by metaphor and symbolism, especially within ancient cultures. But when Indigenous teachings have been mingled with modern philosophies and church dogmas, confusion rather than clarity often has followed.

Humanity and the Earth are now in the midst of great change and emotional turmoil. Everyday conversations often embody fear, disappointment, confusion, frustration, and anger. Different ways to understand current events abound. Indigenous philosophies that embody the concepts of natural cycles and evolution are two of the ways available.

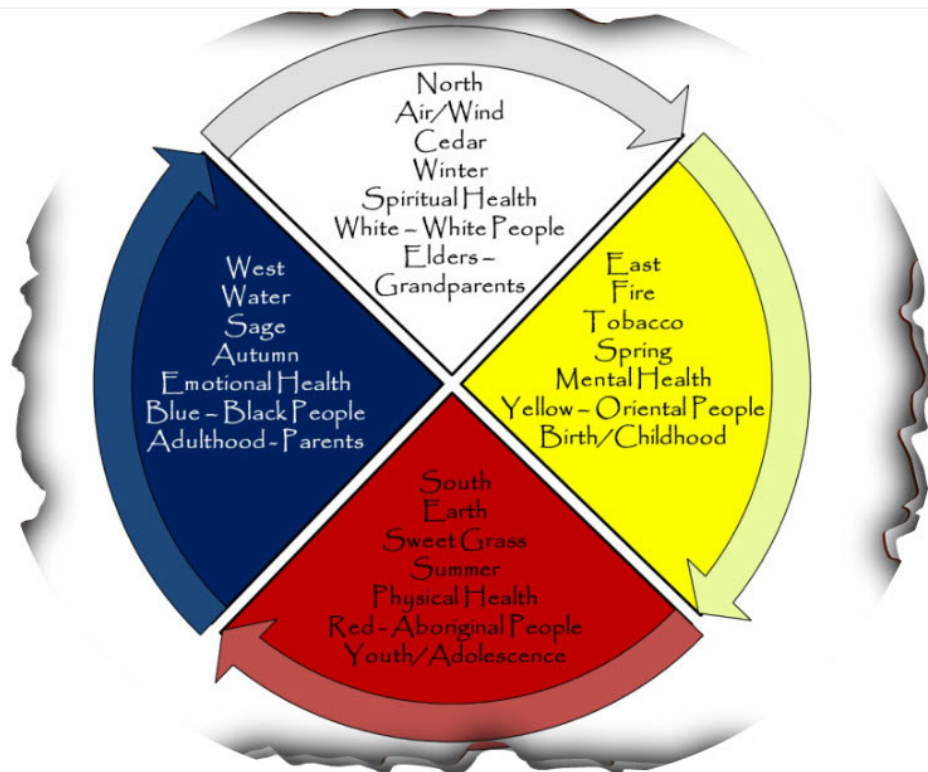
The key concepts are balance, harmony, compassion, and our responsibility to empower these energies to disempower the energies of fear and anger that separate us. The Native American Medicine Wheel is the vehicle that carries the positive message of hope and self-empowerment which are natural to humans.

The Native American Medicine Wheel

The Native American Medicine Wheel is a sacred symbol and physical structure used by most Native American tribes for health, healing, and spiritual purposes. It is a circle divided into four quadrants representing the four directions. Its four colors (white, yellow, red, black) can signify the seasons, stages/cycles of life, human races, and elements: fire, air, water, and earth. With this perspective we observe how far America is out of balance and lacks basic harmony.

The struggle for balance, harmony, and compassion is both personal and social in specific actions: praying, donating, volunteering, listening, dancing, etc. A clarion call for 24/7 service and engagement is now omnipresent to save our nation and our world from greed, destruction, dominion, and grief for decades to come..

Amen



The Holiday Season in the United States: A Celebration of Diverse Traditions.

By Darryl Freeman

While Christmas, Hanukkah, and New Year's Day dominate much of the mainstream celebration, the diverse tapestry of the country means that different ethnic groups bring their own unique customs and traditions to the holiday season. As we participate in our own unique celebrations, there is social value to recognize the rich cultural variety that defines this time of year, and how some of the many ways different ethnic communities celebrate the holidays between the months of November and January.

Thanksgiving, observed on the fourth Thursday in November, is perhaps one of the most universally recognized holidays in the U.S. However, the way it's celebrated can vary significantly across cultural and ethnic lines. For many, it's a day of feasting and family, but the foods, customs, and even the history behind the day take on different meanings.

Many African American families incorporate soul food into their Thanksgiving celebrations, such as collard greens, cornbread, fried turkey, and sweet potato pie. For some, the holiday holds deeper cultural significance, as it serves as a time to reflect on heritage, family, and the broader historical African American experience.

For Native American communities, Thanksgiving can be a complex and sometimes controversial holiday, as it is tied to the history of European colonization. Some Native Americans commemorate the day as a National Day of Mourning, reflecting on the impact of colonization on their people and land.

However, others celebrate it as a time to gather and share in community. Native foods like corn, squash, and turkey might be featured in their meals, but they may also highlight foods significant to their specific tribal heritage.

For Jewish Americans, Hanukkah (or Chanukah), which usually falls in December, is a joyous eight-day festival commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem and the miracle of the oil that lasted eight days. While it's not one of the holiest days in the Jewish calendar, Hanukkah has grown in prominence in the U.S., especially as a family-centered celebration.

Hanukkah celebrations include lighting the menorah, a candle holder with nine branches, one for each night of the holiday and a central candle (the "shamash") used to light the others. Families also gather for special meals, playing games like the dreidel (a spinning top), and eating foods fried in oil to remember the miracle, such as latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly

doughnuts).

Within the Jewish community, celebrations can vary based on cultural background. For instance, Ashkenazi Jews (descendants of Eastern European Jews) are more likely to make latkes, while Sephardic Jews (who trace their roots to Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East) might serve foods like burekas (savory pastries) and dairy dishes.

Christmas, celebrated on December 25, is the largest holiday in the U.S., but its celebration is a blend of religious and secular activities differing greatly depending on ethnic groups' historical experience in this country.

Christmas is a deeply religious holiday for many Latino families, often beginning with a midnight Mass known as "Misa de Gallo" (Rooster's Mass). The season may last through the New Year, with celebrations culminating in "Día de los Reyes" (Three Kings' Day) on January 6. Food plays a central role, with dishes like tamales, bacalao (salted cod), and ponche (a warm fruit punch) often featured. In some countries, like Puerto Rico, Nochebuena (Christmas Eve) is the main event, with family gatherings lasting well into the early morning hours.

For many Italian Americans, Christmas includes both religious and secular traditions. Christmas Eve (La Vigilia) is especially significant, with a feast known as the "Feast of the Seven Fishes," where families serve various seafood dishes. Christmas Day often involves a large family meal, featuring pasta, roasted meats, and Italian desserts like panettone or cannoli. The celebration of Epiphany (January 6) is also important in many Italian communities, marking the arrival of the Three Kings.

While many African Americans celebrate Christmas in ways similar to the general American population—decorating Christmas trees, exchanging gifts, and sharing festive meals—there are also unique aspects to their observance. Christmas often features gospel music, both in church services and during family gatherings. A number of African American communities also participate in the "Kwanzaa" tradition, which starts the day after Christmas (December 26) and runs through January 1, celebrating African heritage with seven guiding principles (Nguzo Saba).

Many Asian American families celebrate Christmas and the Lunar New Year with family gatherings, festive foods, and cultural events. Additionally,

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January Submissions Due: December 2

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(continued from page 7)

Southeast Asian communities, particularly Vietnamese

Americans, celebrate Tet, the Vietnamese New Year, with customs similar to Chinese New Year but unique to their own culture, including special foods and family ceremonies.

For Arab Americans, the holiday season can include celebrations of both Christmas and the Islamic New Year, depending on religious affiliation. Many Arab-American families also celebrate Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, which occur based on the Islamic lunar calendar, although they often fall outside the traditional November-January holiday window of this country.

The arrival of the New Year is marked by fireworks, celebrations, and resolutions across the U.S., but ethnic groups often have their own unique customs tied to ringing in the new year.

Chinese New Year (January or February): While not strictly part of the "holiday season" in the Western

calendar, many Chinese Americans celebrate the Lunar New Year, which typically falls between January 21 and February 20. The holiday is filled with festivities such as dragon and lion dances, family feasts, and giving red envelopes filled with money for good luck. Special foods like dumplings, spring rolls, and fish are prepared to symbolize prosperity and happiness.

The holiday season in the United States is a complex and ever-evolving celebration, rich with cultural diversity. Whether you are spending it with family, friends, or community, the months between November and January offer countless opportunities to engage with and appreciate the unique traditions of the many ethnic groups that make up American society.

For Renaissance members it's a perfect time to learn about the varied cultural expressions that fill the air with light, joy, and meaning, offering new ways to connect with the broader world and deepen your appreciation for the mosaic of American life.

