

President's Message



Deborah Seiler

President

The Renaissance Society
of Sacramento

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

Key Dates

Week of Jan. 3 –
At A Glance available
Mon. Jan. 6 –
Board of Directors Meeting
Mon Jan. 13-
Spring Catalog Posted;
Fri. Jan. 17-
Orientation and Open House
Mon, Jan 20
March for the Dream
Tues Jan 21
Spring Program Enrollment
Opens;
Tues Jan 21
Member Survey mailed
Sat. Jan 25-
MLK Jr. event
Mon. Feb. 3-
Renaissance classes begin



Welcome to 2025 and our Renaissance Spring Semester

A new year always fills me with hope. At the national level the future may look uncertain, but here within our Sac State community there is ample goodwill, strong commitment to new initiatives, and progress towards social justice.

At our final Forum on Dec. 6, President Luke Wood shared his vision for the coming year with ever increasing enrollment and four-year graduation rates along with progress on a new stadium.

See the Forum here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGaPzktlnlU>

Our long-term liaison with Sac State, Dr. Dianne Hyson has stepped down as dean, but we are in excellent hands with Interim Dean Dr. Marya Endriga. And Dianne promises to remain close at hand.

Our Spring program lineup looks strong with some innovative new additions. To learn more, our Orientation and Open House event is coming up on Friday, January 17 at 10 am in the Hinde Auditorium. Bring a friend to visit program leaders' tables, enjoy cookies and socializing, and take a campus tour. Importantly, we will provide more information about the on-campus parking process!

Here is my challenge for 2025:

We need Zoom tech hosts. Our hard-working program leaders need much more help to make sure their Zoom classes function smoothly and their in-person classes can be broadcast on Zoom. It's not rocket science, and the Technology Committee will teach you.

Got good ideas? We need help on the Program Committee to bring creative new programs. It's easy. Either send your suggestions to the Program Committee or to me. pcmundy@ucdavis.edu or deborah.seiler2@gmail.com Better yet, join the committee.

Have great connections in the community? Help us recruit Forum speakers on diverse and stimulating subjects.

We need a Forum Committee co-chair. It's a fun way to meet prominent members of the community as well as interact with other Renaissance members. Contact me.

A new year.

A new beginning.

New opportunities to learn, connect, and share.

Join and bring your friends!

Deborah



President Wood and Dean Hyson at Renaissance December Forum

Sac State Students Vote to Add a Second Mascot, the Squirrel

By Deborah Seiler

On Friday, December 6 we celebrated our last Friday Forum by welcoming Sac State President, Dr. Luke Wood and sharing his holiday video with Guardian Scholars around the piano singing the Beatles tune, "Let It Be."



President Wood devoted 40 precious minutes to being with our Renaissance Society. He told about moving Guardian Scholars, former foster youth, and Project Rebound, formerly incarcerated students, to the seat of power in Sacramento Hall.

He noted the number of Guardian Scholars increased from 150 last year to nearly 200 this year with a Guardian Promise of guaranteed admission to those who spent time in foster care and who meet the university's admission standards.

He proudly noted the great diversity of students at Sac State, which has the largest population of Black students of all the CSUs and UCs, has 37% of students who are Hispanic, 22% Asian Pacific Islander, and the largest population of Native American students in all the CSUs.

President Wood spoke about the largest incoming Fall enrollment in the history of Sac State at 8,500, described the graduation ceremony for students unable to "walk" during the pandemic, and shared plans for the new sports stadium. He responded to members' questions with great candor.



The Forum was also an opportunity to honor Dr. Dianne Hyson, Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary studies who has served as our official liaison with Sac State since 2017.



Dr. Hyson is stepping down as Dean to pursue other important endeavors on campus but will continue to devote 20% of her time to the College of SSIS.

She was honored for her unwavering support by attending Board meetings, Orientation events, and our Annual Meetings. She brought her problem solving skills to help us navigate relations with University Enterprises, Inc., College of Continuing Education, and Information Resources & Technology.

During difficult times, notably the pandemic, the uncertain return to campus, a faculty strike, budget cuts, and on campus demonstrations, she offered candid analysis and as much information as she was at liberty to share.

She was honored with an honorary lifetime membership in the Renaissance Society, a memorial brick at the new Art Building, and a huge bouquet of flowers. She shared her admiration for Renaissance and described her role as liaison as "a labor of love."

Sac State has a new Mascot and Renaissance has a new motto.

President Wood took time during his remarks to share the outcome of a recent election. At the suggestion of a student to add a second mascot — a squirrel— the administration turned to the Associated Student government which embraced the idea and put it to a vote.

Options were 1) keep Herky only; 2) give Herky a new friend, a squirrel; 3) add another mascot such as a turkey, chicken or other alternative.

Perhaps they were nuts, but students voted to add a squirrel mascot. A competition for its design is forthcoming.

For us, the motto is now, "gather ye acorns while ye may."



ASI Food Pantry “Friendsgiving Feast”

By Jennifer K. Morita

On Monday, November 25 the Associated Students Inc. (ASI) Food Pantry hosted its first “Friendsgiving Feast” for Sacramento State students in need of a hot holiday meal complete with all the traditional fixings.

The ASI Food Pantry team transformed the organization’s annual Thanksgiving food baskets into a warm, vibrant community gathering to better meet students’ needs, said ASI Food Pantry Manager, Sommer Hayes.

“It came from conversations with students that we serve,” she said.

In the past the food baskets included raw ingredients for students to prepare their own meals at home. But many said they lacked the cooking skills to make a proper holiday dinner, while some went home and ate with their families instead.

The ASI Food Pantry partnered with on-campus caterer Epicure to provide the meal, which included roasted turkey with gravy, mashed potatoes, green bean casserole, macaroni and cheese, and of course, dessert.



The event also featured music from the student-run KSSU radio station and games such as Human Bingo, dancing and raffle prizes. Volunteer help included members of the Renaissance Society.

“It’s another way for our students to interact and get to know each other,” Hayes said. “Maybe they can make a few new friends to spend their extended Thanksgiving and Winter breaks with.”

“Financially, students are struggling to live day to day and go to college and meet other family responsibilities,” Hayes said. “We’re hoping this small gathering will help students stay connected with the University and the resources we can provide and foster the idea of being their family away from home.”



Photo Credits: (Sacramento State/University Communications/Bibiana Ortiz)

Gail Reed's Career Path Has Followed Many Avenues

By Judy A. Lewis

Gail Reed's journey from Buffalo, New York to Sacramento was the beginning of an adventurous life. "The winds and temperatures constantly controlled life in Buffalo, and since this was prior



to television, we didn't know anything different," she reports.

At age 18, and engaged to be married to her 28-year old boyfriend, Gail had a change of heart. She and a girlfriend who owned a car devised a plan to travel around the U.S. and then head for Mexico. A roll-over accident in the Utah desert resulted in the friend breaking her hip. When the friend was able to travel, Gail put her on a plane back to Buffalo and caught a bus to California. Since their belongings had been stolen from the damaged car, Gail arrived in Sacramento with a suitcase and ten dollars. She found a room to rent near 16th and J Street and supported herself cleaning people's houses and cooking for them.

A lover of ballroom dancing, Gail located a position at Arthur Murray dance studio, where she taught for one year. When her previous travel partner appeared in Sacramento, the friend moved in with Gail and found a job working for a commercial construction company.

Then the friend announced she was pregnant. Once again, Gail put her on a plane back to Buffalo, and then proceeded to apply for the job with the construction company.

Thus began Gail's 25-year career, where she moved from positions doing secretarial work, pricing, accounting, estimating, office management, vice-president, and finally president of the company. Because she made money for the owners, she was rewarded with bonuses and shares of the company, thus enabling her to purchase a house. Gail found that involving her employees in decision-making processes made for

a cooperative environment within the all-male business.

Throughout her years in the construction business, Gail attended Sacramento City College in the evenings. After 25 years, she decided it was time to move on to something new. Since Gail knew she enjoyed working with people, she earned Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Social Work from Sac State.

She learned of a position at U.C. Davis Medical Center where she worked with people who had bleeding disorders and had contracted AIDS from their blood transfusions. In the 1980s, there was little knowledge about how it was transmitted and the approximately 100 patients who were HIV positive were not sharing their diagnosis with their parents, partners or wives. Her focus was to help the patients set up a support system.

She is proud to report that after ten years as a counselor with the UC Davis bleeding disorder program, the hemophilia program was the only one in the U.S. which did not have any positive wives or babies.

At the age of 62, Gail looked forward to her retirement years, and joined the Renaissance Society. For more than 30 years, she had been studying Eastern religions and attending conferences. She was drawn to a meditation class, and eventually ended up facilitating the course for eleven years, while sharing the information she had gleaned on her spiritual journey. COVID brought that endeavor to a halt.

Currently, Gail draws inspiration from participating in the Renaissance Society's walking group as well as game and lunch groups with friends.

So far, she reports, she is extremely happy with her life journey of mental, emotional, and spiritual challenges and has reached a place of quiet contemplation.



Invite Friends To Renaissance Society

By Sheldon Yee

We Bid The Semester Farewell
Now Four Months Smarter
So Obvious, Can't You Tell?
Lifelong Learning
Online Or In Class
And The Best Part Of All
Guaranteed Academic Pass
Broaden Your Perspective
With Your Community Align
The World Offers Knowledge
To Combat Mental Decline.
Seminar Content
Always Relevant And Truthful
Build Character And Wisdom
Stay Attractive And Youthful.
Most Presenters Are Not Experts
Simply Teaching Peer-2-Peer
Truly A Testament
We're Still Standing And Here.
Whether You Seek Stimulation
Or Meditative Stillness
Renaissance Can Improve
Your Pre-Existing Illness.
Challenge Your Curiosity
Satisfy Your Hunger
Inspiration Is Available
To Help All Stay Younger
If Renaissance Has Enriched You
Invite Your Friends
Where The Joy Of Learning
Continues Without End.



Dining Together January

By Cheryl Nelson

Dining Together will meet at
MESA MERCADO,
(mesamercado.com)
6241 Fair Oaks Blvd.,
at 5:30 PM on January 8, 2025.
Dining Together members
who wish to attend should RSVP to Thelma Zuniga
by email atlavenderlady57@gmail.com
or phone at
(408) 427-7439 no later than January 5, 2025



Separate checks will be provided.
Parking is available.



Classical Music Seminar Awards Grants

By Robert Seyfried

The final day of the Fall, 2024 Classical Music Seminar was again quite special. The members of this seminar again contributed enough money to award two \$1,000 grants to students selected by our College of Music.

Our winners this semester were Alla Chistykhova, Violin, and Evan Wright, Saxophone/Composer and both were selected for their academic excellence.

Also in attendance at this ceremony were Stephen Blumberg, Director of the School of Music, Deborah Seiler, President of the Renaissance Society and Professors Greg Johnson and Scott Perkins.

Bob Seyfried and Leo Eylar noted that over \$85,000 has been raised for music student grants over the years by the participants of the Classical Music Seminar and, for this, we are all most gratified and pleased.



The Other Winter Holidays

By Darryl O. Freeman

Christmas celebrations dominate the social and religious life of many people that live in the United States. The immigration of people from around the world has introduced America to many other religious and secular celebrations. This article briefly explores four of these other winter season celebrations.



Hanukkah

Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights, is a Jewish holiday that celebrates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem during the second century BCE. Its origin lies in the historical events surrounding the Maccabean Revolt, which took place in the 160s BCE. At Seleucid king Antiochus IV, who ruled Judea imposed Hellenistic practices on the population and desecrated the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem by installing an altar to the Greek god Zeus. This provoked a rebellion led by the Jewish priestly family of the Maccabees, who successfully defeated the Seleucid forces, reclaimed the Temple in eight days, and restored traditional Jewish religious practices.



This miracle is the core event commemorated by Hanukkah, which is observed for eight days, beginning on the 25th of Kislev in the Jewish lunar calendar. The holiday's central ritual involves lighting the menorah, a special candelabra with eight branches, plus a ninth holder for the "shamash" (the helper candle used to light the others). On each successive night of Hanukkah, one additional candle is lit until all eight are burning on the final night.

In some places, especially in the United States, Hanukkah has taken on elements of a more secular celebration, with a focus on family bonding, gift-giving, and public menorah lightings.

Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is a vibrant cultural holiday that celebrates African heritage, unity, and community. It was established in 1966 by Dr. Maulana

Karenga, a professor of Africana studies, in the midst of the civil rights movement. Seeking to promote African-American cultural pride and reconnect people with their African roots, Karenga created Kwanzaa as a week-long celebration highlighting principles and practices central to African traditions.

The name "Kwanzaa" is derived from the Swahili phrase *matunda ya kwanza*, which means "first fruits." Spanning from December 26 to January 1, Kwanzaa incorporates a blend of modern and traditional customs, serving as both a cultural and educational event.

At the heart of Kwanzaa are the *Nguzo Saba*, or "Seven Principles," which guide the celebration.

These principles are: *Umoja* (Unity), *Kujichagulia* (Self Determination), *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility), *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics), *Nia* (Purpose), *Kuumba* (Creativity), and *Imani* (Faith).



A *kinara*, or candleholder, holds seven candles: one black, three red, and three green. Each candle represents one of the seven principles, with the lighting of a new candle each day sparking reflection and discussion, all of which symbolize the collective legacy and aspirations of the black community.

Kwanzaa celebrations are diverse and adaptable, reflecting the creativity and unique traditions of each family. Although Kwanzaa is not tied to any specific religion, over the years, it has grown from a small, grassroots movement into an internationally recognized observance.

Chinese New Year

Chinese New Year, also known as the Lunar New Year or Spring Festival, is one of the most significant and widely celebrated festivals in Chinese culture. With roots that trace back over 3,000 years, this annual event marks the beginning of the lunar calendar and is deeply intertwined. The origins of Chinese New Year stem from ancient agricultural society, where it was initially celebrated as a time to

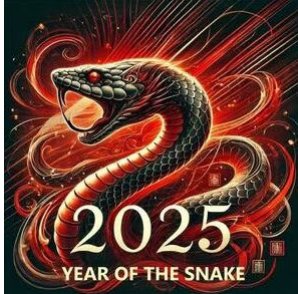
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The Other Winter Holidays

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honor deities and ancestors while ushering in a new year of planting and harvest.



The Chinese New Year celebration spans 15 days, beginning on the eve of the lunar new year and culminating with the Lantern Festival. Each day is associated with specific customs and rituals, many of which center around family,

prosperity, and renewal. Key traditions include; Reunion Dinners, Red Envelopes (money), decorations (red lanterns, paper cutouts). The use of fireworks and traditional performances like lion and dragon dances are integral to the celebrations, showcasing vibrant cultural artistry while driving away misfortune.

Today, Chinese New Year is celebrated not only in China but across the globe, particularly in countries with significant Chinese communities. Cities like Singapore, San Francisco, and Sydney host large parades and festivals, blending traditional elements with contemporary times. The holiday has also gained recognition as a time of cultural appreciation, with people from diverse backgrounds participating in the festivities.

Each Chinese New Year corresponds to one of the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac. These animals, such as the Rat, Ox, and Dragon, are thought to influence the year's characteristics and the fortunes of those born under their signs. The year 2025 is the year of the Wood Snake.

Eid al-Fitr

Eid al-Fitr, often referred to as the "Festival of Breaking the Fast," is one of the most significant celebrations in Islam. This occasion marks the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, prayer, and reflection observed by Muslims worldwide. Rooted in Islamic traditions and teachings, Eid al-Fitr is both a spiritual and social event, reflecting the values of gratitude, generosity, and unity.

The origins of Eid al-Fitr can be traced back to the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in 7th-century Arabia. According to Islamic tradition, the festival was established after the Prophet received divine revelation of the Quran during Ramadan. Following the month of fasting, Muslims were instructed to celebrate the completion of their devotion by gathering as a community, offering special prayers, and sharing their blessings with others.

Central to the observance of Eid al-Fitr is the act of giving. Muslims are required to pay Zakat al-Fitr, a charitable donation made to ensure that those in need can also partake in the celebrations. This act underscores the importance of compassion and social responsibility in Islam.

Eid al-Fitr is a time for feasting and festivity. Families and friends gather to share meals, exchange gifts, and strengthen their bonds. Traditional foods vary by region, reflecting the rich diversity of Muslim cultures, but they often include sweet delicacies, symbolizing the sweetness of faith and fellowship.

Eid al-Fitr is more than a celebration marking the end of Ramadan. It is a manifestation of faith, unity, and generosity, rooted in Islamic tradition. As Muslims across the globe gather to observe this sacred festival, they reaffirm their commitment to these principles, creating a ripple of joy and compassion that transcends borders.



The general tenant of all of these religious and secular practices as with Christmas is to promote peace and brotherhood among the people of the world.



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February Submissions Due: January 2

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On Wednesday, Dec. 4, the Walkabout group concluded the semester with a lovely walk through William Land Park. Organized by Donna Eash, with help from Steve Scott and Alan Wong, the group toured historic landmarks before going to a farewell lunch.

