

THE WORD

Summer 2025

PILGRIMS OF HOPE





THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE

Home-coming

There's truly no place like UIW during



There's truly no place like UIW during Home-coming—a time when the Incarnate Word family, near and far, returns to the start of their journey. As we gather under the theme There's No Place Like Home(coming), we celebrate the familiar faces, the lasting friendships and the Mission that first brought us together.

JOIN US

OCT. 25 – NOV. 2, 2025

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Summer 2025

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Editor
Stephanie Denning

Photography
Robin Jerstad
Ed Ornelas

Contributing Writers
 Leo Almazan, PhD, HEC-C
 Krystal Cantu-Cuate
 Devin Castillo
 Lena Gokelman, BM '85
 Clarissa Guana, MS '23
 Michael Valdes

Director of Alumni Relations
Ana P. Bribiesca Hoff, BA '12, MA '20

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CONTENTS

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 11** Living the Word
Celebrations and reflections on the UIW Mission
- 16** Class Notes
Announcements and achievements
- 18** Cardinal Athletics
Cardinal football
- 19** University Collective
Announcements and achievements from our alumni
- 22** Calendar
Save the date

FEATURES

- 5** Pilgrims of Hope
Our sung prayer and shared ministry
- 8** Celebrating the Best of Humanity
UIW and the Interfaith San Antonio Alliance Host the Second Annual Festival of Faiths
- 14** Marissa Watters,
BBA '20, MBA '22
Alumni stories
- 23** A Jubilee of Hope

Do you know someone interested in attending UIW? For more information on what UIW has to offer or to schedule a campus visit, go to uiw.edu/admissions

For correspondence or to change your address: pr@uiwtx.edu

ON THE COVER:

James Tan, St. Thomas the Apostle parishioner from Canyon Lake, was a member of the liturgy and music planning team for the NPM "On the Road" mini-conference.



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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Alumni and Friends,

In looking ahead to the coming 2025 Jubilee Holy Year, Pope Francis called us to be “pilgrims of hope.” In his papal bull, he wrote: “for all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. God’s word helps us find reasons for that hope.” In this edition, we honor this theme, and Pope Francis’ legacy, by sharing stories of hope and unity across our community.

In the coming pages, we share a behind the scenes look at a gathering of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians that worked together to enrich musical liturgy and gifted us with their sung prayer (p. 5). We also offer a preview of the coming Festival of Faiths, the second annual celebration of our city’s rich diversity of religious traditions that encourages greater understanding (p. 8). Alumna Mariana Barron Esper channeled her music education and exceptional talent into rising stardom that recently earned her multiple nominations from the International Catholic Music Awards (p. 11). Marissa Watters, a two-time UIW graduate, has continued to live out her commitment to community service and now shares it with other young University students as part of her new role (p. 14). Finally, we close with a reflection by Fr. Leo Almazan, PhD, on Pope Francis’ call for this holy year (p. 23).

As we move away from the long, restful days of summer, we look ahead to the coming of a new season full of potential. I hope that you are inspired by the stories presented in this digital edition.

Praised be the Incarnate Word!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas M. Evans". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'T' and 'E'.

Thomas M. Evans, PhD
President



Pilgrims of Hope

Our Sung Prayer and Shared Ministry

By Lena Gokelman, BM '85

By Lena Gokelman

Special thanks to the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, for hosting several events in the Chapel of the Incarnate Word

Lex orandi, lex credendi...

"what we pray is what we believe."

Music, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constantly influences the rich tapestry of our human experience – especially our memories and emotions.

It can be enriching or distracting, with the ability to shape our beliefs about God, the Church and society. It can soothe and offer consolation, excite and incite, catechize and evangelize, often expressing what words cannot. In the life of a faith community, caretaking of the assembly's sung prayer is one of the foundational responsibilities a pastoral musician assumes. Texts, melodies, musical styles, instrumentation and even silence may be easily critiqued in isolation, but in creative combination, they have the power to enrich our worship and deepen our journey of faith.

"Fostering the art of musical liturgy" is what has drawn pastoral musicians together as the [National Association of Pastoral Musicians \(NPM\)](#) for almost five decades. For these ministers, "education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire," igniting a passion for learning that must shine forth like a lamp on a stand, illuminating all "in the house."

On Friday and Saturday, June 27 and 28, the University of the Incarnate Word co-hosted one of six regional NPM "On the Road" mini conferences. The bilingual gathering, themed "Pilgrims of Hope," welcomed approximately 120 pastoral musicians, representing over 32 parishes across 13 dioceses within the United States. It also marked NPM's first return to San Antonio in 45 years.

Established in 1976 by Fr. Virgil C. Funk, a priest of the Diocese of Richmond, VA, and with the assistance of Sr. Jane Marie Perrot, DC, NPM began its fledgling existence in a church basement with a staff of two and no members. Their sole purpose, Fr. Funk stated, was to establish an association “to motivate, encourage and support pastoral musicians and clergy, and to develop

skills and understanding in the areas of music, liturgy, preparation for worship, communication and spirituality” that would, in turn, positively impact the worship life of the Catholic Church. The focus then and now continues to be on the musician, grounded in Fr. Funk’s belief that “Good musicians make good music.” Well-formed musicians – cognizant of the demands of the

Sacred Liturgy (its structure, feasts and rituals) and the principles surrounding good music (reflecting the diversity of styles and cultures of the Church, as well as honoring its tradition) – play a critical role in the formation of the faithful in the theology of the Church and its sacramental life, always encouraging its “full, conscious and active participation.” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 14).

NPM’s departure this year from one national convention to a series of smaller regional gatherings, represented an intentional shift to create stronger connections with current and potentially new members for whom attendance

at a national gathering might be out of reach. As the only bilingual site, San Antonio offered its attendees an opportunity to experience the Church of South-central Texas through its gifts of language, art, history and music.

Two early morning “extra beats” were part of Friday’s pre-conference schedule. A [Jubilee Year](#) pilgrimage to the San Antonio missions and San

Fernando Cathedral, co-sponsored by University Mission and Ministry in conjunction with [El Camino de San Antonio Missions](#), offered attendees insight into some of the legacies of the mission period, including the use of art and music as tools of evangelization to catechize and guide the Indigenous communities in the liturgical life of the Church. The second, led by Dr. Andrew Bergmann, assistant

professor of Music and coordinator of Music Industry Studies, introduced attendees to UIW’s state of the art recording studio while providing a helpful overview of the basics of sound production, as many musicians now find themselves with such responsibilities during worship.

In his double keynote address, “Many Gifts, Un Solo Espíritu: The Beauty of Our Ministerio Compartido,” liturgical composer [Peter Kolar](#) emphasized that the ministry of pastoral music is not one of isolation. Whether in the best or worst of times, it is in our shared ministry that we often discover and hone our gifts in serving

“Fostering the art of musical liturgy” is what has drawn pastoral musicians together





our communities. As a resident of El Paso, TX, Kolar emphasized the power of music in communal prayer, sharing his experiences preparing music for the [annual bi-national border Mass](#) celebrated on an elevated platform in the Rio Grande River separating Texas and Mexico, the [2016 bi-national papal Mass](#) concluding Pope Francis' visit to Mexico, and the liturgies surrounding the 2019 Walmart shootings. In each setting, the circumstance and gathering itself amplified the power of sung prayer.

Prayers for peace and justice in the world continued during solemn evening prayer, celebrated with Bishop Gary Janak, in the beautiful Chapel of the Incarnate Word. One attendee remarked how the monastic seating in the Chapel gave her an entirely new experience of this official prayer of the Church, as sung stanzas of the psalms echoed back and forth in the space. The UIW Cardinal Singers, under the direction of Professor William Gokelman, closed the evening with a stunning concert entitled "Being Light" which featured an eclectic selection of music in various languages and styles. Memorable was the performance of Thomas Rett's text, "Be a Light." Its simple, yet inspiring message – that we can change the world by being more compassionate and thoughtful – hung poignantly in the air until the audience broke the silence with an affirming emotional applause.

Saturday offered workshops in English and Spanish on liturgical planning, choral conducting, the ministry of the cantor and mastering Spanish and other language considerations. The conference concluded with Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Boulette.

As NPM approaches its fiftieth anniversary, it is fitting to reflect on the long-standing relationship our University and the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word have shared with the Association since its earliest days. During this time, NPM has contributed significantly to the musical and liturgical formation of many of our staff and Sisters. It has also enriched our University's formative offerings, strengthening connections with parishes throughout the Archdiocese of

San Antonio and the wider community. For our clergy, NPM has been a valuable resource – especially through its recording library of Roman Missal chants. At the heart of this relationship, however, NPM has assumed an important supportive role in the formation of our student music ministry interns who serve the campus community and beyond. These are the alumni that continue their service in parishes, schools and other institutions. Musical and liturgical resources equip them with the practical tools necessary for successful ministry. Nurturing their own spiritual growth emphasizes the importance of caring for the spiritual wellbeing of those with whom they serve. And the sense of belonging – the communal bond with a vibrant and diverse community of Catholic music ministers who share a common ministry – continues to inspire, encourage and motivate their understanding of the importance of collaboration.

Fortis solum simul fortior...

"strong alone, stronger together."



Celebrating Faith Traditions

UIW and the Interfaith San Antonio Alliance Host the Second Annual Festival of Faiths

By Devin Castillo

The University of the Incarnate Word's (UIW) Mission statement reads that "UIW is a Catholic institution that welcomes to its community persons of diverse backgrounds, in the belief that their respectful interaction advances the discovery of truth, mutual understanding, self-realization and the common good."

As the largest Catholic university in the state of Texas, UIW is committed to educational excellence in a context of faith in Jesus Christ, while also fostering a culture that allows people of various faith backgrounds to be acknowledged and respected. Through the efforts of UIW's Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith, Mission and Ministry,

Pastoral Institute and more, a community comprised of multiple faith systems has been able to prosper throughout the entire UIW system.

In 2024, UIW was honored to collaborate with the Interfaith San Antonio Alliance (ISAA) and host San Antonio's inaugural Festival of Faiths, a festival that hosted the city's diverse communities to "learn about other faiths and cultures, foster understanding, equity and connection" (festivaloffaithssa.org). This year, from 12:30 – 6 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 14, the University will welcome guests to the Broadway campus as it hosts the second annual Festival of Faiths.

The idea for this event started with the Festival of Faiths Director and ISAA Executive Director, Rev. Wyndee Holbrook.

Holbrook was previously familiar with a Festival of Faiths that had been hosted in her hometown of Louisville, Kentucky since 1996. Having been a San Antonio resident of nearly nine years now, she became familiar with how rich the city is in culture. However, it's common for people of specific faith traditions to operate in their own familiar "bubbles" and they are often unaware of other faith traditions that are present within their community. She became determined to host an event in San Antonio inspired by Louisville's long-standing Festival of Faiths, welcoming people to gather and expand their world view, intentionally choosing to know their neighbors.

FEATURE

During her search for a host location, Holbrook was led to UIW due to her connection with the Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS), Dr. Javier Clavere. Having previously served as interim director of the Pastoral Institute, Clavere had extensive insight into UIW's Mission, values, history and its broad cross-culture. Feeling that the University reflected a proud sense of identity in its own faith while simultaneously respecting multiple faith systems, Holbrook felt that UIW was the perfect site to host the first-time event, which was held on January 21, 2024.

"The purpose of this event is to celebrate the best of us," expressed Holbrook. "People come seeking to know and be known. No one comes to persuade anyone, but simply to share who they are and to be open to who other people are."

Last year, 25 faith traditions were represented at the inaugural festival, including Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and more. This year, approximately 35 faith traditions are expected to be represented at the festival, better representing the numerous faith systems that are present in the San Antonio area.





Additionally, the 2024 Festival of Faiths received an abundance of support, with the event generating 27 partnerships and sponsorships from local organizations. This year is no different, as the festival has received sponsorships from well-known organizations including H-E-B, Frost Bank, Methodist Healthcare Ministries, Archdiocese of San Antonio and more!

“We as humanity, are still about this business of living out our values in honor of and reverence to God and also to each other.”

“Participating in the inaugural Festival of Faiths was a great opportunity for our small congregation to showcase our distinctive culture, heritage, institutions and social initiatives,” shared Munira Tajkhanji, 2024 participating Dawoodi Bohras (Muslim) representative. “The event was a truly enlightening experience reinforcing that our city is a great confluence of faith and culture. We are most grateful, and looking forward to being a part of the 2025 Festival of Faiths!”

This year’s festival will feature a variety of engaging activities that will grow attendees’ knowledge of faith systems and build unification across communities. Talented participants will be featuring musical and dance performances that will demonstrate the vibrancy of their cultures. Guests will also be able to expand their food palettes by tasting cuisines from various cultures at

the “Flavors of Faith” food truck alley. Kids are also invited and highly encouraged to attend the festival, as there will be booths with arts-and-crafts activities that will ignite their creativity and allow them to learn about other faiths.

Holbrook hopes that by participating in the festival’s events, that attendees will see that faith isn’t a separate part of one’s being, but rather that it is pervasive throughout one’s life. Faith, in all its many forms, influences art, music, dance and culture. Without faith, the story of humanity is incomplete.

“This (festival) is a space to simply come, engage and safely ask questions. To be able to leave with a sense of, ‘Oh, it’s a lot easier to make friends with people who are different than me than I realized.’ We as humanity, are still about this business of living out our values in honor of and reverence to God and also to each other. It’s both.”

“Everyone interested in learning more about others, especially those from a different religion, should come to the Festival of Faiths,” encouraged Michael Romero, director of the Pastoral Institute at UIW. “The festival provides a fun and engaging environment for anyone to explore different faith

perspectives with respectful curiosity. Interfaith dialogue is important for our city for many reasons, not least of which is peace. From the Catholic perspective, the Festival of Faith engages what can be called ‘a dialogue of life,’ that is, an aim toward mutual respect and understanding, to the best of our ability and despite our human limitations, that a peaceful and amicable relation exist between neighbors professing different religious convictions. This challenges us. But it is important to know that interfaith dialogue and inter-religious relations can encourage you to become more familiar with your own spiritual heritage, which in turn helps to foster a sense of humility and renew the flame of your own faith.”

[Click here to register for the 2025 Festival of Faiths!](#)



Mariana Be

Connecting Us All Through Music

By Clarissa Gauna '23

The goal for Mariana Barron Esper, BA '19, no matter where life takes her, is to evoke peace, love and faith in the people she comes across. Her primary vessel for doing so is her music, which has been nominated for the International Catholic Music Awards, presented by the Vatican.

A proud graduate of UIW, Esper earned a bachelor's in Music and International Affairs in 2019. When looking back at what made her decide to choose UIW for the next four years, she says that her family was a major factor in that decision. For starters, her oldest sister, Maricarmen Barron Esper, attended UIW and graduated in 2017, in addition her mother has also taken a handful of classes. Esper remembers her sister thriving during her time at the University, continually sharing how happy she was with the education she received and the connections she was making with both classmates and professors. And if that wasn't enough for her to know she had made the right choice. Years later, while on a trip leading up to her graduation, Esper discovered that her family roots

here at the University ran even deeper than she realized.

While visiting her paternal grandmother in Queretaro, Mexico, Esper learned that the University had been interwoven in to her family's history long before she decided to attend. Back in 1960, Esper's grandmother, Maria Del Carmen Cepeda, was studying in Saltillo, Mexico, at a school run by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. During that time, the Sisters noticed Cepeda's dedication to academics, specifically music and gave her a recommendation to attend what was then known as Incarnate Word College (IWC). With the support of the Sisters and her determination to be successful, Cepeda made her way to San Antonio to pursue her studies at IWC.

Hearing about her grandmother's time at IWC made Esper realize the parallels between both Cepeda's journey and her own. Coincidentally, both her and her grandmother studied the same instrument, the piano, and both made a point to attend daily mass on campus. Cepeda's involvement on campus also mirrored Esper's, in that



both were part of campus life groups that gave them the chance to meet students from different places and backgrounds, and through those experiences, they became lifelong friends.

The two were also able to relate in other ways, as Esper shares, “I was moved and excited about the similarities we had both experienced as music students. Semester presentations of her

“I often get inspired by observing the human experience, by love, romance, faith, spirituality and seeking a sense of peace and connection with humanity through our common values.”

piano pieces to the music department, getting nervous before performances, and a love for a wide range of composers and pieces has also been ingrained in my journey to become a better musician every day.”

One last point that Esper and her grandmother both agreed on was the type of professors they encountered

while in school. Cepeda shared that the professors she met during her time at IWC were kind and “extremely comprehensive”, something that Esper could attest to while completing her own studies. When asked which professors made the most impact on her journey, it was not a short list. Esper highlights professors such as Dr. Ara Koh, for helping her stay disciplined in classical piano lessons and musicality, Dr. Scott Dittloff and Dr. Kevin Salfen for being strong advisors for both of her degrees, and Dr. Hermes Camacho, who served as her private music composition professor, for “helping me believe in myself, do ‘hard music things’, and pursue music 100%, even with all the hardships that came with that journey.”

In addition to working hard on her craft in the classroom, Esper also made time to be involved on campus, sharing that she served as the Student Government Association (SGA) president and was a senator on the SGA board for international students prior to her presidency. Other organizations she was a part of include Amnesty International, where she was president her junior year, UIW’s Pre-Law Society and the Music Industry Club. Of course, she was also a part of the UIW Chorale and Cardinal Singers.

Esper shares, “I loved taking advantage of all the clubs and organizations!”, as it helped her connect with a broader range of students than she would have been able to otherwise.

On top of her studies and her roles in organizations and clubs on campus,



Esper was also recommended by her professors to perform at events, one of those being the 11th Annual Research Week in 2018. At that event, Esper was asked to be the keynote performer, where she performed a handful of her original songs alongside other musicians. After completing her performance, it only fanned the flame, encouraging her to chase her music dreams, sharing, “I felt very honored and motivated to continue to pursue my music path.”

Now six years post-grad, Esper is making waves in the music industry, where she is known as MARIANA BE. She has been recording, producing and writing albums professionally around the world, though currently, she is making her musical mark in the Holy Land. Through her efforts, Esper has had the opportunity to record and perform internationally—in Spain, London, Mexico, the United States, and Israel—where she hopes her music uplifts those it reaches and helps them find purpose. When asked to describe her sound, she shares, “It has always been hard for me to pick just one genre. My current work blends Pop, World Pop (inspired by my Arabic roots), Christian/Catholic, Latin Pop and Acoustic Singer-Songwriter styles”, in addition to loving soul and piano ballads as well. When it comes to what inspires her music, Esper says inspiration comes from all around her, explaining that in the beginning, her songs were often from a place of not fitting in, feeling like an outcast while trying to figure out who she wanted to be. As she’s gotten older, though, that inspiration has changed, sharing, “I often get inspired by observing the human experience, by

love, romance, faith, spirituality and seeking a sense of peace and connection with humanity through our common values.”

Deep into creating two new albums, Esper says there is a ton to look forward to and is most excited to tour the world and perform for those who are fans of her work. When asked if she had a favorite song that she has put out, she explains, “That is such a hard question to answer and will be even more so when the new albums are released. But, if she had to choose, her songs ‘City of Lights 2.0’ and ‘New Life’ are top contenders, each having their own special story.”

When Esper first performed “City of Lights 2.0”, it was for her high school pop show, and she shared that the feedback she received from her peers was “incredible and unexpected” giving her a boost of confidence to continue exploring this as a profession. The backstory for “New Life”, is another one of her favorites to tell. While explaining how the song came to be, Esper shares, “I believe it was given to me by the Holy Spirit, Jesus and Mary

Magdalene since I wrote it in Magdala, by the Sea of Galilee inside the Mary Magdalene Chapel and it just came very quickly and naturally to me!” For her, the best part about the song is the reaction people have to it while listening, connecting to the song in a spiritual and personal sense. You can listen to MARIANA BE and all her songs on Spotify, Apple Music and YouTube.

Earlier this year, Esper learned that she has been nominated for the International Catholic Music Awards, presented by the Vatican, in a handful of categories in English. These categories include Best New Singer, Best Female Singer, Best Evangelization Song, Best Music Production for her song, “New Life”, Best Music Video for “New Life” and Best English Song for “New Life”. She won the Best Evangelization Song for “New Life”. Because of this honor, MARIANA BE performed in Rome, Italy as part of the awards ceremony and music festival on July 27 and July 29, 2025.

Through it all, Esper is especially thankful for her time at UIW, her mentors and peers, and her family history at the University, for leading her to where she is today. She shares “My sister, my mother, my grandmother and I will forever be grateful for the opportunity to have attended an institution founded under the example of the greatest gift to humanity, the Incarnate Word.” She feels blessed to be able to pursue her passion for music and share that with the world, explaining, “I am grateful I have the opportunity to take part in music projects that align with my spiritual values, which I hope can connect with many people across the world regardless of their beliefs.”

[Listen to MARIANA BE now.](#)



Marissa Watters

BBA '20, MBA '22

By Krystal Cantu-Cuate

Much like UIW, many families take pride in the core values that guide their homes and communities. They raise their children with the hope that these principles will be passed down and lived out, just as they have been before. For Marissa Watters, a 2020 and 2022 UIW alumna, these values have been a constant compass, shaping the path that has led her to where she is today.

Watters grew up in a household where acts of service were part of everyday life. From a young age, she recalls her family making hundreds of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for victims of hurricanes in the Houston area. When it came time for her to attend college, the choice was easy. UIW fulfilled the values and commitment to community service that her family had instilled in her at a young age—and it's where she began to plant her own roots for years to come.

Watters' time at UIW began in 2017 when she arrived with a scholarship to swim on the UIW swim team. A reconstructive shoulder surgery just months before the school year started forced her to sit out the season, but it also gave her the opportunity to live the values she held dear.

Encouraged by her coaches to serve the community, Watters completed over 300 hours of service during her undergraduate years. Starting with the Silver



and Black Give Back program; she served as a mentor and event coordinator for the Alamo Area Teen Suicide Prevention Coalition—a role that resonated deeply with her due to personal family experiences. She also contributed to the Harris County-Houston Sports Commission and NextPlay, continuing her work in event management and beginning her journey into strategic planning for collegiate student-athletes.

As the 2018 season began for the UIW swim and dive team, Watters was not only able to resume competing but also continued her service as president of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). She swam throughout her undergraduate and graduate years, completing four years on the team. These formative years helped shape the path to the role she holds today. Her dedication to service and leadership through SAAC fueled her passion for help-



“God opens doors we must walk through with faith. Even if we don’t know the purpose today, the answer will be revealed in time.”

ing others—giving students the ability to find their voice and use sports as a platform for positive change in their communities.

Today, Watters serves as the director of Student-Athlete Success at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. In fulfilling her passion for service, she now helps thousands of student-athletes discover their purpose, guiding them to create meaningful change as they walk a path similar to her own.

To past, current and future Cardinals, Watters encourages you to say YES—yes to new opportunities, friendships and experiences. She believes God opens doors we must walk through with faith. Even if we don’t

know the purpose today, the answer will be revealed in time.

Through the doors she chose, Watters graduated from UIW as a two-time Outstanding Sport Management Student of the Year, MBA Student of the Year, four-time SAAC Member of the Year and recipient of the Kappa Gamma Pi St. Catherine Medal.

By seizing every opportunity, Watters has found her answers—and gratitude for the values she holds strong, her time at UIW and the people who helped her along the way.

CLASS NOTES

Celebrate UIW success stories. Keep up with your class and be part of *The Word* in print and online!

Send your achievements to alumni@uiwtx.edu.

Photos submitted for Class Notes may be included on the online alumni community site.



2017

Arnulfo Hernandez, BBA '17

Received the following professional recognition: John Cooper Partnership Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Mission Support for the Office of Mission Support (OMS) Reorganization Implementation Team: For exemplifying the highest standards of leadership and collaboration while implementing the OMS reorganization.

United States Environmental Protection Agency's Bronze Medal for Outstanding Service for the Enterprise Cybersecurity and Privacy Team: For extraordinary performance and dedication, enabling the EPA's Mission of protecting human health and the environment and their contributions to safeguarding the information environment.

1970s



Eliza Garza Rojas, BA '79

Retired in June 2020 after 40 years as an elementary school teacher. She married in March 1986 and has three children:

David (1987), Paulina (1988), and Eduardo (1990). Rojas and her husband are proud grandparents to five beautiful grandchildren—two granddaughters and three grandsons—ranging from six months to four years old.

In December 2023, their daughter was married in Austin, TX, where Rojas was reunited with her UIW roommate, whom she had not seen in more than 35 years.

2000s

Arnulfo Maldonado, BA '01 received his second Tony Award for Best Scenic Design for Buena Vista Social Club.

Additionally, earlier this summer he had two new shows open on Broadway: *Real Women Have Curves*, *The Musical* and *Dead Outlaw*.

Stephanie D. Borroel, BSN '03

Is excited to share that she has submitted her application to graduate school and looks forward to continuing her academic journey as she transitions from Crusader to Cardinal.

2013

**Mathew Garza, BBA '13**

Recently joined NexaMotion Group (NMG) as the vice president of Strategic Accounts. NMG is a leading provider of automotive aftermarket parts and solutions, with a mission of simplifying complex vehicle repair to keep the world moving. Our focus is on delivering high-quality products, innovative solutions and exceptional service to our industry partners.

Garza has spent the last 10+ years in sales, building strong relationships in the automotive industry. Garza reflects, "My time at UIW-especially as a four-year football player and team captain-helped shape my leadership and teamwork skills, which continue to drive my career today."

Beyond his professional role, he is proud to give back to the UIW community as a co-founder and board member of the Forever First Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to supporting UIW Football and ensuring its continued success.

Garza shares, "I'm grateful for the foundation UIW provided me, and look forward to continuing to represent Cardinal pride in my career and beyond! Go Cards!"

Eternal Rest Grant unto Them, Oh Lord.

Winifred P. Coers, BSN '81**Marilyn Billimek, BSN '62****Jane M. Cardea, PhD, RN,
Former Dean****Norma O. Casillas, BBA '98****Peggy M. Cavazos, BSN '53****Robert C. Cruise, Friend****Carolyn J. English, BS '55****LaRén Antoinette Garcia, BA '08,
MBA '21****Rose Lorelle H. Jacobs, BA '54****Elizabeth A. Kenney, BA '45****Patricia S. Lopez, BS '66****Mary V. Luby, BSN '55****Cecelia A. McKenzie, BA '71****Mary H. Mueller, BA '48****Mary L. Norris, BSN '75****Command Sgt. Maj. Bonifacio
Roldan-Galarza, Ret., BA '75****James C. Sorensen, Faculty Emeriti****Antonia Q. Ulloa, BSN '51****Cynthia F. Villarreal, BSN '79****Beatriz V. Zapata, BA '63**

Let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.



x **SMOKE**
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UNIVERSITY COLLECTIVE

NEWS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACCOLADES FROM OUR ILLUSTRIOUS FACULTY AND STAFF



Lenora C. Chapman

Chief Financial Officer and Vice President
for Finance and Administration

Joined UIW, and in her new role, Chapman will be responsible for the University's financial operations, and will oversee management of facilities and physical infrastructure, human resources, UIW Police, environmental health, safety and risk management and vehicle services.

"I extend my sincere thanks to the search committee for their careful and deliberate national search that yielded the ideal person to serve as UIW's new CFO," said Thomas M. Evans, PhD, UIW president. "Lenora Chapman is a deeply experienced financial leader in higher education who will bring invaluable expertise in management and collaboration, a desire to build and foster relationships, and a commitment to clear transparent communication. She is eager to become a part of our University community, and we are eager to welcome her."

"I was drawn to the University of the Incarnate Word for its strong commitment to academic excellence, innovation, student success, the development of the whole person as well as its commitment to the Catholic intellectual traditions and the community," said Chapman. "I was especially impressed by the University's diverse academic offerings, its multiple campuses throughout San Antonio and its impressive global presence in Mexico and France."



Dr. Eva Fernández

Provost and Vice President
for Academic Affairs

[Watch a Welcome Message from Dr. Fernandez.](#)

Joined UIW, and in her new role, Fernández will oversee the division of Academic Affairs, academic programs, faculty affairs, research and student success.

With more than 24 years as a faculty member and administrator, Fernández has led a long and distinguished career in higher education. She comes to UIW from New York, where she served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs for Mercy University, the largest private, Hispanic-Serving Institution in the state. Prior to this role, she held leadership and teaching positions at multiple institutions in the City University of New York (CUNY) system. Across institutions, Fernández has led efforts to improve student success, support faculty and curriculum development and advance academic momentum.

"I am elated to join the University of the Incarnate Word, an institution that places students at the heart of everything we do," said Fernández. "Together with UIW's exceptional faculty and staff, I am committed to developing an innovative academic vision that elevates student success, strengthens our academic standing, fosters system integration and deepens meaningful connections with the broader community – all in service of our collective mission, deeply rooted in Catholic educational and intellectual traditions, of creating educational experiences that enlighten and empower students to make a lasting impact in the world."



Carlos de León, BA '12, MBA '16

Professor of Marketing
School of Professional Studies

Led his team to four Telly Awards. The Telly Awards showcase the best work created for television and across video. The theme for the 46th Telly Awards was "Stories Take Shape." The recognized works won awards in the categories of Public Interest and Awareness, Videography and Cinematography, Biography and Corporate Image for his clients, the City of San Antonio Animal Care Services and El Camino Health, Silicon Valley's public health district. Currently, de León is a marketing executive at Louisiana's largest full-service marketing and advertising agency. Throughout his career, his client portfolio has spanned various industries, including public sector entities, oil and gas, healthcare, finance, higher education, technology and real estate development.



Dr. Helmut Gottlieb

Professor
Feik School of Pharmacy

Has been named a Fellow of the Academy of Pharmacology Educators by the American Society of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics. The Academy of Pharmacology Educators was established in 2010 to recognize individuals who have made exemplary contributions to pharmacology education in one or more of the following areas: student-teacher interaction, innovative contributions, scholarly endeavors, professional development and service.

"Dr. Helmut Gottlieb, a long-time faculty member at the pharmacy school, is one of our best teachers," says Dr. David Maize, dean of the UIW Feik School of Pharmacy. "He has been recognized many times as a "Teacher of the Year" by his students. He has also been recognized for his teaching by the University, winning the UIW Provost's Legacy in Teaching Award and the Presidential Teaching Award. We are proud to have him on our team."

Gottlieb maintains an active research lab where he has trained more than 48 students. And he has published in several journals and is a co-author in one of the chapters in Foyer's Principles of Medicinal Chemistry.

"The greatest reward about my job is that I can make a significant impact on our students lives," concludes Gottlieb. "We see them arrive at UIW not too sure about themselves, but we can see their growth and development over time, and they become a role model to their families and community."



Dr. Timothy Wingert
Former Dean
Rosenberg School of Optometry

Has been inducted into the National Optometry Hall of Fame. The award is administered through the American Optometric Association and honors optometrists who have made significant and long-lasting contributions to the optometric profession.

Wingert served the students of UIW for over a decade and worked as Dean for eight of those years. In addition to being a fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, he is a diplomate in the Section on Public Health and Environmental Vision, where he also serves as past chair. Among his many accolades, he is a founding member of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics and one of only three U.S. optometrists to have earned fellowship in that organization.

“It is very special to be recognized for what you have done in your professional career,” says Wingert. “But it would not have been possible without having good colleagues who were always encouraging and working to improve things.”

RETIREES

OVER 35 YEARS OF SERVICE	OVER 30 YEARS OF SERVICE	OVER 25 YEARS OF SERVICE
Dr. Douglas Gilmour Associate Professor <i>College of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences</i>	Dr. Beth Senn-Duff Associate Professor <i>College of Math, Science & Engineering</i> Dr. Bonnie McCormick Professor <i>College of Math, Science & Engineering</i>	Maria Gonzales Associate Vice President for Business & Finance/ Comptroller <i>Comptroller's Office</i> Nora Cadena Director of Business Office <i>Business Office</i> Linda Etter Administrative Assistant <i>Feik School of Pharmacy</i>
OVER 20 YEARS OF SERVICE	OVER 15 YEARS OF SERVICE	OVER 5 YEARS OF SERVICE
Benjamin McPherson Senior Instructor <i>College of Math, Science & Engineering</i>	Dr. Sharon Welkey Dean <i>School of Media & Design</i>	Dr. Adam Ratner Assistant Dean of Strategic Initiatives <i>School of Osteopathic Medicine</i>
THANK YOU FOR YOUR YEARS OF DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT TO UIW.		



CALENDAR

ALUMNI EVENTS

CARDINAL FOOTBALL TAILGATES:

VS. EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Saturday, Aug. 30
Gayle and Tom Benson Stadium

VS. UTSA
CARDINAL TAKEOVER
[Buy your tickets now.](#)

VS. ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Saturday, Sept. 27
Gayle and Tom Benson Stadium

VS. LAMAR UNIVERSITY
FOOTBALL GAME (HOMECOMING)
Saturday, Nov. 1
Gayle and Tom Benson Stadium

HOMECOMING EVENTS
Saturday, Oct. 25 – Sunday, Nov. 2
[Click here to learn more about Homecoming 2025.](#)
Including favorite traditions like Trunk-or-Treat,
Hall of Fame, Breakfast Taco 5k & 50th Reunion
Brunch.

MISSION & MINISTRY

MASS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
Wednesday, Sept. 3
Our Lady's Chapel, Noon

HOMECOMING MASS
Sunday, Nov. 2
Chapel of the Incarnate Word, 11 a.m.

BACCALAUREATE MASS
Friday, Dec. 12
Chapel of the Incarnate Word
Celebrating Mass for the Fall 2025 graduates.
*Please check the [UMM Events Calendar](#) for updates and
information on additional services, times and locations.*

ARTS, MUSIC AND THEATRE PERFORMANCES

FROM WORD TO WORLD: AN ALUMNI
EXHIBITION
Monday, Aug. 11 - Friday, Sept. 5
Kelso Art Center / Semmes and Condos Galleries
Free and Open to the Public

CULTURAL THREADS EXHIBITION
CELEBRATES HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH
Monday, Sept. 15 - Friday, Sept. 26
Kelso Art Center / Semmes and Condos Galleries
Free and Open to the Public

UIW THEATER PRESENTS "THE NINA
VARIATIONS"
Friday, Oct. 3 - Saturday, Oct. 11
The Cheever Black Box Theater

FIBER ARTISTS OF SAN ANTONIO EXHIBITION
Monday, Oct. 13 - Friday, Nov. 14
Kelso Art Center / Semmes and Condos Galleries
Free and Open to the Public

UIW THEATER PRESENTS "MISS BENNET:
CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY"
Friday, Nov. 14 - Friday, Nov. 21
UIW Broadway Campus - Coates Theater

IN A MEMORY PLACE EXHIBITION
Monday, Nov. 24 - Friday, Dec. 19
Kelso Art Center / Semmes and Condos Galleries
Free and Open to the Public

SPECIAL EVENTS

FESTIVAL OF FAITHS
Sunday, Sept. 14
UIW Broadway Campus
[Click here to register.](#)

LIGHT THE WAY
Saturday, Nov. 22
UIW Broadway Campus

GRADUATION
Saturday, Dec. 13
Celebrate the 2025 graduates at Freeman Coliseum

[UIW ALUMNI EVENTS](#)

[UMM EVENTS CALENDAR](#)

JUBILEE 2025



A Jubilee of Hope

By Leo Almazan, PhD, HEC-C,
Mission and Ministry



The 2013 picture of Pope Francis washing the feet of 12 young people in an Italian detention facility went viral almost immediately after it was posted on the internet ([Have you seen it?](#)).

The reason for that occurrence was simple, yet profoundly impactful: a Pope lovingly serving those consider the least in society stirred a feeling of jubilant hope in the minds and hearts of people around the world.

Pope Francis's actions allowed us to understand the place from which he called for a jubilee in 2024. In other words, he did not just ask us to do something when he declared 2025 to be a Jubilee of Hope year. Instead, he showed us through his actions what jubilee and hope look like and then invited us to enter into this celebration with open minds, full hearts and generous spirits. "Jubilee" and "hope" are two words that demand careful exploration.

On the one hand, the concept of hope, a theological virtue, indicates a deep desire for a future good, which is difficult, but possible to be attained, thanks to divine assistance. On the other hand, jubilee, a Jewish celebration, derives its name from the sound of the ram's horn (jobel, in Hebrew) that marks the beginning of a celebration. From jobel, Christians

came up with jubilee. In the original Jewish tradition, a jubilee year happened every fifty years and consisted of letting the earth rest and freeing slaves.

In line with the deeper meaning of both words, Pope Francis' invitation to celebrate a Jubilee of Hope in 2025 begun with a clear acknowledgment of the harsh realities of life: devastated nature because of over-utilization and exploitation; human relations marred by domination and abuse; and a world state-of-affairs marked by unrest and strife. Additionally, all the related emotions that are elicited by these harsh realities are included in the celebration, such as fear, stress, anxiety, uncertainty, resentment and mistrust. At the same time, a true celebration of a jubilee of hope adamantly refuses to stay in the dark places mentioned above. Instead, it boldly declares our communal willingness to pause, pray, rest, reconcile, restore and recreate.

For some people, the latter description sounds "rosy", "too idealistic" or even "impossible". However, herein comes the "invoking divine assistance" part of hope. In other words, we invite God into the chaos we have created so that, just as God did with the original chaos (Gn. 1:2), God will bring order, beauty, harmony and new beginnings for all of us in the here and now.

Does this mean we just sit passively on the sidelines, expecting God to solve everything without our collaboration? Of course not. Celebrating a jubilee of hope means actively intensifying our life of prayer; proclaiming our faith and hope, especially when faced with recent tragedies such as floods, wars and general uncertainty; and translating them into concrete acts of charity. In the words of Pope Francis:

Here we see the reason why this hope perseveres in the midst of trials: founded on faith and nurtured by charity, it enables us to press forward in life. As Saint Augustine observes, "Whatever our state of life, we cannot live without these three dispositions of the soul, namely, to believe, to hope, and to love"

(Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025, May 9, 2024, n. 3).

It is in that same spirit that our present Pope, Leo XIV, has called us to be "seeds of peace and hope" and has challenged us to do so "by working with love and perseverance, [so that] we can sow many seeds of justice and thus contribute to the growth of peace and the renewal of hope." (Message for the 10th World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation 2025).

In brief, a jubilee of hope is not an external celebration. Instead, it is a call to transformation and conversion, a challenge to all of us to use our words and actions, filled with faith, hope and charity, to usher in a more just and peaceful world.