

# THE HAREBRAIN

Long Beach Poly High School PACE Parent Group

Spring 2021

## Hello PACE families from your PPG,

The familiar catch phrase, “Never a dull moment” seems particularly apropos as we continue in this unprecedented 2020-21 school year. This unique year has encouraged a level of complacency in many ways, dare I say, even a sense of apathy. As our PACE Parent Group (PPG) peeks out of a mid-winter hiatus, I am reminded of our goal. Our goal keeps us focused and motivated to get back to business. Here’s a reminder of what the PPG does and why, **EVEN NOW**, we matter. Your PACE Parent Group is a non-profit board consisting of PACE parent volunteers who raise and manage donations in order to provide additional support to the PACE academic and scholarship program. The Harebrain celebrates these efforts by sharing highlights and activities that make PACE unique.

After the new year, we heard from a few more of our Spring 2020 PACE Scholarship recipients. You’ll enjoy reading about their unique experiences. You’ll see letters of encouragement and hope from our PACE instructors who we are thankful for every single day.

The Harebrain also reminds us all that without parent, family, and alumni support, our ability to accomplish our mission of support to the PACE program is significantly limited. Thank you for your extra financial support of your child’s growth and success. Reach out to us at [paceparent@gmail.com](mailto:paceparent@gmail.com).

Terry O’Dell - Harebrain Chair

## Save the Date

We are pleased to welcome back Nicole Gracie of UniVarsity, LLC on **Thursday, April 15th**. She will share her expertise with our PACE families in her Zoom presentation, **“Helping Students Find their College Match”**. She has advice relevant to today about navigating a college application process unique to each student. Look for more detail on remote attendance specifics soon.



## Sarah E. Schol PACE English Teacher

When I reflect on my personal growth, I must admit that I’ve grown the most during what have been vastly uncomfortable periods in my life. This school year has been profoundly uncomfortable, but the resiliency I’ve witnessed has made it perhaps one of the most powerful years of my career. Blank screens, various malfunctions, my own (admittedly) insufficient tech abilities, and a steep learning curve—how can it be that this year is rapidly becoming one I most appreciate? Perhaps it’s because, in times like these, we must recognize and be grateful for what we do have.

I have a digital room full of students who are clever, ingenious, hardworking, and just plain...fun. You coach me through my tech missteps, support one another through a chat box, and do a phenomenal job on the assignments; you ask pointed questions and take notes; you proudly proclaim the superiority of the Clippers to the championship Lakers (giving most of us a giggle), and you manage to collaborate in breakout rooms rather than give in to the deafening silence they sometimes harbor.

I’m so proud of each of you. Of course I miss the bustling hallways, my (futile) attempts to draw on my whiteboard, and the overall energy that thrives on campus. But I deeply admire the spirit with which you have all embraced (even grudgingly) what this year has forced upon us.

We will probably never have another school year quite like this one. I miss my former students popping in to say hello. I miss the excitement of school concerts; I miss the buzz of attending your games or matches. I miss walking across campus and yelling out “hello,”

or randomly jumping on the rally stage to dance (or to have “pie” smashed in my face for a worthy cause). But I also recognize that when this year is but a figment of my distant memory, I will miss my students who fought alongside me in the digital trenches.

I am so thankful for the memories we have created, for the successes we have had, and for the sheer grit and tenacity you have demonstrated on a daily basis. I’ve often said that PACE prepares you for the challenges life presents; this year has tested your mettle and shown that, no matter what obstacles you might face, you are ready to emerge the victor.



### **Ron Rita** **PACE Science Teacher**

Dear PACE parents,

I hope all is well and that you and your families are healthy. In speaking with your student(s) I know many in our Poly family have been impacted by this pandemic and I wish those who have taken ill all the best towards a speedy recovery. This is not the 25th year of teaching I expected but at least my classroom at home has a window! Along with distance learning we have undergone a few other changes in the science department. A new textbook and a shift to the NGSS curriculum. I can’t imagine what this shift would be like without the support and understanding of the best students in the district.

The students have been understanding and supportive. They have reached out with questions and concerns and shared both trying and exciting experiences. I feel that we have worked together well to accommodate any distance learning obstacles we encounter and I want to encourage the continuation of collaboration and communication. In terms of labs we have been using a combination of alternatives. I use online simulations when they are available and a few times I have recorded myself or another teacher performing the lab. Students watch the lab and collect and analyse the data they collect. I have several labs planned for the students to perform if we return to the classroom.

I truly look forward to meeting the students in person whenever that is safe. Thank you for all of the support you provide to your student(s) and their teachers. I look forward to seeing everyone soon and take care.



### **Jeff Montooth** **PACE U.S. Government & Economics**

This past Fall, PACE Freshman U.S. Government students researched and produced a video documentary for submission in the annual CSPAN Student Document-

ary Competition. Our U.S. Government students have participated in this small group project for the past seven years. 2020 posed unique challenges, as students were unable to meet physically with one another to collaborate and scheduling and conducting interviews would now need to be done virtually. A significant element in successfully addressing the challenges of collaboration in a virtual world was the purchase of cloud based editing licenses funded by the PACE Parent Support Group, allowing students to work together virtually to upload interviews and narrate and edit their videos together remotely.

The prompt for this year’s CSPAN competition was, “Begin a National Conversation- examine the issue you most want Congress and the new President to address in 2021.” Students’ self-selected topics included issues surrounding health care, political polarization, immigration, climate change, income inequality, misinformation and criminal justice. Over 80 5-6 minute videos resulted from the students’ research, interviews and product production.

Contacting and interviewing individuals with first hand knowledge of the issues that face our nation can be intimidating for 9th grade students. To make things easier for our students we interviewed U.S. Congressman Alan Lowenthal, Special Advisor to County of Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascon, Mario Trujillo, UCLA Department of Anthropology and Chicano/Latino studies professor, Jason De Leon in groups using zoom which was a big success. Of course students were also able to personally reach out to professionals around the country to learn more about their issues.

In addition to the competition element of the project, in which our PACE 9th graders consistently receive numerous National awards over mostly 12th grade students’ submissions, our students develop their skills and knowledge in collaboration, research, thesis development, time management, professional communication with adults, government structure and policy, and production technology.

In this unprecedented year, working with 185 students, many who did not know each other or have the opportunity to meet face to face, the project proved to be a valuable tool in bringing students together and supporting their learning. This unique learning experience allowed me as a teacher to connect more personally with the students, particularly when meeting in small groups. It also provided the opportunity to hold deep discussions on a variety of subjects and issues. I am so proud of all of the kids that participated and look forward to sharing their work in the future.

## Checking in with more of our 2020 PACE Scholarship Recipients



### Julian Pearce, *UCLA*

Hello, fellow Jackrabbits! My name is Julian Pearce, and I attend UCLA: studying International Development. I am sure none of us expected the pandemic to unfold the way it unfortunately did. Nonetheless, I would like to thank the PACE program for preparing me. I have seen the harshness of Meckna's quizzes or the times in Schol's lectures dedicated to random stories, echoed by my Professors. Professors are very open and willing to accommodate all students—whether they be having technological, physical, or mental issues. They're understanding and dedicated to giving you the best experience possible (as I am sure the PACE teachers are doing). Alongside life itself, school has been just as

much of an adjustment. Not only am I learning the ropes of virtual school, but I am on the quarter system as well. Although I only have three classes, they move at a faster pace than the semester system. Fortunately enough, the adjustment was manageable, and the workload was not too overbearing. Once again, I'd like to thank the PACE program for that. I found many other students feeling overwhelmed with the work where I saw it as no harder than the week of the 5x5.

If you're fortunate enough to dorm with others at your school, I would recommend it as it's more in line with the college experience. If that's not the case, due to COVID—such as for me—I advise you to connect through social media, zoom, or any other platform. Frankly, staring at a screen gets boring, but it is slightly better to share those feelings with some new friends. Lastly, COVID sucks, but I urge all of you to do your best to let it not affect you. Your experience is ultimately dependent on your attitude and the effort you make in your schoolwork. Attitude is everything. Remember to be grateful for the opportunity you've received at whatever school you may attend and feel grateful to be able to be bored, staring at a screen for a few hours.



### Laura Yontz, *UC Irvine*

I had initially thought my freshman year college experience as a Biological Sciences major at UCI was going to be "classic." Still, as fall approached and everything worsened, I knew it was not going to be that. It was incredibly nerve-wracking to start college on Zoom and with little interaction between other students that would typically happen during welcome week. Being a student-athlete on the UCI Women's Cross Country and Track teams have boosted my comfort with meeting others in virtual college. My experiences in PACE have helped me balance the extreme rigor of honors classes and athletics. There was a learning curve, especially online, but the habits and skills I

developed in PACE made the transition a lot smoother than I predicted it would be. At UCI, I have realized that good time management is one of the most valuable things to have because I find myself with less homework and more studying than in high school. My classes have been engaging and collaborative in the college honors collegium rather than competitive, which has allowed me to learn and form relationships with other students. Not only has PACE enabled me to be successful in college, but it also gave me lifetime friendships. I am roommates with one of my good friends from the PACE program, and another lives just down the street. Exploring Irvine with a fresh set of eyes has made my heart grow for the city. Walks around Aldrich Park, sunsets in Newport Beach, trying all the boba shops, and running new trails are only a fraction of what the city offers. While I have lived and learned my first quarter, I hope to be on campus next fall while being reassured that what I have learned in PACE has set the foundation for a bright future at UCI. ZOT ZOT ZOT!

Connect with Us







## Jude McCarthy, UCLA

My first quarter at UCLA has been nothing like I had imagined — but you already knew that. Much of 2020 was nothing like any of us had imagined.

I spent fall quarter at home with my parents, giving presentations in my Public Speaking class from the same desk at which I used to sit late at night, bleary-eyed in front of my APUSH textbook. I decided to take a class called “Heroic Journey in Northern Myth, Legend, and Epic,” which demanded a quality of writing greater than anything I had produced in high school, but I was pleased to find that PACE English was just the foundation I needed for college writing; I was (almost) always able to meet the mark.

I won't pretend this quarter has been particularly exciting. It has felt much like a waiting period — a way to pass the time until we return to campus. Despite the challenges and disappointments of this quarter, however, I truly have enjoyed it. I'm learning that every challenge presents an opportunity, and every cloud has a silver lining. Without life on

campus to keep me busy, I've been able to engage with my interests in other ways. I'm working as a Content Intern for a Long Beach nonprofit, managing their Instagram page and creating meaningful, educational content to share. I've potted a small army of houseplants and created a few new pieces of artwork which now sit and hang in my bedroom, waiting to travel with me to my dorm when the time comes. One perk of online education is the ability to attend classes from anywhere, and I'll be starting winter quarter from Ketchum, Idaho, where I'm enjoying the snow.

My greatest allies in the past few months have been gratitude, optimism, and resilience. As we welcome 2021, I'm hopeful for what the new year will bring.

## Thank you to our most recent PACE Donors!

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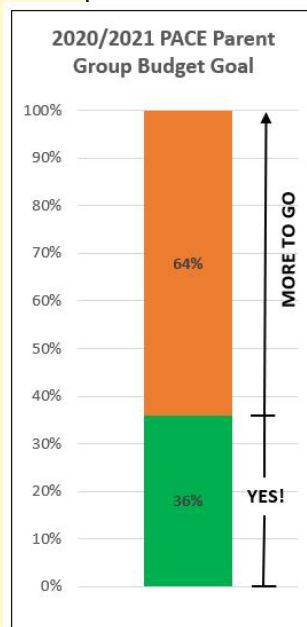
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Your suggested tax-deductible donation (Tax ID #20-1801993) of \$150 meets our budgeted expenses per student but any amount is welcome and appreciated. We are pleased to continue our gift to you of a signed copy of The History of Long Beach Poly for donations of \$500 or more. Written by PACE and CIC alums, Tyler Hendrickson and Mike Guardabascio, it's a terrific read for all and a lifelong keepsake for your PACE student.



PACE Parent Group (PPG) is a non-profit board consisting of PACE parent volunteers who raise and manage donations in order to provide additional support to the PACE academic and scholarship program

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