

December 2025

Dear Loyal Leo,

As I reflect on my 48-year journey with the University of La Verne, first as a shy, first-generation international student from war-torn Lebanon and later as an administrator serving at multiple positions, I am overcome with gratitude and humility. My parents sent me to the American Armenian International College, associated with what was then La Verne College, because they wanted a safe and nurturing environment where I could learn and thrive far from the uncertainties of home. What began as a leap of faith became a lifelong relationship with an institution that shaped my values, character, and sense of purpose, and provided me with a truly unique opportunity to raise a family.

When I first stepped onto campus, I found more than a college. I found a community of faculty and administrators that welcomed me, believed in me, and inspired me to grow and succeed. Those early days taught me that this institution is not just a place of learning; it is a place of belonging. That sense has stayed with me throughout every stage of not only my professional life, but also my personal life. This is where I met my wife and where I watched my two sons graduate. Between the four of us, we hold eight ULV degrees (soon to be nine). We are Leos for Life, and the same values that drew me here continue to guide my family today.

Now as Vice President of Administration & Finance and Chief Financial Officer, I have seen us evolve from a small regional college into a nationally recognized university. Financially, our operating budget of \$17 million in 1985 grew to more than \$200 million today, and an endowment of less than \$1 million in 1985, grew to \$195 million. This growth over the years has allowed us to expand academic programs, modernize facilities, and extend our reach to serve students regionally and internationally; yet through every change, the spirit of this university has remained constant, grounded in inclusivity, compassion, and service. As I prepare for my retirement next month, I do so with confidence in the university's future. We are in a position of financial strength with a track record of positive operating margins, and our strategic priorities continue to center on student success, access, and financial sustainability.

In my decades at the University of La Verne, I have had the privilege of witnessing how your donations have strengthened the university and transformed lives. **Because of you**, students receive scholarships that make education accessible; and faculty and staff are empowered to innovate, build programs, and create life-changing experiences. Gifts large and small have fueled opportunities that ripple far beyond our campus. Your belief in our mission sustains us. It is because of your trust, commitment, and generosity that we continue to thrive and serve as a beacon of hope and an opportunity for future generations.

Like you, I give back, too; and I personally do so, because I have lived the La Verne story. I have experienced firsthand how your philanthropy enables education to transform a life. Thank you for being part of that story and for believing in our students, our mission, and our future.

**Because of you**, the University of La Verne continues to inspire, to empower, and to shine.

Wishing you and your families and friends, peace, joy, and gratitude this holiday season.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Avo Kechichian '80 '85

Vice President of Administration & Finance / Chief Financial Officer

