

January 2026

Dear Loyal Leo,

In some ways, it feels like I never graduated; but for four decades, I've been a professor of journalism at the University of La Verne, my alma mater. My energy comes from my students. They are alive with dreams, ambition, and purpose. I am swept up in their positive energy to succeed.

I entered ULV as an introverted freshman. Before that year was up, I was a member of the chamber singers, a member of the track and soccer teams, and deep in student government. I possessed two majors and could not get enough of my college experience. It was the time of my life. Later, I added on being the editor-in-chief of the Lambda yearbook, editor-in-chief of *La Verne Magazine*, an editor on the *Campus Times*, and Associated Students Federation President. At a big school, there was no way I could have had that diversity of experiences. I remember thinking at the end of every school year that I was a new, better person. The University of La Verne changed me—allowed me to jump into all sorts of experiences and showed me how to set my future life compass.

Now, one of my great joys is to greet my former students. So many of them have stellar careers and are happy with who they are. At Homecoming this past fall, many alumni came up to me and told me of going to graduate schools. They told me of prestigious careers. They told me about their families. And most of them told me a very powerful phrase: “**Because of you** and the University of La Verne, I would not be where I am.” That made my day. To hear it repeatedly, you realize that it was not just you they are honoring; it is all of us who serve the university—faculty, staff, administrators, and donors, like you. We all have made our students successful. We have all made the university a place to find yourself. It is the place for scores of doorway conversations, filled with truthful, hopeful words that come with a rush from the heart and tell students to believe in themselves. I believe in the strength of the university, now as much as ever before. There is transformative magic and energy here, and I experience that every day.

Most of my students now have outside jobs because tuition is expensive. Some cannot afford college otherwise. Tuition was expensive for me, too. My parents did not have the money to send me to ULV. Nevertheless, I knew it was my goal, aimed in that direction, and earned good grades in high school. Then, I gained several outside scholarships. But the lion's share of my tuition money came from ULV donors. I continue to be so very grateful to them.

Perhaps your tuition funding story reads like mine. Someone made the big difference for you.

I believe in paying it forward.

I personally give to ULV because of what it did for me. I give, too, because of my firm belief in its present-day strength and its students.

Because of you, the University of La Verne continues to be a changer of lives. Thank you for being part of the ULV story and for believing in our students, our mission, and our future.

I wish you and your family a wonderful New Year!

With kind and appreciative regards,

George Keeler

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