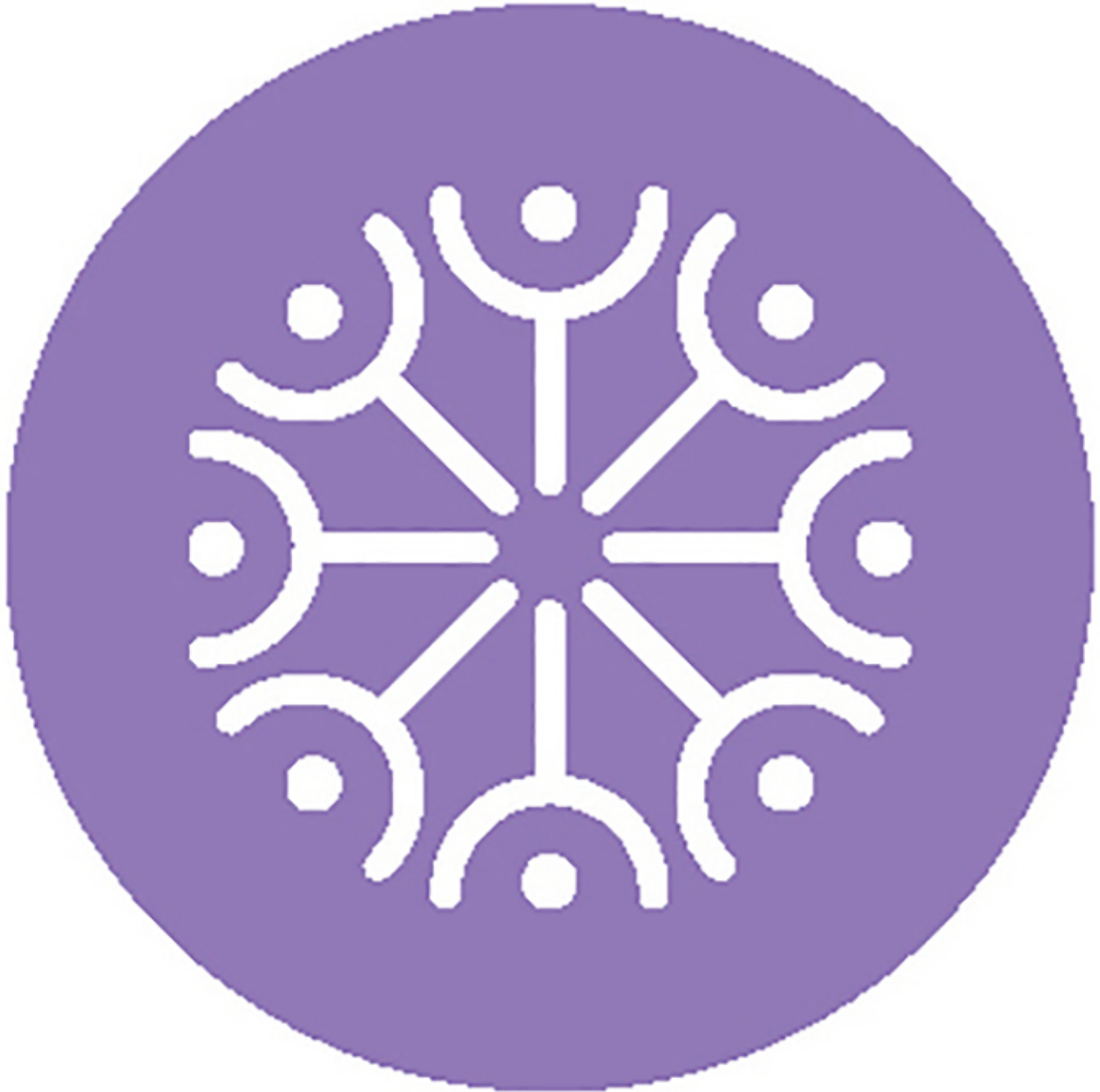




La Sierra University: Excellence Through Innovation and Safety





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Over the past five years, La Sierra University (LSU) has continued to carry out its mission to seek truth, know God, and serve others. While the COVID-19 pandemic has brought challenges to this mission, it has also created incredible opportunities for the university to demonstrate God's love to the wider community while continuing to offer the excellent education it is known for through innovative and safe delivery systems.

LSU voluntarily halted international and domestic travel and began to prepare for remote work and learning at the beginning of the pandemic, several weeks before these actions were required by local and state authorities. During spring quarter 2020, all courses were delivered virtually, and during the 2020-2021 academic year, a small number of laboratory and studio courses were offered in carefully protected environments on campus. Since March 2020, more than 3,600 virtually-delivered courses have served more than 2,000 students in diverse locations—some as far away as China.

LSU's own faculty have been instrumental in developing cutting-edge techniques for managing the pandemic risks. Dr. Arturo Diaz, associate professor of biology, developed a COVID-19 saliva-based surveillance test. The university also purchased certified COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing equipment to confirm any positive results from surveillance tests. This two-step testing process, coupled with rigorous contact tracing and rapid isolation of individual cases, kept the virus from spreading among essential workers and the approximately 90 students who remained in residence on campus. It also contributed to the overall health of the community.

In addition to responding to the pandemic, LSU has continued to meet community needs in other ways. During the past five years, the university received two federal government grants totaling \$5.6M to support Hispanic student success. These funds have been used to develop a summer learning program that prepares students for success in college mathematics and other STEM subjects, as well as a collaborative learning center to deliver academic support to students throughout the year. LSU has obtained AVID for Higher Education (AHE) certification that includes training/certification for faculty in active learning techniques.

Individual schools and departments are also engaged in exciting service and learning projects. The Zapara School of Business Enactus team applies business principles in meeting the needs of both local and global neighbors. Recently, Enactus partnered with the College of Arts and Sciences in bringing a shipping container farm to campus. Students will apply knowledge gained from their computer science, chemistry, biology, business, and



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communications courses in the real-world setting of the farm to bring healthy produce to local markets.

The H. M. S. Richards Divinity School continues to meet the needs of the local churches and conferences in the Pacific Union, most recently through the delivery of the Master's in Theological Studies (MTS) program to pastors in the Central California Conference (CCC). The first cohort of 27 pastors graduated from the program in 2020, and the second group began their studies in February 2021. The School of Education continues to train educators, administrators, and counselors for the Pacific Union. Last summer, during the height of the pandemic, LSU provided online graduate degrees and Adventist certification courses to 93 union teachers.

It is with tremendous gratitude that the faculty and staff of LSU prepare to welcome students back to beautiful Riverside, California, in August 2021. The university is not only a place for academics but one that instills deep spiritual values in its students. Over the past five years, 89 of these students have chosen to be baptized in order to publicly join the family of God. The university community is thankful for the ongoing support of so many church members who have made it possible to provide a range of services to students and their families.

Joy A. Fehr is the president of La Sierra University.