SEQUOYAH SCHOOL

PHOENIX

MAGAZINE

FALL 2026





From the Head of School

There is a lot I want for Sequoyah this year. I want us to be ambitious and to believe in who we've always been. To try things before we know exactly how they will turn out. To take some of the big questions in our Strategic Plan and do something with them. To go **big**.

Every new school year makes possibilities a little easier to see—and you can feel that kind of possibility throughout this *Phoenix*. Ten years ago, trustees, faculty, and families opened our high school with 51 students and a lot of nerve; that story is here. Julian Suh-Toma '21 remembers learning to "fall in love with the problem and not necessarily the solution." Student and alum artists explore questions of identity, loss, memory, and belonging, while our Alum Notes show just how many directions a Sequoyah beginning can take—from plasma physics and filmmaking to architecture, law, music, and teaching.

What I love about these stories is how conviction develops through experience and commitment. You try something. The world complicates it. You adjust, persist, begin again. Along the way, you discover more clearly what you think, what matters, and what you're capable of. That feels deeply Sequoyah.

Sequoyah has always grown this way. Our founders built a school around different lives learning together. Later generations built our junior high, then our high school, each before knowing the outcome. Now we have big work ahead—for our academic program, our Middle School, our campuses, and a more connected K–12 experience: grounded in what we believe, always curious about what Sequoyah and our students might become.

So this year, let's stay grounded in what matters, stay loose enough to learn, and have the confidence to reach for what's possible. And let's enjoy each other and these remarkable young people we teach along the way. There's so much ahead. I'm very glad to be here for it, and ready to get to work.

With excitement,

Rebecca Hong

Above: *Sequoyah high school students celebrate DEI Day in the courtyard in March 2020. Learn more about the high school's founding on page* **10**.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 CONGRATS, CLASS OF 2026

Sequoyah celebrates the high school graduates of the Class of 2026! See photos from graduation and read remarks from Rebecca Hong given during the ceremony.

4 WELCOMING NEW TRUSTEES

Sequoyah is excited to add five new dedicated members to its Board of Trustees for 2026-27.

8 PLAY WITH HONOR

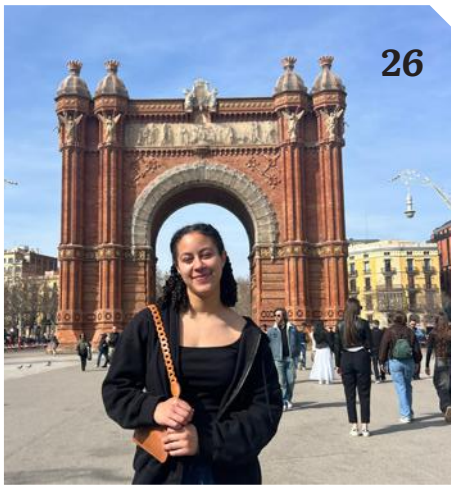
Sequoyah Athletics had another incredible year in sports! Check out some of the highlights, learn about our K-12 championships, and catch a glimpse of the new scoreboard on Gryphon Plaza.

10 A DECADE OF IMPACT

Ten years ago, Sequoyah opened a high school with the same conviction that founded the school in 1958. Those who were there remember how it came together—and those who steward it today share why the education it delivers has never mattered more.

13 MANY HAPPY RETURNS

Founding science faculty Chelsea Confalone is back in the classroom! Learn about the high school's early days, catch up with her today, and read about the projects she explored in between.



16 WHAT REMAINS, WHAT BEGINS

Sequoyah's special relationship with Pasadena's Armory Center for the Arts culminates in a celebration of student and alum creativity—and how their art reflects the past while building toward the future.

22 GET BACK

Julian Suh-Toma '21 brings history, perspective, a sense of belonging, and vision as the newest—and first high school alum—addition to Sequoyah's Board of Trustees.

26 ALUM UPDATE

Fellow Sequoyahns share updates about their lives after leaving—as well as their favorite memories of their time at school.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE NAME *PHOENIX*?

In 1821 Sequoyah, the namesake of our school, invented a syllabary for the Cherokee language. Soon after its adoption, thousands of Cherokee were able to read and write in their own language.

***The Cherokee Phoenix**, the first newspaper published by Native Americans in the United States, was first published in 1828. We name our alum magazine in honor of this important milestone.*

PHOENIX

FALL 2026
VOL. 68 • ISSUE 1

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Rebecca Hong

CONTRIBUTORS

Sarah Gossage
Matt Hutaff
Lee Taylor
Nyuol Lueth Tong

***PHOENIX* LOGO**

Denton Design

CREATIVE DIRECTION

Matt Hutaff

SEQUOYAH SCHOOL

K-8 CAMPUS
535 S Pasadena Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91105

HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS
301 N Orange Grove Boulevard
Pasadena, CA 91103

ADMINISTRATION & FOXES DEN
500 S Pasadena Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91105

@sequoyahschool

SEQUOYAHSCHOOL.ORG



CONGRATULATIONS, *Class of 2026!*

This year's graduating class is Sequoyah's biggest ever! As you head off to places like ArtCenter College of Design, Babson College, Berklee College of Music, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Cal State Northridge, Champlain College, Chapman University, Emerson College, Emory University, Loyola Marymount University, Middlebury College, Molloy University, Mount Holyoke College, New York University, Oberlin College, Occidental College, Otis College of Art and Design, Parsons School of Design at The New School, Pasadena City College, Purdue University, Reed College, Rhode Island School of Design, Sarah Lawrence College, Skidmore College, Smith College, Stanford University, Swarthmore College, The Cooper Union, Trinity College Dublin, University of British Columbia, University of California, San Diego, University of Oregon, University of Pittsburgh, University of Southern California, University of Utah, University of Victoria, University of Washington, Washington University in St. Louis, and Wesleyan University, know we are so proud of each and every one of you—***and that you are always welcome at Sequoyah.***

"At Sequoyah, you have spent years discovering yourselves—in classrooms and performances, on trails and Field Studies, in conversations, challenges, friendships, and moments of unexpected growth. ***Again and again, you have been invited to learn more about the world and, in the process, more about yourselves.***

All along, we have returned to the same aspiration: to challenge the mind, nurture the heart, and celebrate human dignity. That work—the work at the center of our mission—will remain. In many ways, it may become even more important.

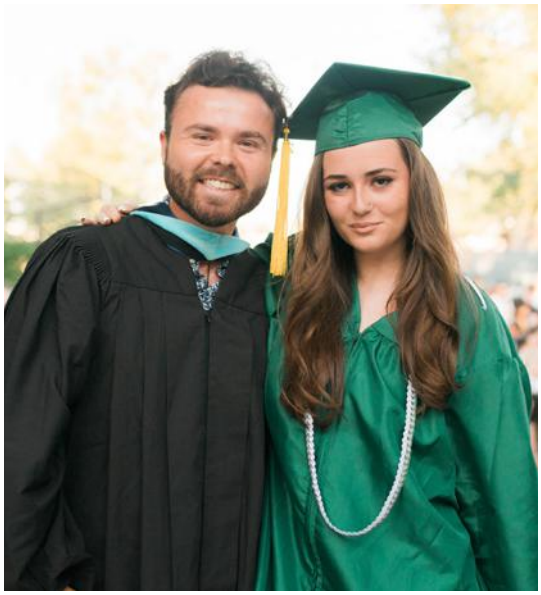
—Rebecca Hong




PERIOD
The Places You'll Go!
by Dr. Seuss




CLASS
OF
2026















MEET SEQUOYAH'S

New Trustees



Adriann Cocker

Current Parent

A Los Angeles native, **Adriann** combines her work in brand strategy from top ad agencies, qualitative research for Fortune 500 firms, and hands-on experience with children's wellness into solving business and communications challenges.

Adriann received her bachelor's in political science from the University of Southern California. She's been honored by the Mayor of Los Angeles for her *pro bono* civic work. Beyond her professional life, Adriann writes and performs stories reframing the narrative around motherhood, and mentors emerging communications professionals.

A firm believer in the power of education, she has served her *alma mater*, Mayfield Senior School, as Alum Council President and on the Board of Trustees. Her son Mason is a member of the Sequoyah high school's Class of 2028.



George Dulgeryan

Current Parent

George is a Private Wealth Advisor at Capital Group Private Client Services, based in Los Angeles. He works with families to develop tailored strategies for preserving and growing wealth across generations, and advises foundations and endowments to help them pursue long-term objectives through comprehensive planning and investment management.

Prior to joining Capital Group, George held roles with J.P. Morgan Private Bank, California Community Foundation and Deloitte. He earned a bachelor's in history from UCLA and a JD and LLM from Loyola Law School, Los Angeles.

In addition to his work with Sequoyah School, he serves on the boards of Pasadena Community Foundation and Food Forward Inc. and is a member of the advisory committee of The Huntington.



Steve Khachi, M.D.

Current Parent

Steve is a child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist and Founder, CEO, and Medical Director of Mind Study Center in Pasadena. He is double board-certified in General Psychiatry and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. He earned his MD from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and was a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Research Scholar at the National Institutes of Health.

Through his work at Mind Study Center, Steve and his team provide psychiatric care, psychotherapy, and neuropsychological evaluations for children, adolescents, adults, and families. He is especially interested in child development, student well-being, family systems, and how schools can support the emotional and psychological growth of children while maintaining high expectations for learning.

2026–27 Board of Trustees

Sequoyah's Board of Trustees provides strategic leadership, oversight, and governance to ensure the school's mission, financial health, and long-term success.

Laura Gowen
President

Luis Livingston-Gomez
Vice President

Taejo Kim
Treasurer

Erin Beck Acain
Secretary

Gillian Bush
Jennifer Cardillo
Yvonne Cheng
Adriann Cocker
DuVon Davis
George Dulgeryan
Jason Freeland
Jeff Halmos
Zsaleh Harivandi
Waleed Ibrahim
Steve Khachi
Amit Kunte
Dack LaMarque
Luciana Lang Taylor
Adam Lisagor
Nicole Rabaudi
Julian Suh-Toma
Stephanie White
Tasha Willis
Renee Dake Wilson



Luciana Lang Taylor

Current Parent

Luciana is an instructional leader with more than 20 years of rich experience in K-12 education. Since 2023, she has served as adjunct professor, fieldwork supervisor, and dissertation reader at Pacific Oaks College.

Her background spans both public and private schools across Texas and California, where she has taught secondary science and research courses while assuming leadership roles. She has served as science department chair, biology curriculum developer, standardized test item equity reviewer, United States Academic Decathlon coach, and participant on several instructional committees and task forces. She holds a bachelor's from the University of Pittsburgh, a Master's in Science Education from the University of Texas at Dallas, and a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) from the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education, specializing in Teacher Education in Multicultural Settings.

As a deeply invested parent of two K-8 students, Luciana is a highly active member of both the Sequoyah School and broader Pasadena communities.



Julian Suh-Toma

Alum, Class of 2021

Julian serves as a District Representative for State Senator Sasha Renée Pérez (CA-25), specializing in the issues of labor and human trafficking. Born and raised in Glendale and La Crescenta, Julian received a bachelor's in Sociology and graduated from the Brady-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy from Yale University, where he was elected student body president and inducted into Phi Beta Kappa.

Upon returning to Los Angeles, Julian completed the Coro Fellows Program in Public Affairs, working across the public and private sectors, political campaigns, and studying critical regional issues such as housing, transportation, and water/energy. With aims to work at the nexus of human rights, human trafficking, and law, Julian has worked at the ACLU of SoCal, Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, and other community-based organizations.

To learn more about Julian, read our conversation with him on page 22.

Celebrating Laura Gowen

Later this year, Laura Gowen steps down as Board President after more than a decade of service to Sequoyah. After co-chairing the capital campaign that funded the purchase of 500 S Pasadena and will enable us to acquire our beloved K-8 campus from Caltrans, she helped shepherd the school through COVID, two Head of School transitions, and the Strategic Vision that will see the school flourish in the decades to come–all while raising two incredible Sequoyah alums. We are so grateful for the time, talent, and treasure she has given over the years.

"I was thrilled to find Sequoyah—an intentionally diverse school where dedicated educators encourage students to know themselves, think deeply, and pursue their goals while working to improve the world around them. Supporting this place that aligns with my values has been an honor, and I look forward to helping the community continue to thrive in the years ahead."



Leading Together

At Sequoyah, leadership is structured around a partnership between two distinct but complementary roles: the Head of School and the Board of Trustees. Understanding how these two roles work together—and how each is essential to the other—helps explain how the school is led, both today and over time.

The Head of School carries the day-to-day responsibility for bringing Sequoyah's mission to life—overseeing academics, hiring and supporting faculty and staff, managing school operations, and setting the tone for the culture that students, families, and teachers experience every day. The Head's leadership is immediate, hands-on, and deeply attuned to the rhythms of school life.

The Board of Trustees, by contrast, is charged with stewarding Sequoyah's long-term health. Trustees don't run the school day to day. Instead, they focus on strategic planning, financial oversight, and ensuring the school has the resources and vision to prosper well into the future while staying true to its mission. The Board is also responsible for hiring, supporting, and evaluating the Head of School, which makes this one of the most consequential relationships in our governance structure.

It is in that spirit that we share exciting news. With full confidence in her leadership, the Board is thrilled to announce Rebecca Hong has signed a five-year contract to continue serving as Sequoyah's Head of School. Rebecca is a thoughtful and strategic leader, someone who believes deeply in progressive education, is committed to academic excellence, and understands what makes Sequoyah special.



Leading Sequoyah in a rapidly changing world is the work ahead for Rebecca and the Board. It will mean continuing to ask hard questions about what students need and making bold, deliberate choices so our values and education stay meaningful for the world students are growing up in. We are committed to steering that work together and energized about what this next chapter holds for Sequoyah.

Laura Gowen
President, Board of Trustees

A Lasting Legacy

The Class of 2026 left their mark on the high school campus this summer, coming together in community to present a truly transformational senior class gift. The office built for Director of College Counseling Amy Abrams on the Science Patio will impact every Sequoyah high school family as they begin the process of applying to colleges and universities.

More than **$40,000** was raised by the Class of 2026 to make this possible. The beautiful mobile office offers students and families a private space to plan for the future. "Having this office creates a clear, reliable place where students know they can come back again and again," says Amy. "My hope is that the space will become more than just an office; it will serve as a trusted home base throughout students' college journey!"

Sequoyah's goal for the senior class gift is that it gives each class an opportunity to leave a meaningful piece of their community behind. It allows families to honor their experiences on campus and enrich the lives of the students to follow.



Director of College Counseling Amy Abrams with beloved high school mascot Dottie outside her new office.



Play With Honor

Sequoyah Athletics had another incredible year in sports! Check out some of the highlights, learn about our K-12 championships, and catch a glimpse of the new scoreboard on Gryphon Plaza.

In April, Director of Athletics Brian Knigin hosted Sequoyah's first-ever Sports Banquet, celebrating high school student-athletes and recognizing lifelong Gryphons **Shanti Moran '26** and **Vaughn Wilson '26** as Athlete of the Year and Heart of the Gryphon, respectively.

The evening was a remarkable capstone to both the strength of the athletics program and its growth over the past decade. Now competing in the regional Omega League, Sequoyah boasted nine varsity teams (with golf joining the roster later this year) and held its own against the competition, winning championships in girls' cross country, all-gender soccer, boys' basketball, and track and field, with strong showings in flag football and girls' volleyball—including the school's first-ever appearance at California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) events.

Sports on the K-8 campus are also looking up! Girls' basketball won their fifth league championship, and all-gender flag football and boys' volleyball were league finalists in competition. And, thanks to the Sunday Basketball crew and the generosity of the Sequoyah community, Gryphon Plaza now boasts a new, state-of-the-art scoreboard for competition (above).

"Athletics are about so much more than the final score," says Knigin. "Over the past season, our students have shown early morning commitment, late-night perseverance, and the ability to push through challenges both on and off the field. They've learned discipline, resilience, and what it truly means to support one another as teammates. We are incredibly proud of you—not just for what you've achieved, but for ***how*** you've achieved it."



















A Decade of Impact

Ten years ago, Sequoyah opened a high school with the same conviction that founded the school in 1958. Those who were there remember how it came together—and those who steward it today share why the education it delivers has never mattered more.

It was a brisk summer morning when they began gathering. Thirty-seven ninth graders. Fourteen tenth graders. Six faculty and a handful of staff. The Armory Center for the Arts wasn't their planned meeting place, but no one minded. They were together in community, aware they were writing the next chapter of a story that began in 1958.

Former Head of School Josh Brody welcomed everyone and gestured to the walkway above, where a photographer waited. Some students raised their hands. Some yelled in celebration. A few shied away. But, when the shutter clicked, a milestone for Sequoyah School was saved for posterity.

August 25, 2016. Sequoyah's high school—and its first day as a K-12 school—had arrived.

A Long Time Coming

"Sequoyah is built on the understanding that different lives, learning together, is the real education," says Michael Barak, Sequoyah's Chief Financial Officer and former President of the Board of Trustees. "As Board President, I understood the decision to establish a high school was about much more than adding another division. It was about determining whether we could extend the School's founding mission and values while protecting its long-term health and integrity."

It was not an easy decision, but it was a clear one. Sequoyah had taken mission-aligned risks before: new K–8 facilities, a more robust junior high program, larger enrollment, and more. Each now feels core to the school's identity. The dream of adding a high school, which had been building for years, was the next logical step forward.

Alums were making the case on their own as well. "They would come back and talk about their years as a Sequoyah student for the *Life after Sequoyah* panel," says Assistant Head of School and High School Director Marc Alongi. "This theme emerged; while they liked their schools, they really missed our approach in terms of owning their own education."

It wasn't a particular course, it was a way of learning: asking their own questions, working alongside a diverse student body, and being encouraged by teachers they really knew. "There's a joy in learning here," said one recent alum. "It's easier to do hard things because of that."



Day One of Sequoyah's high school adventure began at the Armory Center for the Arts on August 25, 2016.

In 2012, the Board, led by Barak, committed to a K–12 Sequoyah. "We wanted to ensure our philosophy would endure beyond eighth grade and provide that same joyful pathway of the K–8 through high school to college and beyond," he says.

The commitment came with a condition everyone understood: Sequoyah would become a K–12 institution. "It seemed natural, and developmentally appropriate, to extend our progressive education into high school classrooms, deepening intellectual inquiry, engagement, and application," says former director of advancement Elena Phleger. In the process, great care was taken to ensure Sequoyah's identity, mission, and commitment to socioeconomic diversity would remain unchanged.

Building it Together

Barak and Brody asked Alongi to research the right model. What followed showed Alongi in his element: drawing people in, trusting them with real ownership, and building something none of them could have built alone.

Alongi convened an Advisory Board to shape the program. Longtime K–8 art specialist Erin Trefry brought the visual arts. "If you look at the first curriculum guide, you'll see her imprimatur there," he says. Chelsea Confalone helped imagine a dynamic and interdisciplinary high school science curriculum. RJ Sakai '04, a connected alum who now leads and supports stewardship and inclusive practices at Sequoyah, consulted from the start.

The group took big swings, considering a high school framed entirely around social entrepreneurship, or a fully interdisciplinary curriculum with no traditional subjects. Those formative ideas never left, but they have been evolving as the students and teachers and administrators iterate on the program over the years. They live today in the Social Innovation Program (SIP) and Talking Leaves thesis presentations; interdisciplinary thinking remains a key program objective.

The next question was where. Sites from the Southwest Museum to the former Ambassador College were considered; some were too expensive, others needed major renovation. Then the Neighborhood Church, whose original Pasadena property is now Sequoyah's K–8 campus, asked whether the school needed space.

"The timing couldn't have been more serendipitous," says Alongi.

With all the key pieces in place, the Board approved the establishment of the high school. In January 2015, Sequoyah voted to lease part of the church's campus near the Gamble House beginning that July.

The team now had one year to enroll students, hire faculty, and refine a curriculum.

Sequoyah families opened their homes for Q&A sessions. Patricia Han, whose children are K–8 alums, led admissions and, as Alongi jokes, served as *ad hoc* athletic director as well, calling gyms and finding coaches. "It was a true startup!" Han recalls. "We would celebrate each time a family enrolled."

There were anxious months. "There was a moment where I thought we were going to have only 20 kids," Alongi says. By August 2016, however, there were 51.

The founding faculty arrived the way the ideas did: through relationships and conversation. Confalone and Arden Thomas spent the year building curriculum before becoming the founding biology and theater/humanities teachers. Thomas wanted a theater program "intentional about both artistic excellence and a sense of belonging."

For music, Alongi asked Daniel French of the East L.A. band Las Cafeteras, "Who do you know?" French suggested Ben Ede. "I was intrigued to find a place willing to put real effort behind the desire to create a diverse campus," Ede says. A decade of Gryphon Ensemble and Studio Band has followed.

Alia Kate joined as the first Director of Social Innovation and Field Studies, connecting students with organizations across Los Angeles. SIP remains a defining part of the high school, carried forward by Sakai and current Director of Social Innovation Joel Murillo.

The Ride Home

One piece was still missing. Educational reformer and progressive educator Ted Sizer argued a diploma should be earned by exhibition, not just seat time. The faculty wanted that: a portfolio each student would build and defend. So they packed into a school van and drove to Wildwood School to see how it could be done.

(*continued on page* 14)



Music faculty Ben Ede jams with Gabriel Robles '20 at the socially distanced Class of 2020 graduation.

FACULTY PROFILE: CHELSEA CONFALONE

Many Happy Returns

Founding science faculty Chelsea Confalone is back in the classroom! Learn about the high school's early days, catch up with her today, and read about the projects she explored in between.

By the time Sequoyah's high school opened in 2016, Chelsea Confalone had been immersed in its curriculum for a long time.

"When Marc Alongi reached out to see if I was interested in helping develop the science curriculum and pitched me his vision for the school, I was sold," she says. "We spent the following year working it out, connecting it to other disciplines, and talking about the vision for the school in general. It was one of the most fun things I've ever done."

Biology at the beginning was scrappy; Chelsea's class shared a room with visual arts, leading to paint spilled on microscope slides and fruit flies from genetics experiments getting stuck to modeling clay. Since many of the first group of students transferred from other schools, they all had a wide range of interests, abilities, and expectations—but also a desire to come together.

"In the beginning, we all tried to do too much," Confalone says. "It's been great to watch as programs have become more honed, as more support staff have been added so teachers can focus on creating engaging learning experiences and collaborating on projects with each other."

After teaching remotely from Maine during the beginnings of COVID, Chelsea took a year off to balance herself, spend time with family, and work on projects that piqued her interest. Those projects grew in scope until one year became a few—including an incredible history project tied to the Mount Desert Street Cemetery in Bar Harbor.

"I was curious to learn more about who was buried there," she says. "I worked with two local historical societies to make a curriculum local schools could use and partnered with the local library and a bookstore to make a website (**headstonehistory.org**) for the public."

She also immersed herself in local politics, helping East Coast candidates before moving back to California. Her skills with artificial intelligence gave small campaigns the ability to compete against larger, better-funded opponents.

"Campaigns don't typically have the money for fancy tools," she says. "I built things staff wished existed but didn't have the time or budget for, like a searchable database of every speech or podcast done so the communications team could find exactly what was said, or a community outreach tool to build mutual aid networks across the state.

"Activism isn't a chore. When you are contributing to something bigger than yourself, being humble and offering your services, it can feel incredibly rewarding and will make you much happier than doom scrolling."

Meanwhile, her day job is equally rewarding. "It's so great to be back," Chelsea says. "Sequoyah was always in the back of my mind as the kind of place uniquely positioned to get it right. The competency-based framework we use is exactly what we need to navigate this new landscape. That teachers here already think in this way means we can be a model for how to get it right, and I'm thrilled to get to be part of that work."





Above: *Chelsea with students in 2019 (left) and 2026 (right).*

"It's a good model, one we thought we wanted to do," Alongi says. But on the drive back, the conversation turned. What they had seen was strong, but it wasn't quite **Sequoyah**. Instead of asking students to present everything they had learned, what if each student chose one subject and went deep?



Above: *Theater and Performing Arts Chair Arden Thomas with the 2019 cast of* Radium Girls.

By the time the van got back to Pasadena, the idea had shape. "There was such energy and consensus around it," Alongi says. They named it Talking Leaves, an homage to Sequoyah himself. Today Talking Leaves is a multiday event held every fall and spring. Students present college-level work on a topic that speaks to them before taking live questions from faculty, peers, and outside guests.

Selina Yang '20, now a Ph.D. student in astrophysics at Cornell, recently learned what her candidacy exam will look like. "It's exactly the same format as Talking Leaves," she says. "You write a paper, you go talk to a panel, they ask you really hard questions. But I feel so prepared because I've been doing this since high school."

The First 10 Years

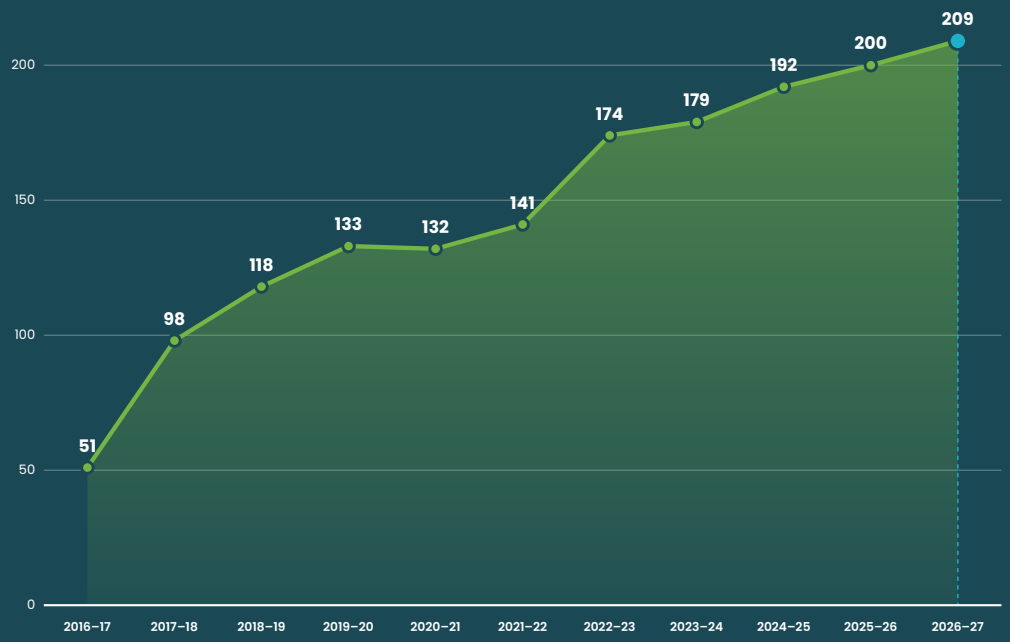
"We were a tiny school, experimenting with all kinds of ideas," Thomas says. "Our students were part of building the school culture right alongside us. There was a sense that anything was possible."

Then COVID hit. Social distancing. Zoom classrooms with resilient students celebrating one another and practicing activism at a distance. The Class of 2020 came to campus one at a time to receive their diplomas, and some stayed for socially distanced jam sessions with Ben Ede. A school built on relationships, it turned out, could hold together even when its people couldn't share a room. When the community returned, it kept growing. New teachers brought new voices and ideas to campus, and incredible staff like Director of College Counseling Amy Abrams arrived to help students prepare for life after high school.

It Keeps Going

From its founding cohort of 51 students in 2016, Sequoyah's high school has more than quadrupled in size. This growth has spurred access to a new generation of rigorous academic offerings as well as a competitive athletics program that supports baseball, basketball, volleyball, and more.

For more details on the high school's current curriculum, visit **sequoyahschool.org**.



Today, the high school is home to more than 200 students and faculty, and eight graduating classes are at work in the world. And the school keeps evolving. This year's theme, Perspective in Practice, asks students to make the most of a diverse community by building a skill in short supply: staying in productive conversation with someone who sees the world differently. A cohort of trained student leaders, a "dialogue gym" for practicing conflict management, and visiting experts in intergroup dialogue are part of the work.

"Like our founders," says Head of School Rebecca Hong, "the people who built this high school had a vision. Today's high school team carries it forward and sharpens it every day."

And Still Building

When asked, Alongi doesn't describe a finished school. He talks about seeking a home for theater, more room for athletics, greater space for STEM and SIP, and an eventual place where the whole K–12 school can come together. "The vision is still evolving," he says. "The coherence is there, and it takes time to build." Brody, when looking back at his tenure, had this coherence in mind. "The culture," he said, "is what I'm most proud of. There is something you feel when you come onto this campus. And that culture permeates from K through 12."

"I feel enormous pride in the decision we made back then," adds Barak. "And even more in the community that turned that vision into reality."









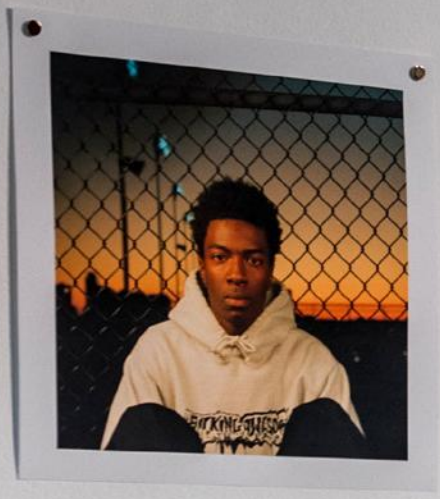


In 1958, no one could have pictured the world today's graduates are entering, where software drafts essays, summarizes readings, and rivals the world's best mathematicians in minutes. Yet the values Sequoyah committed to at its founding describe exactly what this world needs: curiosity that belongs to the student, sound judgment, the ability to learn alongside people whose lives differ from your own, and the power to shape a community. No machine can replace those capacities. Sequoyah exists to develop and amplify them.

The Sequoyah faculty and staff in that Armory photograph saw what students needed and built it. "I'm in awe of what they did," says Hong. "Every generation here has asked what students need next. The answers change. The values underneath them don't."

Those values endure, she says, because they were never only about the individual. "Most of the world treats individual achievement and care for others as competing goals," Hong adds. "We treat them as one: each student becomes more fully themselves by learning that their growth is bound up with everyone else's. That's how you raise people who think for themselves, live well with others, and can hold a democracy together. It's what Sequoyah's progressive education was always meant to do."

She smiles. "It amazes me. We've been evolving since 1958, and we've never lost sight of why."



verything went online and like, regrettably,
ere was a time which my friend & I referred
to as the discord days.

"I don't think there's any harm in learning, you know,
you just get smarter. You just understand people
ter, you understand the world better.
that more people should sorta have
for understanding the world and
ding each other. Because I think with
ld could be a better place if we
ow to understand each other
d how to care for each other."





didn't really do much
never left my house
So isolation was pretty fun for me
first because I'm a pretty introverted p
But i dont know
I think it made me develop my sense
humor and the way I carry
myself."



WHEN PEOPLE GET
F**KING C
ABOUT
AUTHENTI
GENU





What Remains, What Begins

Sequoyah's special relationship with Pasadena's Armory Center for the Arts culminates in a celebration of student and alum creativity—and how their art reflects the past while building toward the future.

On a spring afternoon at Pasadena's Armory Center for the Arts, a small crowd climbed the stairs to the mezzanine gallery, past photographs with burned edges, portraits paired with handwritten interview transcripts, and a family caught mid-gesture in an orange grove. The occasion was both artist talk and homecoming; in 2016, high school students met here for the first time. A decade later, the building hosted the school's tenth-anniversary exhibition of student and alum art, called *One Day I Finally Knew What I Had to Do, and Began*, a title borrowed from a line in American poet Mary Oliver's poem "The Journey." The show filled the Armory's upstairs gallery through the end of May; in its final weeks, seniors **Dashell Wasson** and **Penny Martinez** joined alum **Dahlia Kim Levy '23** to talk about the work on the walls and the decade that preceded it.



Above (l-r): *Dahlia Kim Levy '23, Viviana Palacio, Penny Martinez '26, and Dashell Wasson '26 at the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena.*

A Founding Address, Revisited

For Sequoyah, the Armory has long functioned as a second home. The high school opened as an extension of a K-8 program running since 1958, built on a progressive philosophy that prizes experiential learning, student agency, and, in the words of the school's mission statement, an education that "challenges the mind, nurtures the heart, and celebrates human dignity." The ethos balances challenge, nurture, and celebration—and that vision found an early ally in an arts nonprofit devoted to similar ends. Armory staff opened the talk by describing their mission to nurture community and young people through art-making that advances equity and social justice, and to help imagine a community shaped by many voices. This alignment brought Sequoyah's high schoolers through the Armory's doors, and the exhibition and talk honored that alliance.

Viviana Palacio, who chairs Sequoyah's visual arts program, framed the show around Oliver's line, describing the arc every young artist travels: through uncertainty, toward clarity, and into the slow, unglamorous work of beginning. She turned first to Penny and asked when she had known what she had to do, and began.

Family as First Material

Penny's series, *Soy Una Mosca*, grew out of a short story written by her older sister, Lucy, who also modelled for the photographs. "My family is my muse," Martinez said. Her sister's writing sparked a series that weaves text into the image, while family supplies its subjects and setting. The story follows a Hispanic narrator navigating a limited fluency in Spanish. "This experience that this character has, and her story as someone who's Hispanic and doesn't speak the language, really resonated with me so deeply," she said.

The photographs were shot at the family home where Penny's mother and grandmother had grown up. An orange tree recurs through the frames, tied to a family ritual of harvest and sharing, while braided hair links three generations of women. Many subjects, artist included, appear with their backs to the camera, a choice bound up with the work's tension around belonging.

"I'm part Mexican, and so I'm mixed. I'm Filipino and I'm Mexican," Penny said. "This feeling of feeling sort of torn between the two… I wanted to impart the feelings that I feel, disconnect with my own culture at times, and make the viewer feel that."



The title carries the same charge. *Soy Una Mosca*, or "I am a fly," comes from a scene in the story in which a grandmother tells her granddaughter that flies avoid a closed mouth, a rebuke for talking too much in the kitchen. For Martinez (right), the fly became a symbol for someone learning to interpret a language and culture she loves, leaning on body language and gesture to fill in for words she is still acquiring. Asked what surprised her most, she described her family's relationship to its heritage:

her grandmother's generation taught to suppress it, her mother still working to learn the language she wanted, herself now reaching for it. "We're all still trying to deal with it," she said, "and trying to heal our relationship with our own culture in a country that is actively deporting people for doing so."

Ashes and What Remains

Dashell's series *Remains* began in the aftermath of the Eaton Fire. Wasson recalled walking through the burn zone and noticing chimneys still standing where houses once had. "I felt like they represented gravestones of the houses that were there previously," he said. That image led to his project, for which Dashell returned to the wreckage of his family's home to locate the physical sites of specific memories (a Christmas, the day his father built the pool, and others) and photographed them among the rubble. He printed the images on fiber paper meant to evoke memory's texture, pairing black-and-white photographs of the original moments with burned-edged color prints of the same locations today. "It poses the question to the viewer: what literally remains, and what remains in my memory," he said, and added, with some amusement, that burning the edges by hand over the kitchen sink took hours and left him smelling of smoke for days.

A second piece, *The Phoenix*, turns the same fire into a story of repair. Dashell and his father had spent nearly two years estranged before the fire destroyed the family home, and working through the wreckage together brought them back into contact. The image moves from a darkened center, representing the period before the fire, outward into lighter tones that suggest hope.

"There were better days, right?" Dashell asked the crowd. "We may have had a couple of bad times, but there were better days. It motivated me to want to heal the relationship more."



Dashell Wasson '26 in front of Remains *and* Phoenix*, his two submissions for Sequoyah's March exhibition.*

Sustaining a Practice After Graduation

Dahlia, a photographer studying at Parsons School of Design, offered the clearest picture of what a Sequoyah arts education can grow into over time. She got her first camera the week before COVID-19 closed the school, and began photographing the people closest to her during forced isolation. "I started to kind of just capture that as my own defense mechanism at the moment," she said. In capture, the camera's action becomes an impulse to hold on.

What began as *COVID Girls*—a senior project rooted in quarantine and Zoom classes—has since grown into an ongoing body of work called *COVID Gen*, built around photographic portraits paired with recorded interviews. Dahlia traces her turn toward text and oral history to Nan Goldin's *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* and Abigail Heyman's *Growing Up Female*. That influence shaped her deliberately informal interview format.

"We're used to texting, we're used to abbreviations," she said. "Our attention spans are short." The informality preserves a generational cadence. Watching her subjects—many of them close friends from adolescence—move through college has shown her how differently isolation shaped each of them, and she describes these reunions as "a really fascinating way to get to know new people in my life while also really reflecting on these friendships that I was carrying out at that age."

Kim Levy shoots on medium-format film, a deliberately slow choice within a fast-moving digital culture, and one sustained through real labor years past its original assignment. "When I'm sitting with these photos, like, it's a pain, but I am going to drop them off at the lab," she said. "I'm scanning them by hand. I'm editing them by hand and then I'm printing them by hand." The repetition of 'by hand' makes persistence audible in the sentence.

Asked how photography helps her sit with something as heavy as a generational rupture, she described the medium's particular pull: "Being behind the lens and being separated from your subjects and from what you're working on kind of allows you to assess what's in front of you in a way that can give you a real sense of control."

The most striking moment in Kim Levy's remarks came from a discovery about her own family. Her practice closely mirrors her mother's ongoing oral-history project documenting Koreatown, a resemblance that became clear only after her younger brother pointed it out. "He just looks at me and he's like, 'So you're just doing her program,'" Kim Levy joked. The comment makes artistic inheritance unceremonious. Creative habits can travel between generations quietly, surfacing only much later. "I think it's all become quite intertwined," she said.



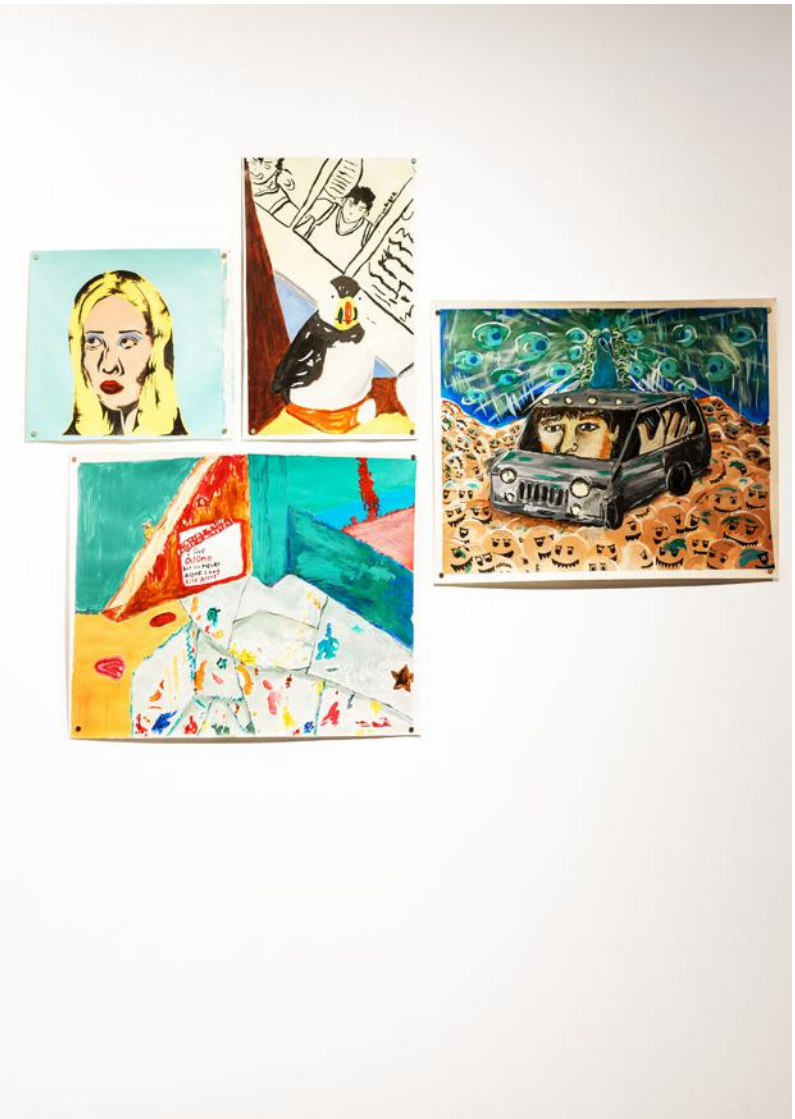
Dahlia Kim Levy '23 with Head of School Rebecca Hong at the opening night of Sequoyah's exhibition at The Armory.



A Decade in the Same Room

The conversation at the Armory traced a throughline from Sequoyah's founding philosophy to the work hanging on its walls last spring. A school built around experiential learning, student agency, and social justice has raised three young artists who turned personal rupture, displacement, and isolation into disciplined, sustained bodies of work. Their seriousness lies in form as well as subject: the orange tree, the burned edge, the slow labor of film and recorded voice.

The Armory remains a place where Sequoyah students exhibit and are recognized as artists in a public gallery. The partnership has produced a pattern: young people given a real audience, a real wall, and real stakes, learning early that art can hold grief, memory, reconciliation, and beauty. Kim Levy's presence at the talk, an alum still building on work she began as a senior, offered evidence that what Sequoyah and the Armory began together in 2016 continues to grow past graduation.





Get Back

Julian Suh-Toma '21 brings history, perspective, a sense of belonging, and vision as the newest—and first high school alum—addition to Sequoyah's Board of Trustees.

Five years after graduating, **Julian Suh-Toma '21** has returned home to Sequoyah. He sits in the high school's faculty lounge, marveling at the room's warm light and sense of space. He has just accepted a seat on the school's Board of Trustees, becoming the first alum of the high school to do so.

"It sparks a lot of reflection and introspection for me," he tells **RJ Sakai '04**, a graduate of the K-8 campus, current Director of DEIJ and Community Engagement, and Julian's longtime conversation partner. "What type of person was I when I was here? What type of person am I now? What values did I hold closely when I was here? Do I still hold those values now?"

He has been asking himself such questions since 2021. They shaped his conversation with Sakai and help explain why a 22-year-old headed toward law school has chosen to spend part of his summer thinking carefully about a small high school in Pasadena.

A Freshman Who Fell in Love with Problems

Julian arrived at Sequoyah almost by accident. His parents, both career public servants, steered him toward the school because of its mission and commitment to social equity. He recalls his admissions tour with more embarrassment than pride, pressing his guide more about lunch options and sports teams than course offerings. Sequoyah won him over nonetheless, and the change it produced has shaped his adult life.

He credits ninth-grade physics instructor Laura Haney with setting that change in motion. She would begin class by writing a question on the board and waiting; eight students on stools worked through it together, testing what they knew and identifying what they did not.

"I think it was at Sequoyah," Julian says, "where I learned to fall in love with the problem and not necessarily the solution."

A self-described type-A personality, Sequoyah helped Julian pace himself, teaching him not just to reach an answer and move on, but to also remain in uncertainty and regard gaps in understanding as the real subject of study. He traces that habit through his ninth- and tenth-grade Social Innovation Program project work on minimum wage policy; through Talking Leaves seminars, where Plato's Republic invited genuine inquiry rather than a search for the right



Director of DEIJ and Community Engagement RJ Sakai and Julian Suh-Toma '21 at Sequoyah's high school campus.

interpretation; and through historical simulations on Indian independence and the trial of Socrates, which asked students to inhabit a role fully instead of studying it from a distance.

Community matters as much as curriculum. Julian recalls pickup basketball and spikeball during break, the daily jog to the Rose Bowl Aquatic Center for flag football practice, and the comfort of being known by upperclassmen as a freshman. Sequoyah's small size allowed students to be recognized across grade levels. That recognition created the belonging he now considers central to his sense of self.

During his two years as student co-chair, Julian helped guide the school through the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The experience taught him a lesson about leadership he still carries with him: results matter less than the buy-in that makes them durable. "Leadership as a practice of facilitation and community building," Sakai offers, and Julian agrees. He learned to accept feedback from friends serving alongside him in student government, a skill that has served him in every room he has entered since.

Carrying Sequoyah to New Haven and Beyond

That grounding followed Julian to Yale, where he built a sociology degree and coursework in Grand Strategy around a persistent interest in how people make decisions and extend concern beyond their immediate circles. He spent three years on the Yale College Council and was elected student body president. The work echoed his Sequoyah student-government years and sharpened his instinct for consensus-building at a larger scale. He also found similar purpose in the Yale Policy Institute and the Asian American Students Alliance.

> "It was at Sequoyah where I learned to fall in love with the problem and not necessarily the solution."



His legal-service placements with the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking and the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles pointed Julian toward a career in advocacy for people with limited access to power. His research on decision-making and cosmopolitanism gave that drive an intellectual home.

Julian describes his post-graduation Coro Fellowship—a nine-month rotation through nonprofit, business, government, and labor placements in Los Angeles—as a direct extension of his Sequoyah education. "It felt like being thrown back into the kind of problem-centric environment of Sequoyah," he says joyfully of the dense memos, interview schedules, and deliberate lack of instructions provided by the organization.

Now studying for the LSAT with an eye on law school, Julian carries forward the conviction that understanding a problem fully comes before proposing a solution.

A Trustee's Task: Listening for the Next Generation

Julian sees his new role as a trustee as a way to represent the perspective of a recent graduate who still remembers what the school feels like day to day. He wants conversations with current students to shape what he brings to board meetings, giving a current voice to decisions that will outlast his own time on campus.

He speaks about his appointment with visible gratitude, calling it "a tremendous sense of pride." The invitation has led him to trace a line from the prospective student who asked about cafeteria food and scoreboards to the young advocate-in-training preparing to serve the institution that changed him.

His message to fellow alums is simple: "Come back. What do you have to lose?"







Above: *Dominik Giapis '21, Julian, and Dylan Cugley '21 on their senior Field Studies trip to Sequoia National Park.*

Right: *Julian's advisory group at graduation and on campus: teacher Kristine Nakada, Zack Wacker, Amber Greene, Julian, Rory Martin, Sammy Potter, Adela Villalba, and Crystal Aviles.*

Opposite: *RJ and Julian reconnect this past summer.*

Alum Update



Garcia Segura '11 is an experiential marketing professional currently living in Los Angeles, leading campaigns and activations for global brands and clients. Most recently, he helped lead the opening of Adidas' new flagship Originals store in New York City. When he's not working, he's planning his next trip, hosting Club Teal, his monthly DJ series, or spending time with his wife and their two cats, Zeus and Rumi.

One of his favorite Sequoyah memories is the many camping trips with his incredible teachers and peers, which helped shape who he is and continue to influence his daily life to this day.



Andrea Bizarro '21 is a Luskin Leadership Fellow working under Supervisor Lindsey Horvath's office at the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Andrea has been gaining hands-on experience in policy development by producing policy analysis and reports to further the Supervisor's goals. She is working under the Civic Infrastructure & Community Services team where she assists in the regional planning and environmental portfolios.



Audrey Bluestone '21 is based in the UK pursuing her Master's in Neuroscience at King's College London, where she researches ALS pathology. Outside the lab, she writes about current events in neuroscience for the student-run magazine, *ScienceMind*. Upon the completion of her Master's she hopes to continue advancing therapeutic strategies for neurodegenerative diseases whether through a PhD, a research role, or R&D in the industry. Her favorite Sequoyah memory is huddling with her classmates under a makeshift tent to wait out an impromptu snowstorm on her senior year backpacking trip.

Congratulations to **Sula Bermudez-Silverman '07** on having her work included in the Whitney Biennial 2026. Bermudez-Silverman's sculptural practice is guided by the contextual origins and contemporary trajectories of her materials. With intensive research, she delves into mythological and historical narratives to examine their imprint. Throughout her catalog, objects that operate as a physical threshold—windows, saddles, staircases—are reintroduced to connect disparate epistemologies and question how history is camouflaged into the subconscious.



Galen Core '09, a Brooklyn-based film producer, won a Film Independent Spirit Award for Best First Feature *Lurker* this past February. In May, Galen's film *Club Kid* was a hit at the Cannes Film Festival and became the object of a heated bidding war by distributors. A24 won, buying the movie for $17 million; it premiered in theaters on November 6. He is currently shooting *Boys for Life*, which will hit theaters on April 9, 2027.



Clemencia Dane '19 spent her spring semester in Copenhagen studying Global Conflict and Humanitarian Law. Upon her return to D.C., she interned at Cornerstone Government Affairs, where she worked on the grant consulting team, tracking federal funding opportunities for clients. Clemencia is a senior at George Washington University, majoring in International Affairs and Human Services with a concentration in Global Public Health. She hopes to continue working in either federal government relations or humanitarian work post graduation.

Her favorite Sequoyah memory was in the Over There class, when teachers let the class organize a protest against the 2017 Muslim Ban and march to Pasadena City Hall: "We marched as a class with our signs and statistics we had researched showing close to 0% of the individuals who carried out fatal terrorist attacks on U.S. soil came from one of the seven majority-Muslim countries included in the ban." Almost 10 years later, she still carries this lesson with her—and it informs her interests and work today.

Lyla Desario '22 is a freshman at Cornell University studying Fashion Design and Management. She's super excited about this next step in her journey. She and her family are thankful to Sequoyah.



Giuseppe DiMassa '24 spent the summer in Rome and Brescia, conducting archival research into the nationalistic radicalization of frontline military chaplains during the First World War while eating gelato and enjoying Rome's art. His primary academic interests include the religious and intellectual history of 20th century autocracies and political violence and the politics of memory in post-conflict and post-fascist societies. He studies Political Science (Political Theory) and Religious Studies (History of Christianity) at Yale. After college, he hopes to earn a JD/PhD and enter academia, or perhaps find a quiet farm in New England with some books.

His favorite Sequoyah memory was the sophomore Field Studies trip to Sitka, Alaska: "Hiking a snow-covered mountain in May blew my Southern Californian mind, while the combination of seeing Native Alaskan totem poles, visiting a Russian Orthodox Church, and touring a salmon farm provided an illustration of 200 years of American history within the geographic span of about 10 blocks."



This past spring, **Claire Donahue '21** worked with our Field Studies team providing logistical support and leading trips. She chaperoned the 11th Grade Lost Coast Grand Adventure. Claire is a recent graduate of UC Berkeley where she studied Molecular Environmental Biology. She plans to work in an ecophysiology lab at the University of Alaska Anchorage in the fall while preparing to apply to medical school.



Ava Ferry '14 is currently working in the admissions office at The Buckley School in Sherman Oaks. When she's not working her way through the stack of books on her nightstand, she's hanging out with her roommate, Solaar KirkDacker '16.

One of her favorite Sequoyah memories is the camping trip to Joshua Tree, highlights of which include visiting the Chasm of Doom, rock climbing, getting Rite Aid ice cream, and hanging out with Ann Liashkov.



Scarlett Ferry '17 is the vice president of Mesmer Mesmer, a Pasadena concept store and cultural event space that celebrates independent makers, sustainability, community, and style. She spends her days telling stories, making social media posts, and helping grow the business. When she's not working, she's usually cooking, reading, drawing, exploring the outdoors (still barefoot of course), or spending time with her cat, Nigel.

One of her favorite Sequoyah memories? Catching frogs at the oases on her first-ever Anza-B trip.

Lukas Frank '08 is a musician composer who recently scored a feature film for Tony Gilroy, made music for the 2026 Venice Biennale, and put out his third record on September 18. You can find his album under Storefront Church anywhere you find music.

His favorite Sequoyah memory is when his best friend Alex Larrimore accidentally knocked his front tooth out when they were messing around on the junior high patio: "I will never forget the look on Alex's face when I spat my tooth out. Luckily, Donna Youngstrom and Ben Moran knew to immediately put it in milk to preserve it so the dentist could shove it back in. Great day."



Congratulations to **Ileia Gibbs '18** on her recent graduation from the University of Connecticut, where she earned a bachelor's in Animal Science. This fall, Ileia will begin the next chapter of her journey at Western University of Health Sciences, where she will pursue her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

When she's not in school, Ileia spends her summers as a camp counselor at Sequoyah Summerhouse and works as a veterinary technician at Vet Villa Animal Hospital.



Sanai Gibbs '25 was invited to the Altadena Historical Society Juneteenth celebration, where she was asked to deliver a keynote address for scholarship recipients. Her speech, titled "A Message of Hope," focused on her first year in college and the hope she has witnessed in the Altadena community post-fire. Sanai is a Posse Scholar and rising sophomore at Tulane University studying English and Communications.



Aidan Grimm '19 spent his junior fall in Copenhagen studying International Humanitarian Law and Armed Conflict. Now a senior at Hamilton College, he is grateful for the lifelong friendships he made and the opportunity to visit Bosnia and Serbia to study the lasting impact of global conflict and the role of the international community in peace making. This summer, he worked as a Legislative Intern in Senator Adam Schiff's D.C. Office, focusing on foreign affairs and food insecurity. Aidan credits junior high history teacher Chris Colthart with igniting his passion for history: "Thank you, Chris!"



This past spring, **Kai Blatt '09** received her Master of Architecture and Master in Landscape Architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Her thesis, "Architecture for a Watershed," proposed branch libraries as hybrid infrastructure in California's Tulare Basin. She's now back in New York City with her husband Tyler, and just started work as a designer at Brent Buck Architects.

A favorite Sequoyah memory is the playlists her classmates burned on CDs for their camping trips: "We would be stuck listening to the same 12 songs on repeat for days, and even today, Duran Duran's *Hungry Like the Wolf* will immediately take me back to a rowdy van ride across Arizona."

Zoela Gullo '19 spent the summer interning with R204 DESIGN, a global planning and architecture firm based in Los Angeles with additional offices in Dubai and New Delhi run by alum parents Sidhartha Sabikhi and Meghna Andley (P '19). Zoela had the opportunity to interact with clients, work on individual buildings and master plans through various design programs, and participate in the contracting portion of architecture. She is a senior studying Architecture and Italian Studies at Wellesley College and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Her favorite Sequoyah memories are the camping trips. "It is such a unique experience out in the world that has inspired and grown my love for the outdoors. I feel confident in hard work, especially prep work, because of the work we did during those trips. It is a core memory that I consistently circle back to for myself and with friends."



Congratulations to **Max Harmon '09** on being named Teacher of the Year at Jordan-Matthews High School in Siler City, North Carolina. As the school's carpentry teacher, Max was honored for fostering real-world skills, leadership, and community service through his vocational program. As an educator and organizer, Max is helping lead the fight in North Carolina for the full funding of public schools and the protection of our democratic institutions.

Max is continually appreciative of Sequoyah for teaching him that learning never stops and that a better world is possible.



Calaya Amparo Hudnut '13 lives in Los Angeles. When she isn't painting in her home studio in Echo Park, she is working as an art mentor for adults with developmental disabilities at Tierra del Sol Foundation.

Her favorite Sequoyah memory is hiking to the furthest oasis pools she could in Anza-B and her art classes with Erin Trefry.

Jared Hughes '86 spent the summer traveling in Greece with his wife Nadia and their daughter Teddy.

His favorite Sequoyah memory is walking around an abandoned construction site on the Sea of Cortez with beloved junior high teacher Sarah Starr and imagining it was his own five-star hotel and restaurant. His class was able to be there for an extended period of time because of the "garden café" fundraiser they ran where they served "fancy" breakfast to carpool parents: "You had to book reservations the week before."



Congratulations to **Orla Irish-Hurlow '17** on graduating *cum laude* from Lewis & Clark with a bachelor's in Fine and Studio Arts. Orla is a Portland-based photographer whose work has appeared in multiple juried exhibitions, including *Blue Sky Gallery* and LightBox Photographic Gallery's *New Visionaries* 2026. Orla is drawn to the logistics side of creative work: the coordination, the problem-solving, and the hands-on process of making art happen.

"Sequoyah will always have a special place in my heart because of all the friends I made along the way. People say high school or college is when you find lasting friends. Luckily for me I still have lifelong connections since first grade! Sequoyah is a place that brings people together, whether it is through endless camping trips or iconic events like Jogathon and Musicale."

Dahlia Kim Levy '23 took part in *One Day I Finally Knew What I Had to Do, and Began*, Sequoyah's group show at Armory Center for the Arts in spring of 2026 (see page 16). Dahlia shared her work, *COVID Gen*, an ongoing oral history project started in 2020. Through intimate photographic portraits and interviews, *COVID Gen* captures the voices, identities, and resilience of a generation shaped by the pandemic. Dahlia is a student at Parsons School of Design at the New School in New York City studying photography.



Riya Koh '19 spent the summer working as an Investigative Intern at the Georgetown Law's Criminal Justice Clinic, which represents indigent defendants at the DC Superior Court. She had the opportunity to interview witnesses, review evidence, and work with attorneys to develop case theory. Riya is a senior at Wellesley College majoring in Political Science and Economics. After graduation, she plans to continue working in law or political research.

One of Riya's favorite Sequoyah memories is Kristen Moore's unit on the Constitution that included a mock trial, which sparked her interest in legal work.



Nora Langknecht '06 works as a program manager and production specialist with the Therapist Development Center and the Pacific Gestalt Institute. When she's not gathering with friends or dreaming up new papier-mâché projects, she's probably cooking with a book in her hands.

One of her favorite Sequoyah memories (among so many) is making towel tents between the seats in the yellow bus on the way home from Beach Day.



Maya Le '17 received a Keasbey Fellowship to pursue her master's degree in English literature at the University of Cambridge. She is focusing on postcolonial interpretations of fairy tales, particularly transoceanic narratives involving mermaids. She also received a Fulbright grant to serve as an English teaching assistant in the Czech Republic for next year.

Her favorite Sequoyah memory: Language Arts class and the many camping trips!



Tosh Le '15 has been accepted to the PhD program in plasma physics at Princeton University. He is finishing a two-year fellowship there and starts the PhD program in the fall. He will be focusing on sustainable energy systems and efforts to address climate change through nuclear fusion. Tosh spent part of his summer volunteering for the Blackfeet Nation in Montana.



Piper Lewis '13 has continued performing since her DTASC days at Sequoyah. She recently finished filming her feature film debut! She is also engaged! Piper and her fiancé, Scott Wagner, will be tying the knot next June. When she isn't acting or planning her own wedding, she's helping other brides find their wedding dresses as a bridal stylist.

Piper's favorite Sequoyah memories are tied between DTASC competitions and whichever hot lunches her mom, Megan, helped cook.



Some ideas stay with you for a lifetime. For **Daniel Lir '87**, his latest film, *Shalom Salaam*— "peace" in Hebrew and Arabic—began as a dream when he was 16. While traveling through the Middle East, he witnessed people of diverse backgrounds sharing meals in Old Jaffa. That moment inspired a film about food, entrepreneurship, and the power of human connection.

Daniel credits Sequoyah with planting the seeds for this project. "In sixth grade, our classroom loft became a marketplace where we formed companies and created products. At the time, it was just a fun



Congratulations to **Benjamin Parkhurst '22** on graduating *magna cum laude* from Columbia University, where he studied Linguistics and Jazz. Ben performed across New York City with jazz artists Anat Cohen, Bob Mintzer, and Nir Felder. His undergraduate thesis, *An Acoustic Sketch of Kalmyk-Oirad*, documenting the properties of sounds in an endangered language of Russia, is available to read via Columbia Academic Commons. Ben is now working at the New York University Acoustic Phonetics and Perception Lab and continuing several research projects while applying for PhD programs in Linguistics.

project, but I now realize it was there I discovered how creativity and entrepreneurship bring ideas to life and solve problems. That lesson has defined my career."

Daniel and his creative partner and wife, Bayou Bennett, have spent over 17 years producing films that inspire social change, earning 85 awards. *Shalom Salaam* celebrates the values he first explored at Sequoyah: collaboration and the belief that ideas can change the world. "I am grateful for the foundation the school provided, encouraging the curiosity and confidence to dream big. Entrepreneurship is about building a better future—a journey that truly began in a sixth-grade classroom."

Foster LippSmith '25 spent the summer as an intake specialist for Lawyers for Justice, playing basketball and seeing friends. He is a sophomore at Northwestern University studying Black Studies and Political Science. He is on the Debate team and loves it!



Blake Logan '20 spent this year recording their first solo album, BLAKE, while also working as a research fellow in a soil ecology lab at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Blake's newly released record features original compositions for cello and viola da gamba that merge their love of music and the natural world, as in the track "Nitrogen Mineralization," a piece inspired by their favorite soil microbial process. In the album, Blake combines Baroque and Jazz harmony, Jewish prayer melodies, and whistling into a unique, genre-defying musical style. Blake is moving to the Netherlands this fall to start their Masters of Music at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague. Blake is a graduate of Oberlin College and Conservatory with degrees in cello performance and biology.



Marco Miralles '17 graduated *cum laude* from UC Riverside this past spring with a degree in Computer Engineering. He recently joined NVIDIA's Omniverse team in Santa Clara as a Real-Time Rendering Engineer working on the RTX renderer. In college he competed in the EcoCAR EV Challenge, a collegiate competition sponsored by the Department of Energy and General Motors, where he served as undergraduate lead of the Connected and Automated Vehicles subteam and built the perception stack for his team's self-driving vehicle.



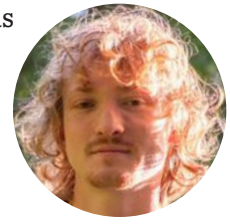
Max Rabaudi '23 began his summer in China, where he visited through the Princeton SPIA China Study Tour, engaging in diplomatic and people-to-people dialogues. He spent the rest of his summer in NYC working on his health care startup. Max is a senior at Princeton University studying at the School of Public and International Affairs.

Outside of work, Marco shoots infrared and fireworks photography, tinkers with electronics and software side projects, and makes sourdough bread and ramen from scratch in Palo Alto.

His favorite Sequoyah memory is playing music in Ben Ede's Gryphon Ensemble. Some of his best friends today are the ones he first made at Sequoyah.



Andrew Satoh '00 builds schools, offices, and warehouses across LA with his brother Chris Satoh '03. You can find Andrew at the beach every weekend with Ava (6), Quentin (3), and his wife Claire. His favorite memories of Sequoyah are spending time with Marty in the library, root beer float fundraisers, and visiting students at the local school in Mulege, Mexico.



Theo Schmit '21 recently joined Tesla as a Product Designer, where he works on the vehicle interface. He lives in the Bay Area and stays creative through photography and side projects.

William Bigby '20 spent the summer as a Getty Marrow Curatorial Intern at the Los Angeles Center of Photography where he had the opportunity to assist the curatorial team with planning and putting on exhibitions. His time at LACP gave him experience in the logistical world of curation from coordinating with artists, installing and uninstalling shows, researching artists and their works, and developing his curatorial philosophy. He got to work with artists such as Ali LeRoi (creator of Everybody Hates Chris), and Susan Meiselas – helping them to bring their exhibitions to fruition. William is a junior at Brown University studying American Studies and Social Entrepreneurship. He plans to pursue a career in the arts.

One of his favorite Sequoyah memories is going on the nearly two week backpacking trip into the Grand Canyon and hiking a little over 30 miles. That trip solidified his love for being in the wilderness, and eagerness to find resilience in challenging situations.

Nadya LaMarr '19 spent the summer working as a Getty Marrow Public Programs and Community Engagement Intern at the Huntington. She supported public programming across The Huntington's three collecting areas and gained insight into the development and implementation of programs for diverse audiences. Nadya is a senior at Vassar College, majoring in Anthropology and minoring in Religion. She also plays as a winger/center on Vassar's nationally ranked rugby team.

One of her favorite Sequoyah memories is winning back-to-back basketball league championships!



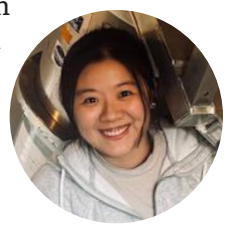


Farah Sevareid '13 graduated from UC Berkeley with a Master's in Public Health and currently works at UCLA evaluating the effectiveness and sustainability of health care policies and programs. Outside of work, she enjoys teaching/practicing yoga and exploring the Santa Monica Mountains with her dog.

Two of her favorite Sequoyah memories are from junior high: the class camping trip to Anza-Borrego and Catalina Island and the production of *Grease*, of which she still has the video of the performance!



Avery Tyler '14 recently began a new job at the St. Mark's School in Southborough, Massachusetts as their choral director and chapel music coordinator. Her favorite Sequoyah memory is performing at Musicale, which gave her the confidence to express herself and inspired her to pursue music as a career.



Congratulations to **Selina Yang '20** on publishing her first scientific paper in the *Astrophysical Journal*! The paper explores her work on analyzing a measurement of the Sagittarius A complex at the center of our Milky Way galaxy.

Selina continues her work at Cornell University on instrumentation and data products from the team's 2026 observing season while pursuing her PhD in physics.



During his junior year, **Evan Yoon '19** had the opportunity to study abroad at the University of Queensland in Australia, where he camped in the Outback and fulfilled a lifelong dream of diving on the Great Barrier Reef. He is now a senior at UC San Diego majoring in Marine Biology, where he is involved with conservation research and teaches underserved high school students about marine science.

One of his favorite Sequoyah memories is being an 8th grade chaperone to Anza-B, accompanying his brother **Jonah Yoon '30**. He credits Sequoyah camping with helping him develop his love for the outdoors.

Above (l-r): *Yoon brothers Evan, Jonah, and Travis '24 have an impromptu family reunion on Gryphon Plaza at Sequoyah's K-8 campus.*

Keep in touch!

Want to share your news with fellow Sequoyahns? Let us know what you've been up to so we can publish your accomplishments to the wider world in a future edition of *Phoenix*!

Please send all notes and contact information updates to **Sarah Gossage**, Advancement Associate, Alum and Family Relations, at sgossage@sequoyahschool.org. We can't wait to hear from you!



Right: *Niko Rosse '18 and Aidan Grimm '19 catching up over coffee in Stockholm, Sweden.*

College Acceptances

CLASSES OF 2020–2026

***Bold** indicates matriculation*

Albion College
Alfred University
American University
The American University of Paris
Amherst College
Arizona State University
ArtCenter College of Design
Babson College
Bard College
Bard College, Berlin
Bates College
Beloit College
Bennington College
Berklee College of Music
Binghamton University
Boston University
Bowdoin College
Brandeis University
Brown University
Bryn Mawr College
California Lutheran University
California State Polytechnic University
Humboldt, Maritime Academy, **Pomona, San Luis Obispo**
California State University
Channel Islands, Chico, Dominguez Hills, East Bay, Fullerton, Long Beach, **Los Angeles**, **Monterey Bay**, **Northridge**
Carleton College
Carnegie Mellon University
Case Western Reserve University
Central Connecticut State University
Central Washington University
Champlain College
Chapman University
Claremont McKenna College
Clark Atlanta University
Clark University
Colgate University
College of the Atlantic
College of Charleston
The College of Wooster
Colorado College
Colorado State University (Fort Collins)
Columbia College (Chicago)
Columbia University
Concordia University
Connecticut College
Cornell University
Denison University
DePaul University
Dickinson College
DigiPen Institute of Technology
Drew University
Drexel University
Duke University
East Los Angeles College
Eckerd College
Elon University
Emerson College
Emory University
Evergreen State University
Fordham University
Franklin & Marshall College
George Washington University
Georgetown University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Gettysburg College
Goldsmiths, University of London
Goucher College
Grinnell College
Hamilton College
Hampshire College
Harvey Mudd College
Haverford College
Hofstra University
Indiana University (Bloomington)
Ithaca College
Johns Hopkins University
Johnson & Wales University
Jewish Theological Seminary of America
Kansas City Art Institute
Kenyon College
Lafayette College
Laguna College of Art and Design
Lawrence University
Lehigh University
Lewis & Clark College
Louisiana State University
Los Angeles City College
Loyola Marymount University
Loyola University Chicago
Macalester College
Manhattan University
Marist College
Maryland Institute College of Art
Massachusetts College of Art and Design
Massey University
McGill University
Miami University (Oxford)
Michigan State University
Middlebury College
Middlesex University London
Molloy University
Montana State University
Moore College of Art and Design
Mount Holyoke College
Mount St. Mary's University
Mount Saint Mary College
Muhlenberg College
New England Institute of Technology
New York University
Northeastern University
Northwestern University
Oberlin College
Occidental College
Ohio University
Oregon State University
Otis College of Art and Design
Outer Coast College
Pace University
Parsons Paris at The New School
Parsons School of Design at The New School
Pasadena City College
Pepperdine University
Pitzer College
Pratt Institute
Princeton University
Purdue University
Quinnipiac University
Reed College
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Rhode Island School of Design
Rhodes College
Rice University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
St. Lawrence University
St. Olaf College
Saint Mary's College of California
San Diego State University
San Francisco State University
San Jose State University
Santa Clara University
Sarah Lawrence College
Savannah College of Art and Design
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
School of Visual Arts
Scripps College
Seattle University
Sewanee: The University of the South
Siena University
Simon Fraser University
Skidmore College
Smith College
Sonoma State University
Southern California Institute of Architecture
Southern Methodist University
Spelman College
St. John's College, Santa Fe
St. John's University
Stanford University
State University of New York Buffalo, Morrisville
Stony Brook University
Swarthmore College
Syracuse University
Temple University
The Cooper Union
The New School
Toronto Metropolitan University
Trinity College Dublin
Trinity University
Tulane University
Union College
University of Arizona
University of the Arts London
University of British Columbia
University of California Berkeley, **Davis**, Irvine, **Los Angeles**, Merced, Riverside, **San Diego**, Santa Barbara, **Santa Cruz**
University of Chicago
University of Colorado Boulder, Colorado Springs, Denver
University of Connecticut
University of Delaware
University of Denver
University of Dundee
University of East Anglia
University of Hawaii at Mānoa
University of Hartford
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
University of Iowa
University of La Verne
University of Massachusetts Amherst
University of Miami
University of Michigan
University of Montana
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of Oregon
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
University of Portland
University of Puget Sound
University of Redlands
University of Rochester
University of St Andrews
University of St. Thomas
University of San Francisco
University of Southern California
University of Toronto
University of Utah - Honors College
University of Vermont
University of Victoria
University of Washington, Seattle
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Ursinus College
Vanderbilt University
Vassar College
Washington State University
Washington University in St. Louis
Wesleyan University
Western Washington University
Wheaton College
Whitman College
Whittier College
Willamette University
Williams College
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Yale University