

## **Celebrating Leadership & Heritage: Welcoming Incoming FACCC President Oranit Limmaneeprasert**

Recognizing Asian Pacific Islander (API) Heritage Month, we proudly introduce Oranit Limmaneeprasert, the incoming President of the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC). A long-time professor in the English as a Second Language department at American River College, Oranit brings decades of experience, a deep sense of purpose, and a leadership style shaped by her Thai and Chinese heritage.

### **Q&A with Oranit Limmaneeprasert**

#### **1. Can you tell us a little about your journey, from growing up in Thailand to becoming a professor in California?**

Great question. I sometimes have a hard time believing that I earned a PhD in educational psychology from the University of Hawai'i - Manoa and have taught there and have been teaching at American River College for nearly 25 years. Born and raised in a traditional Chinese family in a town that is 350 miles from Bangkok, I was supposed to be seen but not heard and not receive any education beyond elementary school. With scholarships, I did manage to study and earn a degree in chemical engineering from a college in Taiwan. After that, I taught Mandarin Chinese to the local community and tutored two American consuls and their staff in Thai, which led to my being selected as a Peace Corps language and cultural trainer and the director of the Maryknoll Fathers' Thai language and culture school. As I learned more about possible opportunities for women in the U.S., I became interested in pursuing advanced degrees in the U.S. With savings from working three jobs for six years and support from some friends, I miraculously received a student visa to come to the U.S. In short, I would say that I would not have been here had I not met the right people and been at the right place. Needless to say that I am deeply grateful and humbled for the opportunities that I have.

#### **2. How has your cultural background shaped your perspective as an educator and leader?**

Educators in Taiwan and Thailand are expected to serve as a role model for their students, and that is what I have also strived to do. Women leaders in Taiwan, Thailand, and many places in Asia are supposed to be very humbled and reserved. I am not a typical Chinese/Thai woman in that regard as I learned early in my academic career in the U.S. that I must actively participate in advocacy work to make a difference for those who don't have a voice.

#### **3. What does Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month mean to you personally?**

We need to celebrate our diversity. Additionally, we must continue to educate the public that API is a highly diverse group and work to dismantle the minority myth as it is harmful to our struggle for racial justice and as it reinforces the myth of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners. Further, the myth has resulted in inadequate support for those in the API group (e.g., Hmong, Laotians, Cambodians, and even many Chinese) who need academic and financial support.

We must continue to advocate for the disaggregation of the API data in all government and private organizations.

**4. What drew you to teach English as a Second Language?**

I always love languages and am fluent in six languages. I chose to teach ESL even though I could have taught statistics, learning theory, research method, or psychology because I felt strongly and still do that I can make more contributions to the field of ESL as many of our students are immigrants who are not aware of their rights and not comfortable about voicing their concerns, especially when they need to do so in English.

**5. How have your students inspired or shaped your work over the years?**

Witnessing my students' hard work, perseverance, and resilience in an adverse environment and their academic achievements constantly reinforces my understanding that what I do can change their lives. So, I need to intentionally and consistently do my best to advocate for them.

**6. What inspired you to take on the role of FACCC President?**

Having served on several FACCC committees and as FACCC Vice President, I was passionate about increasing my contributions to FACCC's advocacy. Further, I believe that my six years of leadership experience and 25 years of membership at FACCC, my seven years of tenure as the faculty union president for American River College, and my four years of service as president of the Sacramento chapter of the Asian Pacific Asian American Labor Alliance (APALA) have prepared me for the position.

**7. Are there any Thai values or traditions that you bring into your teaching or leadership style?**

Teamwork and collaboration are the main Thai values that I deeply appreciate and strive to practice. Being considerate of others is a Thai and Chinese value that was instilled in me. With these values in my upbringing, I am intentional about making sure that every voice is heard and respected and that someone sitting quietly in the corner of the room is invited to every discussion.