

Friday, March 16, 2018 * 8:30 am - 3:00 pm
California State University, Fresno * North Gym
5241 N. Maple Ave, Fresno, CA 93740

ALEC ~ FRESNO

2ND ANNUAL LAO AMERICAN
EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

3.16.2018



*Reconnecting with our roots
to unleash our inner warriors.*

Presented By:

In Collaboration With:



ALEC Conference 2018

The Annual Lao American Educational Conference is a very special day to bring our Lao American students together to celebrate a day of learning , growing, and empowering one another.

This event is inspired by the original conference started over 10 years ago at the Sacramento City Unified School District , founded by Dr. Khonepheth Lily Liemthongsamout. The conference takes place in Sacramento annually and is still going strong today!

Given that there is a significant number of Lao American students and families here in Fresno, the Laotian American Community of Fresno (LACF), a 501c nonprofit organization along with passionate leaders and advocates came together to put on the first ALEC conference in 2017 and we hope to offer this conference for many years to come.



LACF Board Members

Quotes to remember and have close to our heart at all times

“Courage, above all things, is the first quality of a warrior”. Karl Von Clausewitz

“Don’t be afraid to give up the good to go for the great” . John D. Rockefeller.

“The greatest secret to success is believing in yourself and your abilities” . Unknown

“The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today”. H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Sabaidee/Greetings Students,

Welcome back to Fresno State for our 2nd Annual Lao American Educational Conference! We have been working very hard preparing for today, and we hope that you are as excited as we are to be here. The mission of the Annual Lao American Educational Conference is to bring students together to campus for a day of connecting, learning and empowering. By being here today, we hope that you will be inspired to make education a priority, and learn that you can conquer and achieve anything that you have your hearts and minds set on!

The theme of today's event is "Reconnecting With Our Roots To Unleash Our Inner Warriors". This means that we must learn about who we are and what we have gone through to fully realize our significance and potentials. Please take the time to read about Lao history, talk to your grandparents and parents about what they went through and how they got here to America. From these conversations and from your own research, you will clearly realize that Lao people are very resilient, intelligent, big hearted and are true warriors!

Our parents and grandparents escaped a deadly Vietnam and Secret Civil War from the 1950s to 70s, and suffered multiple traumas before they were able to set their foot in America. If you haven't heard about the journey of your grandparents and parents, and how they made it to the US, you must talk to them and learn as soon as possible. The story of their escape, the life in the Refugee Camps and the first few years living in America will make you see that they are true warriors and as their children, we too have the warrior spirits and hearts.

So what does it mean to be a warrior? A warrior encompasses more than his/her ability to fight, and defend himself/herself, and people he/she he loves. Being a warrior involves developing your character, living a life of honor and integrity, defending those who can't defend themselves, taking care of one's family and community. A warrior is not afraid to speak up for what is right and to demand equality and justice for all. Given our history and journey, we are clearly warriors and we must stand up tall and be proud of our heritage and history. We must be courageous and be unafraid to speak up for our rights and opportunities.

Please be fully engaged in the workshops today, and learn the tools and resources to become a success. Studying hard and taking school seriously is the first step in achieving success. With knowledge and education, your only path is upward. Your Lao American leaders, professionals and community are here to help and fully support you. We have no doubt that with the right support, resources and guidance, you will be a great success!

With much love and hope,

Khampha Thephavong

Dr. Khampha Thephavong and the Lao American Community of Fresno

- 8:30 a.m – 9:00 a.m **REGISTRATION**
Check-In and Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. – 9:20 a.m. **WELCOME AND CONFERENCE OVERVIEW**
Opening Remarks by Dr. Khampha Thephavong,
Laotian-American Community of Fresno (LACF), Executive Director
- Welcome and Formal Address by
 Dr. Joseph I. Castro, President, Fresno State
 David Chavez, Chief of Staff, Fresno Unified School District
- Conference Overview: Lany Sivongsay-Avakian, LACF Board Member
- 9:20 a.m. -- 9:30 a.m. Transition to Workshops
- 9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. **WORKSHOP SESSION I**
Please refer to your color sticker dot to determine which session you will attend.
- 10:40 a.m. – 11:40 p.m. **WORKSHOP SESSION II**
Please refer to your color sticker dot to determine which session you will attend.
- 11:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. **CAMPUS TOUR**
Guided tour of campus provided by Lao Student Association (LSA)
- 12:20 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. **LUNCH PROGRAM**
Greetings from Dr. Frank Lamas, Vice President for Student Affairs and
 Enrollment Management, Fresno State
Inspiring Words and Keynote Address:
Sandy Vongthong, Fresno State Graduate Student Candidate
- Cultural Entertainment ~ Ms. 2018 Lao New Year Princess Contestants
 Angelica Khampa and MaryAnn Dorlybounxou
- 1:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. Inspiring Words and Keynote Address:
 Christian C. Douangphouxay, Chief Technology Officer, Tachi Resort and Casino
- 1:45 p.m. --2:30 p.m. **LAO PROFESSIONAL/COLLEGE STUDENT DISCUSSION PANEL**
Meet Lao-American professionals and students in our community.
Learn about their experiences and an opportunity for questions/answers.
- 2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. **CLOSING PROGRAM**
Group Photo and Raffle Drawing
Closing Remarks, Post-Conference Survey

Sandy Vongthong



Sandy Vongthong is a first generation Laotian American who is currently a senior at Fresno State. Her parents are refugees from Laos and migrated to America in the 1980s. She spent the majority of her childhood in Fresno where she considers home. Throughout her life, she has struggled with school which eventually led her to drop out of high school. Sandy has managed to overcome many obstacles in her life including several educational challenges. According to Sandy, college was a place where she discovered her inner strength and uncovered her own true potential. Currently, she is active in three social work student organizations on campus including Asian Social Work Organization, Social Work Student Association, and Chi Nu, Fresno State's first social work honor society where she serves as Community Service Officer. Sandy continues to strive for college success as she was recognized for academic achievement on the Dean's list at Fresno State in 2017. Sandy is also an Ambassador for Fresno State with the Undergraduate Student Recruitment and proudly serves as a Fresno Unified School District mentor. After completing her bachelors in social work in May of 2018, Sandy aspires to continue her education in pursuing her Masters in Social Work degree and Pupil Personnel Services credential where she will focus on fostering changes in the community.

Christian C. Douangphouxay



Mr. Christian Douangphouxay was born in Laos and came to the United States as a refugee from Thailand when he was only eight years old. In the 1980s, his family started their new lives in Orange County, California to learn for themselves how to live the American Dream. Being a person of faith, filled with confidence, motivation, and determination, he was able to achieve his lifelong dream of working in the most challenging and complex field in the Information Technology (IT) industry. His three principles for success are Results, Purpose, and Motivation (R.P.M). Students can apply the three principles in school or when pursuing a career. Christian holds three undergraduate college degrees in the field of Computer Information Systems, Liberal Arts in Elementary Teaching and most recently a Business Management Degree from Fresno Pacific University. He also holds several computer and networking certifications such as Microsoft Certified Systems Engineers (MCSE), CompTIA, Cisco, HP, and other industry recognized certifications.

In his tender years, he worked for Ricoh Electronic, Inc. and Gateway Computers until faith brought him to Hanford in 2002. Currently, Christian holds the position of Chief Technology Officer (CTO) at the Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi Yokut Tribal Government who owns and operates the Tachi Hotel, Casino, and Resort in the City of Lemoore. He oversees the entire Information Technology Department and other economic business development that Tachi owns. With over twenty-eight years of IT experience, Christian believes that the continuation of education, community services, and personal career development is an essential part of living a meaningful life of purpose. His career goals and passions are to implement a wireless broadband communication technology that will serve rural area tribal communities and the unserved public housing, to connect to high-speed broadband internet. With an invaluable personal life experiences as a refugee student, technologist and a successful executive officer in the Information Technology at Tachi, Christian believes that using his three basic principles (R.P.M) will help inspire Laotian-American millennials and future generation to change the narrative of why becoming a successful student and obtaining a job with a meaningful purpose is more rewarding than just trying to achieve the basic American dream.

Cultural Workshop

Presenters: Victoria Phosykeo, Fresno State Graduate
 Lysing Prathamavong, Lao Cultural Broker, Holistic Cultural Center
 Anusone Keochai, Lao Community Advocate, Insurance Agent at Cal-Valley Insurance Services

Knowing our roots helps us acknowledge and appreciate our uniqueness. This uniqueness guides us to our position in life. Knowing our past and present help guide our future and what we can pass on to the next generation. Social cues and etiquette plays a big part of our cultural identity. In this workshop students will learn about different social etiquette found in Lao traditions and why it is important to pass them on.

Leadership Building

Presenters: Dr. Khampha Thephavong, LACF, Chair; Medical Director of Student Health and Counseling Center, Fresno State
 Jackie Rasaphone, Social Work Major, Fresno State
 Sandy Vongthong, Social Work Graduate Study Candidate, Fresno State
 Thianchayphet "Chai" Phannaphob, Education Doctoral Student/Extending the Class (ETC) Coordinator at Madera Community College Center
 Bounhome Dawn Souphasith, Co-Owner of Oka Japanese Restaurant and Sushi Bar

The leadership workshop will empower you to learn about who you are and your true potentials! Through discussions and working in groups, you will learn the skills and traits needed to be a great leader. In the process, you will realized your strengths which will help you achieve your goals and aspirations.

A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader, but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent. —Douglas MacArthur

Education

Presenters: Dr. Davorn Sisavath, Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Asian American Studies, Fresno State
 Dr. Jenny Banh, Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Asian American Studies, Fresno State
 Athena Keobounnam, Student, Fresno State
 Richee Xavonglianekham, Student, Fresno State

This workshop aims to expose students in middle- and high-school about college and the importance of pursuing higher education. The goal is to begin a college-going culture attitude and to encourage students to think seriously about going to college. Students will engage in group work and collaborate with each other to think about what it means to prepare for college in middle- and high-school.

Career Exploration

Presenters: Joh Nouanesymanivanh, Fresno City College Program Counselor for the United Southeast Asian American Academic Program (USEAA)
 Kami Thepphavong, General Counselor/Coordinator for the USEAA Program

Being able to mindfully assess one's interests and skills can help in selecting a major/career that will best fit you and will result in a future profession that one will be passionate about. In turn, this will also provide a clear road map on your academic planning, as far as which college you should attend and how long will it take you to complete your educational goals. Workshop participants will take a simple assessment tool and will receive information on possible career choices, as well as learn about "high-demand careers."

Victoria Phosykeo



Victoria is a recent graduate of Fresno State earning her bachelor's degree in Exercise Science, option under Kinesiology. Currently, she is interning at St. Agnes Medical Center in the Cardiac Rehab unit learning about EKG readings and shadowing Exercise Physiologists. She is also working on obtaining the Clinical Exercise Physiologist certification. She has been an advocate for Lao culture and identity since 2010, and enjoys volunteering with FIRM, Holistic Cultural and Education Wellness Center, and of course LACF (Laotian-American Community of Fresno).

Don Soyinthisane

Don Soyinthisane was born in Champasak, Laos in 1977. His family immigrated to the United States in 1981 to Rexburg, Idaho, where an uncle had settled. After about a year in the cold weather of Idaho, his family moved to the warm and sunny Hawaii. While living in Hawaii, he recalls his father working very hard at his job as a maintenance worker. "My father took so much pride in the work that he did regardless of the title or function"

In 1983, the Soyinthisane family moved to Fresno, CA. Don is a proud product of the Fresno Unified School District system. He attended King Elementary, Carver Middle School, and graduated from Edison High School. Don continued his higher education by obtaining a bachelor of art degree in Information Systems from Fresno State. After a couple years in the work force at Gap Inc, Don decided to pursue a master's degree in Business Administration from National University. While working for Gap Inc./IBM, Don realized his skill of project management. In 2006, he took a leap of faith and left IBM to open Bravo Fence. Although it was incredibly different than his current work field, it allowed him to own his own business and enhance his project management skills. After a successful couple of years at Bravo Fence, he had a calling to return to the technology field.

In 2009, Don was able to fulfill that calling by joining Fresno Unified School District as an Information Technology Coordinator. In this current role, Don is responsible for the management of 20+ Technology Support Specialists, who provide daily support for the technology needs of the staff and students at Fresno Unified 100+ schools and departments.

In 2014, Don and his wife Christina opened JoJo's Yogurt in Clovis, CA. Don's passion is his wife and 3 kids; Bella (10), Ethan (8), Ariel (6). Don is very active in his community and with his children's school. He helps coach his children's youth soccer teams as well as served as PTC President for Oraze Elementary. His advice to our youth is to always have goals that one is passionate about, be confident in your abilities, surround yourself with people who supports you, be willing to work hard, and your dreams and goals can and will be conquered.



Joh Nouanesymanivanh

Joh was born in Muang Phonthong District of Champassack Providence. Growing up during the Vietnam War Era, Joh understood the meaning of struggles and hardships at a very young age. Around the early age of 5, Joh recalled the horror and traumatic effects of living next to a police station and that was later converted into a concentration camp by the communist regime. As a child, Joh shared that when he peeked through the balcony from his house, he could see dead people being hung from poles inside the concentration camp.

Joh shared that his mother was his hero. She has a profound impact on his life and plays a vital role in helping him cope with traumatic childhood experience. Joh recalled as a child, waking up from countless nightmares as a result of seeing dead people hung from the poles. His mother was always there to rock him back to sleep and reminded him that even though life is difficult and harsh, bad times do not last forever, and that one should never give up hope.

Joh graduated from Edison High School in 1991. He obtained his B.A. in Social Work in 1998 and M.S. in Counseling in 2004 from Fresno State.

Joh is currently employed as an Adjunct Counselor/Instructor at Fresno City College. He also works part-time as a foster care social worker with KYJO (Keeping Youth Journey Onward).

Joh noted that he was initially an electrical engineer major. He took a summer job with Stonesoup in 1994, found his calling, switched to social work major, and have never looked back. During his free time, Joh enjoys hiking, working out at the gym, reaching out and connecting with at-risk youths in the communities.



Debbie Sayachack

Debbie Sayachack received her bachelor of arts in English in 2016. Currently, she is in the thesis phase of the masters of arts program in English: Rhetoric and Writing Studies program at Fresno State. She teaches at Fresno State in the First Year Writing program. In addition, Debbie has published and presented her works at several conferences such as the Pacific Modern Language Associate annual conference that was recently held in Honolulu, Hawaii, and the Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society conference held in Louisville, Kentucky. She has attributed her success and motivation in academia to her daughter, Kaitlyn Sayachack.



Anonh Sengmany



Anonh is a graduate of Duncan Polytechnical high school, class of 1990. He attended Fresno State and majored in Civil Engineering and received his bachelor's degree in 1999. He currently works as a Transportation Design Engineer for Caltrans. He is a happy, proud father of five-year old twins. His words of advice is " Stay focus, work hard, believe in yourself, and you will succeed"

Athena Keobounnam



Athena is a current college student working towards becoming a Physician Assistant and will be graduating this May with her bachelors degree in Health Administration at Fresno State. From there she hopes to be accepted into a Physician Assistant program and ultimately help and give back to the underprivileged communities living within the Central Valley.

Athena was a two year athlete and honor's program student at Fresno City College playing water polo and swimming. Upon transferring to Fresno State, she became the president of the Lao Student Association (LSA) during the 2016-2017 academic school year where the mission and goal was to promote and preserve the Laotian culture. Currently, she is working at Saint Agnes Medical Center as a Nursing Assistant where she helps patients with any needs and daily activities.

Words of Wisdom:

In life, the things you truly regret are the things you didn't do. So live life to the fullest and take on any opportunities out there for you!

Dr. Davorn Sisavath



Dr. Davorn Sisavath is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology and Asian American Studies at Fresno State. She received her B.A. in Political Science at San Jose State, M.A. in Asian American Studies at San Francisco State, and Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies at University of California, San Diego. She has received several awards, including the UC President's Postdoctoral Fellowship, the UC Human Rights Fellowship, and California Humanities Quick Grant to expand the archive and museum of Southeast Asian Americans in Fresno at Stone Soup Fresno. She has published on "Hmong and Lao American Vietnam Veterans" in *Encyclopedia of Asian American Issues Today* and "Laotian Americans in the United States" in *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society*. Her book manuscript, *Economy of Excess: Value and Military Waste Materials in Post-war Spaces* examines the global political economy of military waste materials, the conditions of precarity, and the aesthetics of the everyday that are specific to Laos, but also illuminates how US imperialism has proceeded in other postwar spaces. As a 1.5 generation, she resettled in Stockton and Sacramento, California with her family. She is excited to be in Central Valley and Fresno, and hope to inspire young Lao Americans to pursue college and graduate school.

Dr. Jenny Banh



Jenny Banh (Ph.D. University of California, Riverside) is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology and Asian American Studies at Fresno State. Her research focuses on Asia and Asian American studies, cultural anthropology (space, labor, consumption), and popular culture. Previous research explored Asian American gangs and sweatshop labor. Her current research is on restaurants, barriers/bridges to minorities students college graduation and a Hong Kong transnational theme park corporation. She previously has published and edited *Anthropology of Los Angeles: Place and Agency in an Urban Setting* (Lexington, 2017).

Partnership Representatives

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California State University, Fresno

Dr. Joseph I. Castro, President

Dr. Frank R. Lamas, Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

Martina Granados, Director of Outreach and Special Programs

Holistic Cultural and Education Wellness Center

Lysing Prathamavong, Cultural Broker

Lao Student Association

Courtney Thongsavath, President

Presenters and Panelists

Christian C. Douangphouxay

Dr. Khampha Thephavong

Dr. Jenny Banh

Jackie Rasaphone

Athena Keobounnam

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Debbie Sayachack

Anonh Sengmany

Dr. Davorn Sisavath

Bounhome Dawn Souphasith

Kami Thepphavong

Sandy Vongthong

Don Soyinthisane

Cultural Performance Coordinator and

Make-Up Artist: Vicki Kham

Lao Student Association (LSA)

of Fresno State

LACF/ALEC Planning Committee and Volunteers

Lany Sivongsay-Avakian

Dr. Henry Delcore

Kami Thepphavong

Jek Sisomphou

Pitt Volarat

Sandy Vongthong

Jackie Rasaphone

Lysing Prathamavong

Anusone Keochai

Dr. Khampha Thephavong

Noy Bounkhoun

Victoria Phosykeo

Joh Nouanesymanivanh

LSA Members of Fresno State

Special Thanks to our Sponsors and In-Kind Donors

Ameritech Business Systems for providing breakfast and snacks.

Mimi's Kitchen and Pho Lao Vieng #2 for our delicious lunch.

Sahtupress.com founder Nor Sanavongsay for his artistic talent in creating this year's front cover graphic.

The Fresno Center for providing drinks and raffles.

Name: _____

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This person inspires me because ...

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This person inspires me because ...

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