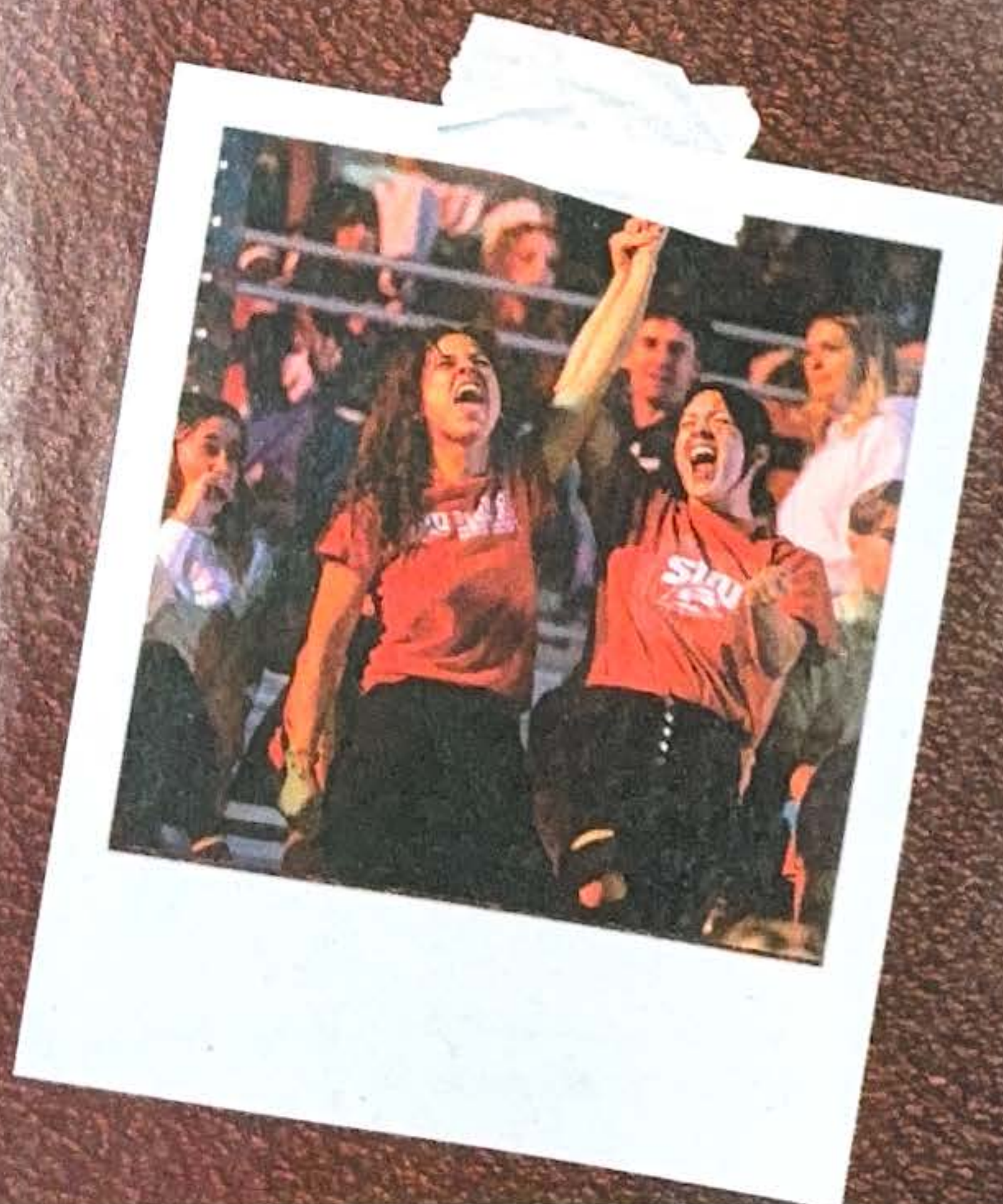


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SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY JOURNAL

VOLUME VII ISSUE II | APRIL 2024

Southern Utah University '24-'25





Best of Life



Forever Red turns T-Bird Nation into dancing queens



Southern Utah University's 14th annual Forever Red filled the upper quad with students and community members alike, various food vendors and live music in celebration of homecoming week on Friday, Oct. 11.

-Written by Heather Turner
-Edited by Kayd Johanson

A New Royal T-Bird crowned during homecoming week



The annual Homecoming Royal T-Bird Pageant took place on Wednesday, Oct. 9 in the Auditorium building, where eight contestants competed for the crown and this year's homecoming royalty was chosen.

-Written by Natalie Anderson
-Edited by Heather Turner

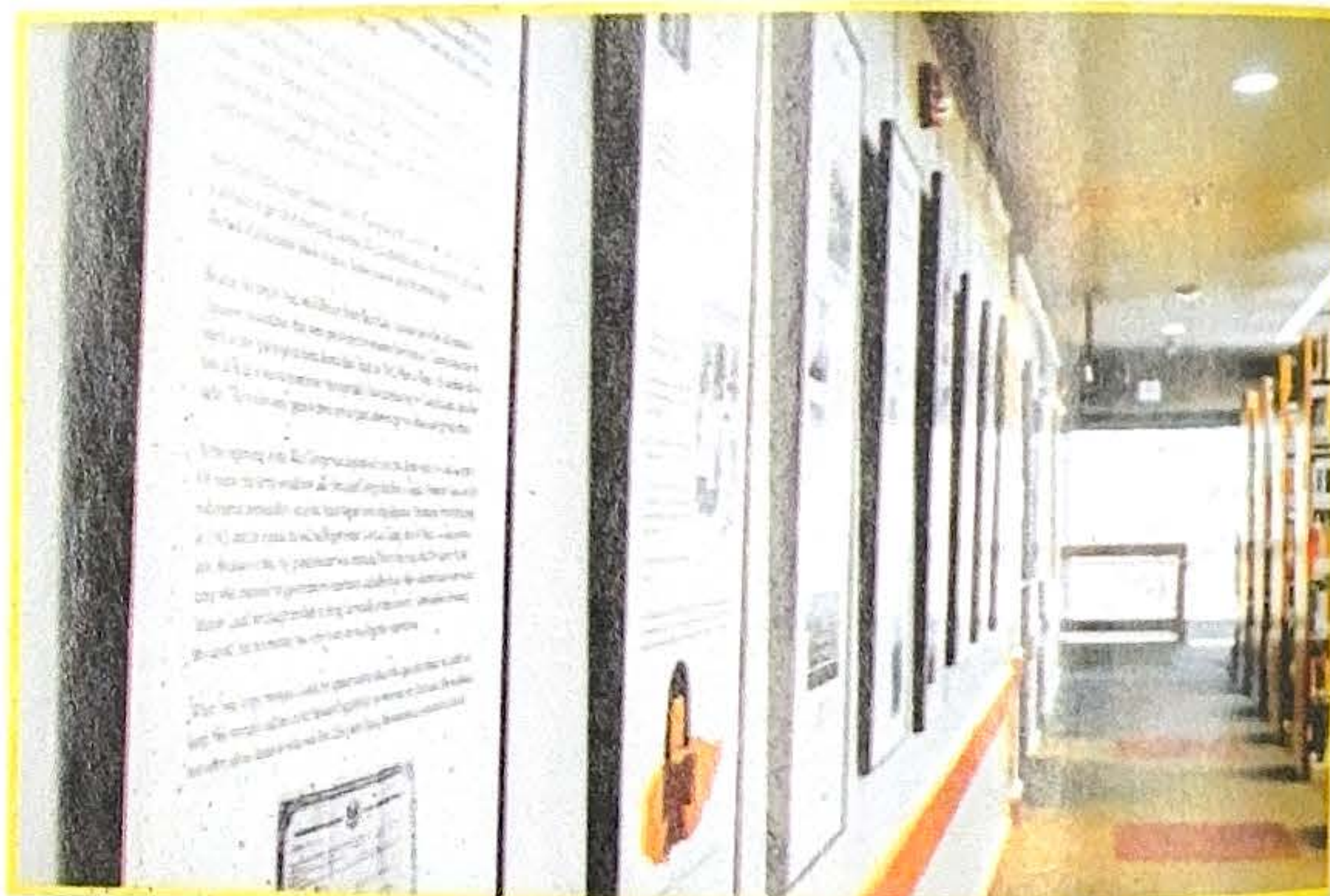
A hauntingly fun night at SUU's Scream



T-Birds threw on their best Halloween costumes for this year's "Twisted Circus" themed Scream, held in the America First Event Center on Saturday, October 26. Entrance was free for those with a student ID and a signed waiver. Non-students paid \$15 to attend.

-Written by Briar Adams
-Edited by Heather Turner

Topaz Stories exhibition : A way to remember the past at SUU Gerald R. Sherratt Library



A temporary display recounting the personal stories of Japanese Americans incarcerated at Topaz, Utah, during World War II can be found on the third floor of Southern Utah University's Gerald R. Sherratt Library until March 6. Entitled "Topaz Stories: Remembering the Japanese American Incarceration," the exhibition is presented by The Friends of Topaz in cooperation with the Utah Division of Arts and Museums.

-Written by Fanny Felixine
-Edited by Heather Turner

PISA SPOTLIGHT

For nearly forty years, the Southern Utah University Pacific Islander Student Association, formerly known as the Polynesian Club, has been sharing its members' cultures on campus.

Despite changing status from a university-sponsored organization to an independent organization, the club has continued to celebrate its traditions through campus events, including its annual Polynesian Showcase.

In February 2025, under the direction of Tevita Sekeni, director of Pacific region operations at SUU International Affairs, and Noa Taeatafa, SUU academic advisor, the club registered as a domestic non-profit organization. This change was in response to recent legislation that would have affected PISA's university funding. Now, they will be able to receive endowment from other sources.

"It didn't mean with this house bill that we were gonna stop what we were known for on campus," said Sekeni. "We're a small needle in a haystack, but we're still trying to figure out how to make a difference in the community by opening our membership to all individuals who want to share our cultural values and be part of something greater."

Each year, many faculty, staff, students and community members get excited for the PISA showcase. For many, it is a chance to reconnect with their heritage and celebrate Pacific Islander culture in a vibrant, immersive experience.

"As a Pacific islander, it feels good to know that there is a place I can come with people that are familiar with my community," said Jeremiah Uti, a Hawaiian attendee of PISA's 2025 showcase. "You get to celebrate, scream your butt off and just enjoy the time."

This year, PISA's showcase was hosted from Feb. 27 to March 1 in SUU's Auditorium Theatre. Titled "Gatekeepers of Oceania: Island Love," the showcase followed the journey of six Polynesian siblings — Tonga, Samoa, Hawai'i, Tahiti, Fiji and New Zealand — through dance, music and storytelling.

"My favorite moment was walking through that front door and just watching the entire showcase," said Uti.

The two-hour event illustrated the different types of love each sibling represented and how they spread that love and unity across the Pacific Islands.

Traditional songs and dances such as "For The Lahui," "Isa Lei Lia" and "Fesi Fohe" were performed, with the audience singing along. During the performance of "Tualuga," a traditional Samoan dance, attendees participated in the cultural practice of "lafo," throwing money onto the dancers in recognition of their skill and status.

Each performance segment was accompanied by costumes inspired by traditional clothing and tools, such as the "poi," a small mace attached to a string used by New Zealand's Maori for juggling and fire art.



The showcase concluded with an interpretation of Samoa's traditional dances and a finale featuring all dancers on stage to honor the siblings' message of unity.

"My favorite moment was the last part, where every culture was being combined," said dancer Jirah Vaa. "It was amazing. Even as a dancer, I could feel the energy from up there. It feels so good to be part of something big and something that feels almost like home."

Usually, PISA's members start practicing at the beginning of the spring semester, but because of the early showcase the rehearsals started in October. Separated into different sections according to the island they represent, they had rehearsals every evening six days a week to learn and perfect their performance.

The storyline was written by PISA president Brenna Jane Fangupo. Each section was developed with the guidance of Kumu — or teachers — ensuring the authenticity of the cultural representations.

"We were dedicated and our leader did a fantastic job with what he was given," said dancer Cindy Esquerra. "I'm surprised by

how fast I was able to learn the dance, but it just goes to show that hard work, dedication and utilizing our practice time can lead to immaculate results."

To continue sharing its heritage, PISA took part in the 2025 Utah Pacific Intercollegiate Association Showcase, "Many Islands in a Common Sea."

Hosted by Weber State University on Saturday, March 29, the event brought together Pacific Islander students from college campuses across the state. PISA proudly represented the island nations of Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga.

"We're open to everyone. Don't feel like you have to be Polynesian or Pacific Islander to be part of our organization, it's far from that," said Sekeni. "We are very honored and blessed that anyone will be willing to be part of our showcase and just be a member of our organization."

The Pacific Islander Student Association brings together individuals of all ages and honors traditions passed down through generations. Those interested in joining can contact Sekeni or Taeatafa directly or connect with PISA via Instagram, Facebook, or email at pisa@suu.edu.



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