



José Hernández gives a talk March 27 at Santiago Canyon College about his path to the stars.

PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

FORMER ASTRONAUT

REACHING FOR THE STARS: FROM FARM FIELDS TO OUTER SPACE

Hernández recounts his science journey

By **Larry Urish**,
contributing writer

A source of many life-affirming benefits, a quality education can inspire students to succeed, providing them with a clear sense of purpose. As German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said: “If you give a man a ‘why,’ he’ll always figure out a ‘how.’”

One starry night in 1972, 10-year-old José Hernández found his “why.” And all he had to do was gaze toward the heavens.

Throughout his childhood, young José traveled with his migrant farm-worker family throughout Central California,

performing backbreaking labor. However, through decades of hard work, focus and persistence, the dirt-poor farm laborer became a space traveler. Today, retired NASA astronaut José Hernández’s main purpose in life is simple: “To inspire, to help people reach their maximum potential in whatever they do.”

Hernández’s visit to Santiago Canyon College on March 27, presented by SCC’s STEM Success Team and its College Assistance Migrant Program, included a screening of “A Million Miles Away,” the feature film based on Hernández’s life, as well as his evening talk about his journey from the farm fields into outer space.

Along with his stargazing, Hernández was originally inspired by his love

of “Star Trek” and his fascination with NASA’s 1972 Apollo 17 lunar mission. However, twinkling stars, Captain Kirk and moon milestones could take a poor farm worker only so far. Reaching his lofty goal was a daunting task. “I didn’t do this alone,” Hernández continually emphasized. “It involved a lot of people. ... My mother taught (my siblings and me) good work ethics and study habits, and my father made us realize that school was a priority. He’d often gesture to the fields and say, ‘This is your future unless you get an education.’”

His father, Salvador, also provided the Hernández children with his five-step “recipe to success”: “Define your purpose in life,” José Hernández related. “Recognize how far you are from

that purpose. Draw yourself a road map from where you are to where you want to go. Prepare yourself according to the challenge. And develop a work ethic that’s second to none.”

Hernández earned a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering at the University of the Pacific and later garnered a master’s in signals and systems engineering from UC Santa Barbara. Hernández worked for 15 years at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, starting in 1987. During his tenure there, he helped develop the X-ray laser technology used in President Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative, nicknamed “Star Wars.” He and a colleague later applied this technology for

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Lola Hahn took advantage of the Transfer Admission Guarantee program and will attend UC Irvine in the fall.

ADMISSION GUARANTEE

Transfer programs give students a clear higher educational path

Advancing to a 4-year university a motivator

By **Jenelyn Russo**,
contributing writer

As entry into four-year universities becomes increasingly competitive and tuition costs continue to rise, many California students are opting for the community college path out of high school, with the intent of transferring to one of the University of California or California State University campuses.

At Santiago Canyon College, the Transfer Success Center is a resource to help guide students through the four-year university transfer process. One of the pathways available is the UC Transfer Admission Guarantee, or TAG, which outlines a streamlined curriculum for admission of California community college students to one of

six participating UC schools, including Davis, Irvine, Merced, Riverside, Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz.

Tustin resident Lola Hahn chose to attend SCC out of high school in 2021, and she learned early on about the TAG program. After meeting with SCC’s Transfer Success Center counselors, she had a plan mapped out for her transfer, or “tag,” to UCI.

“I had a lot of meetings with counselors at SCC throughout my time here, and they really helped me create a clear pathway,” Hahn said. “It made it easy to understand what I needed to do and to be motivated to get that done.”

Hahn will graduate from SCC this spring with honors and two associate’s degrees, in English and liberal arts. Her completion of the TAG pathway

TRANSFER » PAGE 2

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Transfer

FROM PAGE 1

created by TSC was successful, as she recently received acceptance to UCI where she will major in English on her way to becoming a lawyer. Having the TSC support system in place allowed her the space to discover her passion and take the next step.

“In high school, I didn’t have an idea exactly of what I wanted to do, and I definitely took the time at SCC to formulate that,” Hahn said. “At SCC, it’s a great environment where you have so many mentors around you. I discovered that I loved English, and then I saw a pathway to being a lawyer.”

In addition to the TAG program, SCC is stepping into a formalized agreement with UCI in support of increasing the number of SCC students who transfer into the UC system. One aspect of this partnership is a UC Application Day workshop where SCC students who are interested in transferring to a UC are bussed to the UCI campus to receive assistance in filling out their UC application. SCC and UCI team members are present to help facilitate the process, and the students can apply on the spot.

“The whole goal for us is to assist our students with every opportunity to enhance greater equity stride and student success,” said SCC Dean of Counseling & Student Support Services Jennifer Coto. “We want our students to be able to visually see themselves on a University of California campus, and that is a large part of the partnership.”

For the first time this summer, SCC is offering a program in conjunction with UCI called the Summer Scholars Transfer Institute. SSTI is a one-week summer intensive program where SCC students can take an accelerated community college course taught by SCC faculty while living on campus at UCI. The students not only gain transferable credits, but they also get to experience UCI’s residence housing and on-campus dining halls.

“We’re very excited about this because, again, we want the students to gain that confidence that they can do this and know that the same courses they are taking that work for any other institution are the same courses that are utilized for the University of California system,” Coto said.

The first cohort for SSTI will include 30 students who will study a political science course. The program runs from July 21-27, and participants need only to pay for SCC unit costs and summer student fees. All other room and board costs are covered by the program, and students will qualify to receive a \$200 stipend upon completion.

Admission to SSTI was by application only by April 19, but Coto states that applications will continue to be accepted past that date to generate a waitlist. The long-term plan is to offer two or more courses each summer and to be able to extend this opportunity



PHOTO COURTESY JENNIFER COTO

SCC Dean of Counseling & Student Support Services Jennifer Coto

to as many students as possible.

“In addition to instilling confidence, we want them to pursue academic excellence and having them be in an environment and gain that self-confidence is the ultimate goal to set them up for success to transfer,” Coto said.

Last academic year, nearly 1,400 SCC students successfully transferred to four-year institutions, and programs such as TAG and SCC’s newly formed partner-


ship with UCI will continue to provide innovative ways for students to reach their educational goals.

“I feel so lucky to have had the attention at SCC that I got,” Hahn said. “I was really learning and felt so supported by the teachers, classmates and community. It made a huge difference in me figuring out my goals and what I wanted to do in life. ... I’m so thankful for SCC.”



PHOTO COURTESY LOLA HAHN

Hahn's acceptance letter to UC Irvine



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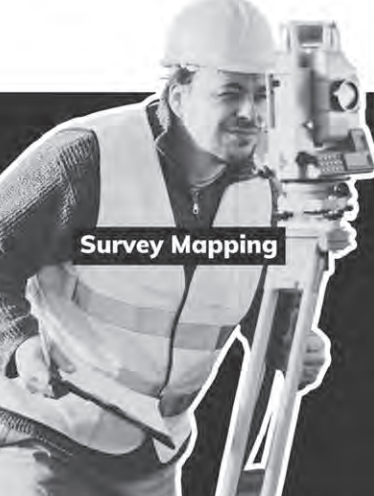
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OUTREACH

Ferragamo Flag Football League is a win-win for the college, community

Collaboration will create opportunities for girls and boys

By Lou Ponsi,
contributing writer

Taking into account a shared goal of growing relationships within the community, Santiago Canyon College and former NFL quarterback Vince Ferragamo have partnered to establish a flag football league for youngsters, with the games being played at Santiago Canyon College.

The Ferragamo Flag Football League, a noncontact football league for boys and girls of all skill levels in grades 1 through 8, kicks off a four-week summer season starting July 19.

An eight-week fall season will follow beginning Sept. 6.

The mission of the new league is to bring communities together through football in a way where children are taught the mental and physical approach to the game while having fun.

"The coaching that the kids are going to receive through this program is going to be top-notch," said Jose Vargas, vice president of communications at Santiago Canyon College. "Every kid is going to have to play. Every kid is going to benefit from it."

The collaboration stems, in part, from Rancho Santiago Community College District's commitment to establish more partnerships with community groups, as announced in January by Rancho Santiago Community College District Chancellor Marvin Martinez.

The idea for a flag football league came about when SCC President Jeannie Kim, after learning that the NCAA was sanctioned for women's flag football, reached out to Ferragamo about forming a flag football program at the college.

More than a dozen NAIA colleges have women's flag football, and the sport will make its debut in the Olympics at the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles.

Girls flag football is also an official sport at high schools throughout the state.

Since retiring from professional football, former Los Angeles Rams quarterback Vince Ferragamo, a longtime resident of Orange County and an SCC Foundation board member, has served the community through the Vince Ferragamo Foundation, a nonprofit that has raised funds for the Special Olympics and other youth sports programs.

"They came to me and wanted to know about the idea about having a flag football league in conjunction with the college, and I said yeah, that sounds like a great plan," Ferragamo said. "So, we've developed what we think is going to be one of the premier flag football leagues."

Santiago Canyon College's two lower soccer fields will be divided into four



PHOTO BY JEFF GRITCHEN, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER/SCNG

Former Los Angeles Rams quarterback Vince Ferragamo poses for a picture with Gene Gilleland and his children, Grace Gilleland, 13, and Harper Gilleland, 6, during the first day of training camp for the Rams on July 28, 2021, in Irvine.

flag football fields where games will be played.

"It's a great venue," Ferragamo said. "It's right at the college, so they have the field, they have the lights, they have all the amenities and the facilities."

The league is expected to consist of 24 teams, divided by age group, with a roster of eight to nine players per team.

Former NFL players will serve as league administrators and coaches, Ferragamo said.

"I think through their experience and the knowledge that we can impart, not only to the kids but to the parents to watch their kids grow and mature... we want that learning experience to be fun," the Super Bowl quarterback said.

The cost of the four-week summer session is expected to be \$100 per player and the eight-week fall season could cost \$175 to \$200 per player.

"We want to keep it as low as possible because we want to make it as accessible to as many kids as possible," Vargas said.

Through decades of philanthropic

work with nonprofits, including the past 30 with the Special Olympics, Ferragamo is confident that the league will secure sponsorships.

The league also gives SCC a great opportunity to showcase the campus to the community, Vargas said.

There might be many community members who are aware of Santiago Canyon College's presence, but have never been on the campus, he said.

"They don't know what we do," Vargas said. "They don't know all the services that are available to them, and we really want the community to think of Santiago Canyon College as their community college, that it belongs to them."

A long-term plan is to provide training for game officials, who would then have the opportunity to earn money officiating games, Vargas said.

"I'm personally very excited to have been tapped on the shoulder to work with Vince on coordinating this because it's big," he said. "I think a lot of kids are going to benefit from it."



GRAPHIC COURTESY RS CCD COMMUNICATIONS

The New Ferragamo Flag Football League kicks off this summer at Santiago Canyon College.

FUNDRAISING

Golf tournament supports scholarships, programs and services

On a sparkling Southern California day last month, about 100 participants and sponsors attended the 22nd Annual Santiago Canyon College Foundation Golf Tournament, held at the Pelican Hill Golf Club in Newport Beach.

The Santiago Canyon College Foundation supports SCC by increasing public awareness of the college and expanding its volunteer and financial support network. Funds raised by the foundation support students directly through scholarships for fees and books.

The foundation also funds campus programs, projects and services important to a vibrant campus life but that the state doesn't typically fund or that need more funding to serve students effectively. It was a great day of golf, fun, friendship and supporting higher education.

To learn more about the foundation and to support its mission, visit sccollegefoundation.org.



Attendees enjoy touring the expansive course in golf carts.



The Pelican Hill Golf Club boasts two complete 18-hole courses, the Ocean North and Ocean South courses.



PHOTOS BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

The Pelican Hill Golf Club in Newport Beach was the site of the 22nd annual fundraiser to benefit the Santiago Canyon College Foundation.



Every tee has expansive views of the ocean.

ADMINISTRATION

District facilities reflect growing educational needs

Matsumoto plans, builds for the future

By Nicole Gregory
contributing writer

The recent grand opening of a \$58.8 million Health Sciences building and the opening of the new Johnson Student Center in 2021 are impressive additions to the Santa Ana College campus.

Yet they are just two among dozens of projects — all in different stages of development — managed by Carri Matsumoto, assistant vice chancellor, facility planning, construction and district support services at Rancho Santiago Community College District.

Her department oversees all new construction and modernization improvements, as well as state-scheduled maintenance projects such as roof replacements or fire safety upgrades for Santiago Canyon College and Santa Ana College. The projects create jobs for residents in the local community and around Orange County while serving the evolving educational needs of the students and faculty.

“It all stems from the campus,” said Matsumoto. She and her team regularly connect with faculty and staff to learn which programs are thriving and growing, which programs are emerging and how well they are aligned with the community and industry needs.

One example is a class called Water and Wastewater Technology, a science-based course offered at Santiago Canyon College that covers the infrastructure of water districts and wastewater treatment and management. Until now, the class has been taught out of a portable classroom that lacks the space and lab equipment needed for the faculty and students. Water professionals are in high demand — the industry needs trained workers — making it a priority for Matsumoto to find ways to accommodate the growing classroom needs, which include complex plumbing equipment and sturdy flooring.

“We’re looking to expand space in the science center building and convert some of the science center general classrooms, doing a reconfiguration and building out a new lab,” she explained. “This takes resources because this is a very specialized lab set-up with both exterior needs and interior needs.”

Another example is the welding program at Santa Ana College. “The current building that they’re in is extremely deficient in terms of meeting the needs for their welding program,” Matsumoto said. “They just are out of space. We’ve had to build welding stations on the exterior of the building, and we are now working with them to build a canopy to create an outdoor situation that allows them to continue to operate more expansively in the exterior because we don’t have interior space for their program, which has a pretty significant enrollment and waitlist.”

For skilled workforce programs, the biggest challenge is finding the appropriate facilities when the current classrooms are very old or the facilities don’t exist, Matsumoto said.

“At Santa Ana College for instance, a more than 100-year-old campus, they have 29 main buildings on campus, but seven out of those 29 are over 65 years old,” she said.

“Both campuses really have a need for these technical labs to meet the demands of our students,” Matsumoto said. Santiago Canyon College doesn’t have a full, dedicated student support service building, she noted. “They don’t have a student union. They’re spread out across the campus.”

Matsumoto and her team maintain a master plan, which is updated constantly. “The facilities master plan outlines the thoughts around improvements to facilities, whether it’s modernizations, new construction, replacements or renovations,” she said, adding that her department continually checks to ensure the plan is addressing the needs of the students and community.

Each big building project, such as the Health Sciences building, takes years to complete. Finding funding, developing the design, planning the project and obtaining approvals takes two years minimum, and construction takes roughly three years.

“Overall, it’s a five-year to six-year process,” Matsumoto said.

“We always undertake a thoughtful planning process as it relates to capital improvements because, one, it takes so long to do, and, two, you have to have resources to do it, and, three, you have to be able to be flexible to the point where if you have to make changes, that you can to the plan, but you have to prepare and plan.”

That’s why the completion of major projects such as the Health Sciences building is a significant achievement.

“Because we’ve spent the last decade or so going through a lot of new building projects and being good stewards of the funding that was available for us through Measure E and Measure Q, local funds, state funds, both campuses have been able to build out and replace, renovate, build new different projects,” Matsumoto said.

“Now we’ve come to this milestone where we’ve just completed our last major capital project under that last round of Measure Q funding, and we’re updating our plan again and looking at all of our needs. We continue that work in planning so that we’re prepared to execute projects that meet the needs of our colleges and our students.”



PHOTOS BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

The Health Sciences building at the Santa Ana College campus opened earlier this year.



Infrastructure around the Santiago Canyon College campus is a priority.



Major construction projects are in the works for both campuses, aiming to meet high demand for labs and classrooms.

GLOBAL EDUCATION

Diverse journeys of international program students flourish

RSCCD Communications

In the vibrant landscape of El Salvador, Gracia Maria Castillo Góchez's journey began, shaped by her homeland's rich culture. El Salvador is long known as an international destination for volcanoes, surfing and world-famous coffee, so it was no surprise that Góchez developed a passion for international business and trading. After earning a scholarship to Oral Roberts University in international business, she explored roles in finance and insurance, including managing international ventures while serving as a chief operations officer.

After completing her master's degree in business administration in Madrid, Góchez felt drawn to reconnect with her sister in California and embraced a new chapter of discovery and growth. Enticed by her sister's recommendation and Santa Ana College's renowned International Students Office, Góchez embarked on a new journey.

Similarly, Yuanyuan Zhou, arrived in the U.S. from Guangzhou, China, in July 2022 and quickly discovered Santiago Canyon College's International Student Program. Recalling her experience, Zhou said, "I found SCC in China with my agency's help." She said, "The teaching system in the U.S. is very different from that in China." These differing approaches, she said, provided valuable opportunities for learning and connecting with fellow international students.

As the director of SAC's International Student Center, Tina Newton says she



El Savadorean Gracia Maria Castillo Góchez plans to pursue a career in international business.

is deeply committed to the success and well-being of every international student.

"My educational journey and thorough understanding of the challenges students encounter abroad drive me to foster a nurturing environment at SAC. We aim to create a place where every student feels supported and embraced. Together, through dedication and advocacy, we cultivate a vibrant community where academic excellence and a profound sense of belonging merge seam-



PHOTOS COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Yuanyuan Zhou arrived to study at Santiago Canyon College from Guangzhou, China.

lessly," said Newton.

At Santiago Canyon College, under Jetza Torres, director of the International Student Program, the program's center serves as a vibrant hub for students worldwide. With students from 27 different countries, the center plays a significant role in fostering cultural exchange and support.

"International students enrich our community with their unique perspectives and talents. At our center, we don't just provide guidance; we create a home away from home, where dreams are nurtured and friendships blossom. As some-

one who once walked in their shoes, I understand the challenges they face, and it's our commitment to offer excellent support that drives us forward," said Torres.

As Góchez reflects on her experience at SAC, she acknowledges its pivotal role in her academic and personal growth. She said, "SAC has been an exceptional support system for me as an international student. From the moment I arrived, I felt welcomed and embraced by all the staff and the many services provided by the International Students Office."

Learn more about RSCCD's International Students Program at SAC and SCC.

ENSURING SAFETY

Chief brings live shooter simulation training to his team

RSCCD Communications

"Gunshot fired! Gunshot fired," yelled Officer Rick Diaz as they entered the building filled with screaming students. As Diaz entered the building with his partner, Tom Spaulding, the two campus safety officers hugged the hallway walls as terrified students ran towards the exit behind them.

Following the gunfire, the two officers entered another hallway, and within seconds, an exchange of gunfire ensued as the assailant's threat was removed.

The simulation of a live shooter on campus was one of three scenarios RSCCD's campus safety officers encountered during intense training in partnership with Artemis Defense Institute. The simulation room, with 300-degree video screens and numerous scenarios, was part of Chief Dave Waters's crisis preparation training for his team.

"I reviewed many training sites and modules and the folks from Artemis are among the best in Southern California. They understand not only the scenarios we are uniquely faced with on a college campus but also current laws and practices to guide our actions," said Waters.

Even though many of the campus safety officers employed by the Rancho Santiago Community College District have years of law enforcement experience, the training was highly critical due to changing laws and procedures, especially in handling a live-shooter incident.

Officer Tom Spaulding, a retired

veteran of the Orange County Sheriff's Department, mentioned the rules of engagement had changed substantially over the years, especially with deadly force. "I am unlearning 10-20 years of police training and relearning new practices."

Diaz, who is in his eighth year in the U.S. Marine Reserves, appreciates these simulation exercises. In a different scenario, where a suspect was clearly irritated with a gun in the parking lot, the two officers worked together to resolve the situation. "There was so much chaos in that scenario, and I had to keep reminding myself to work towards de-escalating the situation," he said.

Responding to the immediate safety and welfare of the campus community has changed over recent years with the unfortunate number of campus shootings across the country.

"While in the past, officers waited for help from supporting law enforcement agencies, we now go after the shooter first," said Waters. "We can't wait because lives are at stake. If you have an active assailant on campus, our officers must engage with them!"

Waters plans to train and prepare his officers continuously. "Every day, families and friends entrust their loved ones to the care of our faculty and staff. I want my team to be fully equipped to support the RSCCD family, bringing a sense of safety, security, and peace wherever and whenever they are at any of our facilities."

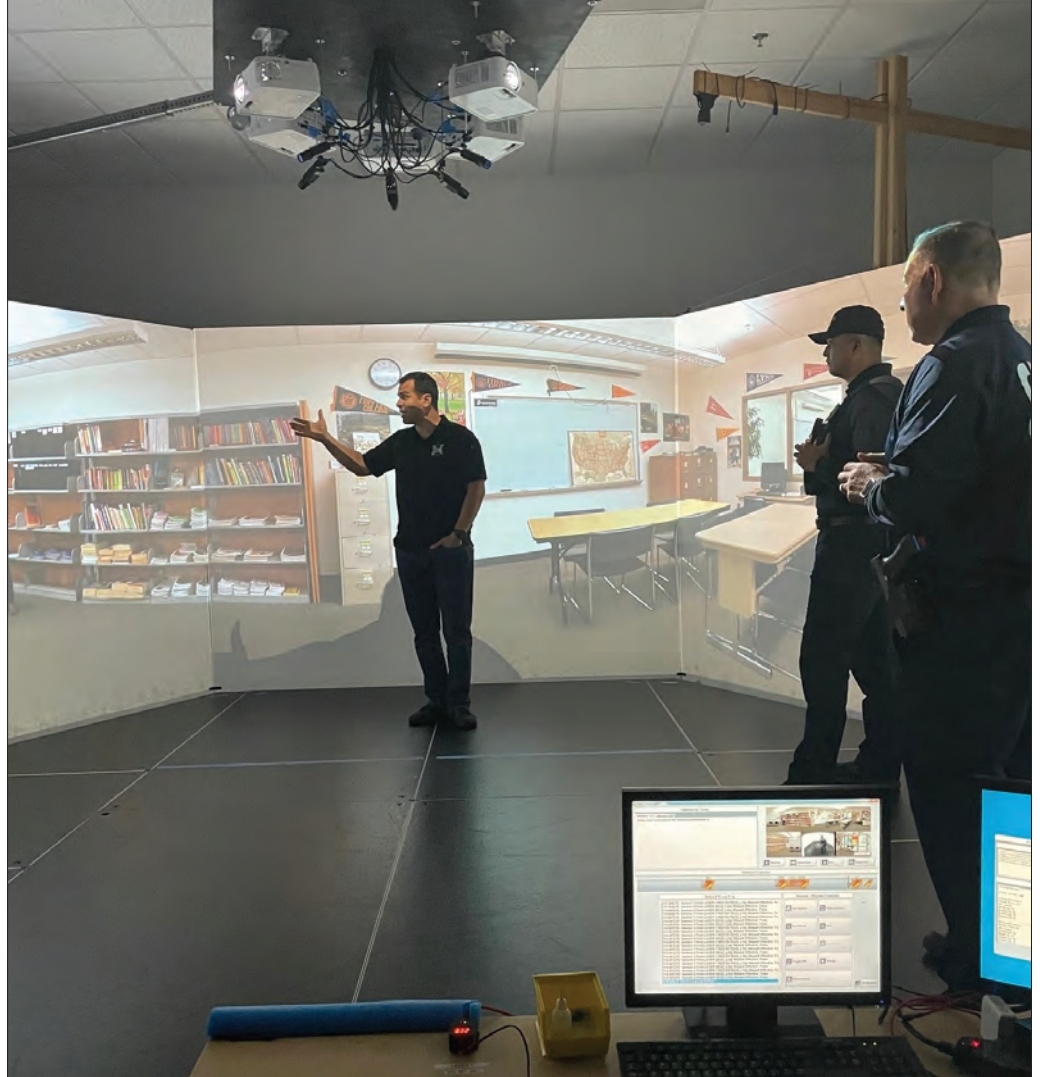


PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Campus safety officers Rick Diaz, middle, and Tom Spaulding, left, receive training on the new simulation program.

Astronaut

FROM PAGE 1

use in the early detection of breast cancer, which has saved many lives.

"That is my proudest professional moment," Hernández said of the digital mammography technology. "It's a greater accomplishment than even going into space."

Going into space, however, remained an elusive dream. Hernández applied to NASA's Astronaut Candidate program on 11 occasions — and was rejected each time — before he was finally accepted in May 2004. "The 12th time was a charm," he quipped.

This persistence points to his own sixth "ingredient," added to his father's five-step recipe to success: "Persevere. Never give up on yourself."

Again emphasizing how his success wasn't a solo effort, Hernández explained how one day he crumpled up his sixth NASA rejection letter and tossed it toward a wastebasket. "My wife found the crumpled letter, because I missed the garbage can, and she encouraged me to persist," Hernández said.

Had the tossed rejection letter made it into the wastebasket, he said, "She would've thrown the letter out, and I would've given up. ... My wife was critical. She was a cheerleader throughout the whole process."

After years of rigorous training, Hernández's lifelong dream was realized on Aug. 28, 2009, when he and his STS-128 crewmates aboard Space Shuttle Discovery blasted into orbit and docked with the International Space Station.

Blasted, indeed. "We went from zero to 17,500 miles per hour in 8½ minutes," Hernández told his Santiago Canyon



PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

José Hernández spoke about his career accomplishments and the value of perseverance.

College audience. Over the course of 14 days, he and his NASA compatriots transferred 7 tons of new equipment to the ISS and orbited Earth 217 times, traveling more than 5.7 million miles.

Although he retired from NASA in January 2011, Hernández is anything but the retiring type. He noted that, in

addition to being a governor-appointed member of the University of California Board of Regents, he's the founder and CEO of Tierra Luna Engineering, author of three books — including his 2012 memoir, "Reaching for the Stars" — and owner of Tierra Luna Cellars vineyard and winery. And, as hundreds

at his SCC visit last month will attest, he's also a supremely effective motivational speaker.

"It's OK to dream big," Hernández stressed to the audience as he wrapped up his talk. "With education and hard work, you can reach the stars. I'm living proof of that."

PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Real estate event provides career information, showcases field

RSCCD Communications

The Santiago Canyon College Real Estate Program hosted its second Real Estate Career Information Event on March 13, to connect students with industry professionals.

The event, created and headed by professor Alana Gates, allowed SCC students to meet with nearly 35 industry professionals who have excelled in their fields. The professionals gave students tips for getting started in the real estate industry and how to build a successful real estate career.

“It gives the students an opportunity to meet industry professionals from all walks of real estate, everything from escrow, title, mortgage to homeowner’s association property management,” Gates said. “It’s that see me, be me experience. If students see someone in that role, they ask, ‘How do you get to be in that role?’”

SCC counselors and faculty also attended to connect with students regarding applicable programs. Interest grew among the student population, as a student-led effort to start a Real Estate Club at SCC is underway.

Another highlight of the March event was a visit from the Orange County Realtors Global Real Estate Association (Real Estate Pros without Borders), which had its entire membership in attendance, including two members from Arizona and Nevada, respectively.

The first event, held in Fall 2023, drew interest from students and the real estate community. Gates said she plans to host more events every semester moving forward to connect students to possible careers and to showcase the diversity of the real estate field.

“I attend industry professional events off-campus and I just thought it would be cool to have one on campus to give more people the opportunity to see the different things in real estate,” Gates said. “This gets people to think outside of the box and see all the different avenues (in real estate) there are.”



PHOTOS COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

The Real Estate Career Information Event gave students the chance to learn about the industry, make professional contacts and get career tips.



Santiago Canyon College Career and Workforce Preparation and, at left, Santa Ana-based Cardinal Property Management hosted tables at the event.



Almost 20 companies and organizations participated in the event.



The Orange County Young Professionals Network gave students a chance to create new contacts.



Representatives from the Community Associations Institute chat with students.



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FALL ENROLLMENT AT SCC

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