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From left are Flo Cudal, Santiago Canyon College Adult High School Diploma graduate and current SCC student, Dean of Instruction and Student Services Joanne Armstrong and SCC President Jeannie Kim.

ADULT HIGH SCHOOL

HER DIPLOMA IS JUST THE BEGINNING THANKS TO SCC PROGRAM

Flo Cudal has plans for higher education

By **Jenelyn Russo**
contributing writer

It's high school graduation season, and this spring, graduates of Santiago Canyon College's Adult High School Diploma program are achieving a milestone they previously never thought was possible.

One of this year's program graduates is Flo Cudal. Her journey to completing high school has been long, but it has been one of the most fulfilling endeavors of her life.

Cudal is a 36-year-old Santa Ana resident who immigrated to the U.S. from the Philippines when she was 11 years old. In lieu of pursuing a high school diploma as a teenager, she chose instead to

work, primarily in positions at employment agencies.

But what Cudal quickly found is that each time she was up for a promotion, she was passed over for advancement by other candidates who had earned high school diplomas. This pattern repeated itself 10 times, and amid her discouragement, she decided it was time to make a change.

In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Cudal received a flyer in the mail advertising SCC's Adult High School Diploma program through the school's Division of Continuing Education.

Immediately, a light bulb went on for her.

"I saw this flyer that said 100% tuition-free, get your high school diploma, and it was like it was talking to me," Cudal said.

"I felt like, OK, I'm going to take this."

With the flyer in hand, Cudal made her way to SCC's College & Workforce Preparation Center and met with counselor Rosa Salazar Dela Torre, who outlined her high school diploma education completion plan on the spot.

Since a significant amount of time had passed since Cudal was in high school, her diploma completion plan had her starting from square one. She initially committed to a part-time schedule, which gave her the flexibility to continue working while she went to school.

In spring 2023, she chose to attend full time, adding dual enrollment classes to her schedule, and she completed her high school diploma program in July 2023.

But Cudal's education journey didn't

stop there. Last fall, she enrolled at SCC as a college student and is working toward a spring 2026 graduation with her associate degree in STEM. She has plans to transfer to a four-year university to pursue bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering and public policy en route to becoming a professor.

"The same program that got me through it is the same program that introduced me to something that is bigger," Cudal said. "And that is to dream bigger and to give back to the community."

Now a college student, Cudal is not sitting on the sidelines or letting her age be a deterrent in experiencing all that college has to offer. SCC's First Year Support Center coordinator Alejandro Ramirez got her connected with Associated Stu-

CUDAL » PAGE 5



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Scott James, distance education coordinator at Santiago Canyon College

TECHNOLOGY

Distance education coordinator James is focused on the future

Professor supports students and faculty

By **Larry Urish**
contributing writer

Professor Scott James has seen a huge number of significant changes during his time at Santiago Canyon College. Then again, that figures since he's been there for more than a quarter century.

Since first stepping onto SCC's campus, not only has James lived through these changes, but he's also been behind some of the most beneficial. His expertise with everything digital, coupled with a forward-thinking mindset, has helped position SCC on the cutting edge of distance learning, in which students attend class from any locale.

Some say online learning represents the future of education. Thanks largely to James, Santiago Canyon College's distance education coordinator, it's been SCC's current reality for years.

As of Spring 2024, 85% of the college's credit students are taking at least one fully online or one hybrid class, and 52% are exclusively enrolled in online courses, according to James.

His affinity for digital tech came early. "Around fifth grade, I bought one of the first PCs ever made, by Texas Instruments, and taught myself basic programming language."

After initially stumbling at SCC ("I was rudderless"), James later returned and became an honors student while working part-time jobs, primarily in computers and computer networking.

James' job as alternate media specialist in Disabled Students Program & Services (the one before his current position) didn't even exist when he got the offer in 2001. "It was a brand-new job that nobody knew how to do," he said. "Helping students overcome their dis-

JAMES » PAGE 5

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HAWK'S-EYE VIEW

An open letter to graduates, their families and supporters

By Jeannie G. Kim
President of Santiago Canyon College

Hello graduates, parents, family, and friends of our graduates, and honored guests.

First a huge thank you to all the parents and supporters of our graduates. They would not be sitting here without your love, guidance and sometimes the nagging, to keep going.

But in all seriousness...
Graduates, as we celebrate your hard-earned achievements, know that I am filled with immense pride and admiration for each of you.

I know that every single one of you have made sacrifices and overcome challenges in pursuing your education.

The financial investments, sleep sacrificed, countless hours spent studying, and the stress endured are all testaments to your dedication.

Early mornings and late nights cramming for tests or writing papers, and getting zoom and WIFI to work, were all part of the journey.

Balancing priorities and juggling the demands of life while pursuing your education required unwavering determination, creative problem-solving, and resilience.

Your commitment and sacrifices exemplify your deep-seated dedication to your academic pursuits, and it's a testament to your strength and perseverance.

Congratulations on overcoming these obstacles and reaching this moment of success.

Like you, I know a little something about overcoming obstacles and many of you may relate.

I remember not knowing how to speak English when I first came to the United States and how embarrassing it was that I couldn't even ask where the bathroom was that first day of kindergarten way back in summer of 1972.

Yes, it's been a minute, but that's one of my core memories and is still one of my clearest memories of getting through and over the physical, mental and emotional distress caused by my lack of



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS
Santiago Canyon College President Jeannie Kim speaks at commencement.

knowledge - in this case not knowing a word of English.

I promised myself then, I would strive to learn everything I could so that I wouldn't feel that kind of frustration again.

While learning English was certainly a significant obstacle, it was an anticipated one. But there were many more challenges that I did not and could not have anticipated.

You see, this is my ninth life.

I have had eight near-death experiences. The first was being hit by a car going 20-25 miles an hour just a couple of months after my arrival in the U.S. and settling in to a two-bedroom apartment across from the Zody's in Inglewood with my parents and two younger brothers.

When the car struck me, I flew into the air and landed on my knees and after being examined by paramedics, walked away from that accident - witnesses said I bounced, literally and figuratively!

Then there was a near stabbing at the age of seven by a disturbed neighborhood teen...

Battling an aggressive form of breast cancer in 2022...

And being hit by a car AGAIN, this time it was while riding my bike, just 30 days after my double mastectomy and reconstruction surgery in June of 2022.

I think you get the picture.

I was not the architect of these situations.

Things simply happened. And some may say I've had a rough life if they only looked at the traumas.

But I have a different perspective. Yes, the not-so-great things happened but overcoming those experiences made me who I am today.

I value those difficult experiences because they were my greatest opportunities for developing a growth mindset, resilience, and perseverance.

Simply put, GRIT.

What I learned though each of these experiences was that while it is not within my power to stop or prevent some bad things from happening, my response to what happens in life IS something I can control.

With each experience, I had a choice in HOW I responded.

I could have become fearful of cars or people who were similar to the boy who tried to kill me, etc.

But I didn't. I decided to focus my energy on moving forward and THROUGH the obstacles of self-pity, doubt, fear, and feelings of inadequacy.

I decided to be a learner of myself and others.

To be the person who sees the cup half full, NOT half empty.

To care for and value others as well as myself.

To believe in myself and the good intentions of others.

And to be kind and gentle with others and myself, because we are often our own worst critic.

This world and life often test our resolve and challenges our beliefs. However, it is crucial to hold onto our values and never waver in the face of adversity.

Your grit and persistence have brought you to this point, and I urge you to carry these qualities forward as you navigate the uncertainties that may lie ahead.

Remember that setbacks are not failures but opportunities for growth.

Every obstacle you overcome strengthens your resolve and gives you additional tools to overcome the next challenge.

As you step into the next chapter of

your lives, remember to always lead with integrity, kindness, and humbleness.

These qualities will not only guide your actions but will also set you apart as compassionate and empathetic leaders in your communities.

Be teachable and ready to learn, for knowledge once mastered, cannot be taken away and it is a tool that empowers you to make a difference in the world around you.

Embrace curiosity and take calculated risks; it is through these experiences that you will continue to learn and grow.

Your dreams are worth fighting for, so never be afraid to reach for the stars and pursue your passions with unwavering determination so that in the twilight years of your life, you will have no regrets in saying "Wow! What a ride!"

Above all, remember to be just, to have faith, and to let your actions speak louder than your words.

Stand up for those who are hurting, defend the weak, and lend a helping hand to those who cannot help themselves.

By embodying these principles, you will not only enrich your own lives but also uplift those around you and create a more just and compassionate society.

The world needs your creativity, intellect, and courage as we continue in the fourth industrial revolution with artificial intelligence augmenting human capabilities.


Today is not only a day of celebration but also a call to action. Whether you are entering the workforce, continuing your education, or embarking on new adventures, carry the values and lessons you have learned with you.

And most of all be brave!
You have what it takes to be the change-makers, the innovators, and the leaders of tomorrow.

All of us here at Santiago Canyon College believe in you!

Congratulations, graduates! The world eagerly awaits your mark. So go out and SOAR!!

GO HAWKS!!
Jeannie G. Kim was appointed president of Santiago Canyon College in January 2023.



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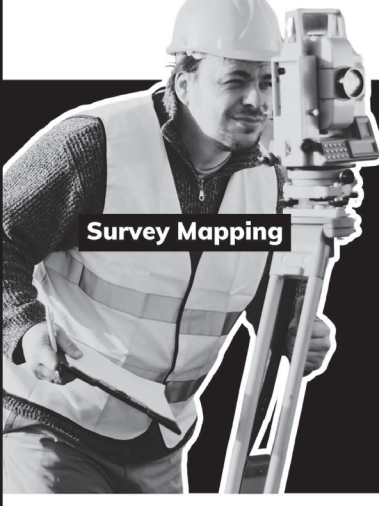
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GRADUATION

CHEERS TO THE CLASS OF 2024

SANTIAGO CANYON COLLEGE BY THE NUMBERS

SCC celebrated graduates at its 25th Commencement ceremony June 7. Graduates are transferring to institutions across the University of California and California State University systems as well as private institutions including Chapman, USC and Stanford.

1,131

Number of graduates

15 to 66

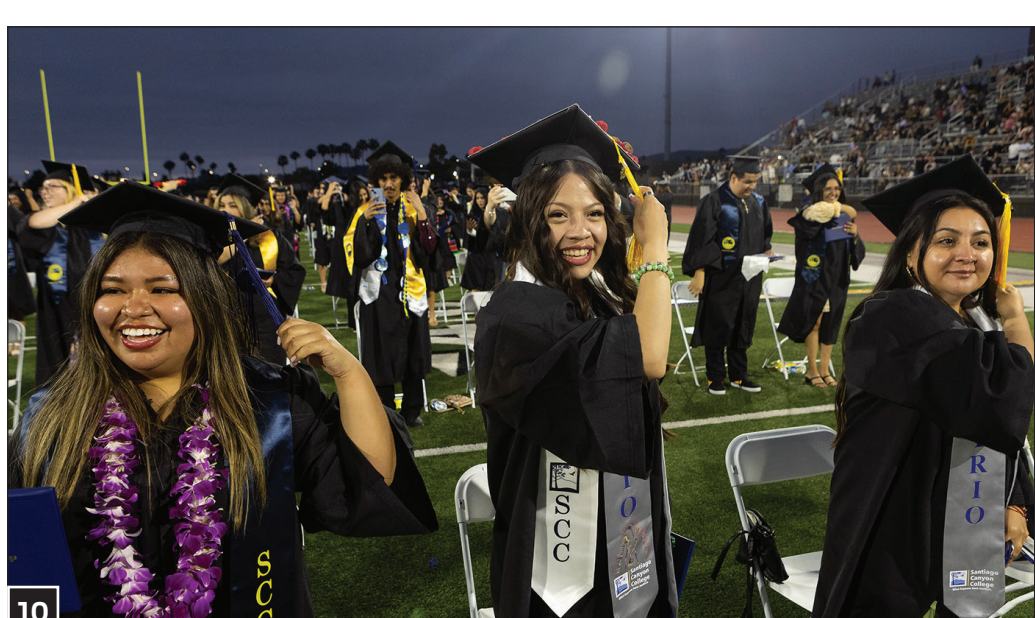
Ages of graduates

3,200

Degrees and certificates awarded

20

Military veteran graduates



Photos by Drew A. Kelley, Contributing Photographer Friday, June 7, 2024

1. A graduate walks the green in style during Santiago Canyon College's June 7 commencement ceremony at El Modena High School in Orange.
2. A mature graduate celebrates his achievement.
3. College President Jeannie Kim poses with a grad at the commencement ceremony.
4. Kathy Silvey, associate professor of English, responds to the crowd.
5. A grad waves to the crowd.
6. Enthusiastic grads strike a pose for the audience.
7. A grad waves a quiet acknowledgement to well-wishers.
8. Another grad with a little more flair.
9. A smiling student gestures to her parents during Santiago Canyon College's commencement ceremony.
10. Newly matriculated alums move their tassels from right to left at Santiago Canyon College's commencement ceremony.
11. SCC graduates put their creativity on display.
12. Santiago Canyon College President Jeannie Kim addresses the crowd.
13. Christopher Sweeten, vice president of Student Services, gives his commencement address.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Helping meet growing employee demand in the water industry

\$1.75 million grant from Labor Department

By Lou Ponsi
contributing writer



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS
Sarah Santoyo, assistant vice chancellor of Educational Services in the Rancho Santiago Community College District's Resource Development Department, who authored the grant



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS
The grant will support Santiago Canyon College's apprenticeship programs.

CalMatters, a nonprofit news organization that covers state government, hosted its inaugural Ideas Festival June 5 and 6 in Sacramento.

Among the agenda items was a panel discussion titled "Work Pathways in Today's Economy," which included Adele Burnes, deputy chief of the Standards; Cesar Lara, director of Workforce and Economic Development, California Labor Federation and Megan Nazareno, senior program and data manager, Construction Trades Workforce Initiative.

The labor experts agreed that students in high school and college should have better access to good-paying apprenticeship programs, especially to fill the need for a more diverse workforce.

Apprenticeships provide career pathways benefiting both employers in specific industries and future workers in those industries.

"We have a lot of opportunity in California," Lara said. "But we have to make sure we have a workforce pipeline that's well-prepared and ready to go."

Santiago Canyon College has been proactive in that effort and is No. 2 among California's 116 community colleges in the number of apprenticeships offered.

Responding to a demand for skilled professionals in the water industry, SCC applied for, and was recently awarded, a \$1.75 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, which will fund apprenticeships for students pursuing careers in the industry.

The grant was written by Sarah Santoyo, assistant vice chancellor of Educational Services in the Rancho Santiago Community College District's Resource Development Department.

"(Apprenticeships) are remarkable because when you look at our students,

most are part-time because they're working," Santoyo said. "It takes forever to finish, or sometimes they don't because life happens. So, with the apprenticeship model, why I think there's such gravitation to it is because you don't have those things in competition. You're hired in an apprenticeship program. The day you start, you're hired."

The district determines its goals and where gaps might exist and then relays that information to Santoyo, who then searches for funding opportunities that align with the district's requirements.

"And then once we do that, then we also do an assessment of those opportunities and then help them strategize on how to develop a project that's going to get funded, that can be implemented and tracked on achieving results."

A report published by the Centers of Excellence for Labor Market Research, a leading source of market research for California Community Colleges, found that the water industry faces an increasing demand for skilled workers in the coming years.

The demand stems from the projected retirement of one-third of its workforce, a need for a younger, more racially diverse male and female workers and other factors.

"Meanwhile, technological advancements in this field have opened doors to bold new prospects in the areas of analysis, treatment, and testing," the report stated.

When applying for the grant, the proposal had to lay out a plan showing how SCC would use the \$1.75 million apprenticeship grant to not only meet the increasing demand for workers in the water industry but also to answer the industry's call for a more diverse workforce in terms of race and gender, Santoyo said.

Through targeted outreach, SCC will market its apprenticeships to demographic groups that match the needs of the industry.

For the wastewater apprenticeship program, SCC will focus on young people who are likely to be invested in the environment and interested in careers that contribute to the well-being of the environment, Santoyo said.

"We know that we need a future workforce that is not just technically trained but who have the kind of commitment to use resources wisely," she said.

SCC will market its wastewater apprenticeships to local high schools and to current SCC students, Santoyo said.

The college is also planning to partner with the Orange County Conservation Corps, a nonprofit organization serving

"young, at-risk adults through employment, training and educational programs that build self-sufficiency and benefit the community through conservation-driven projects."

The college currently offers associate's degrees, certificates of proficiency and certificates of achievements in its Water and Wastewater Technology Department for programs that include wastewater/environmental sanitation, water distribution, water utility management, water equipment operation, and maintenance and water Treatment.

Those who obtain the proper degree or certificate could find careers in water supply irrigation systems, sewage treatment facilities, heavy and civil engineering construction, waste management and state and local agencies.

The college currently offers 10 apprenticeships that serve more than 5,000 students in fields that include carpentry, mechanics, surveying, cosmetology and construction.

The majority of SCC's current apprenticeship programs run from two to five years.

Source: Sarah Santoyo, assistant vice chancellor of Educational Services in the Rancho Santiago Community College District's Resource Development Department.

BALLOT ISSUE

RSCCD proposes a \$720 million bond measure

RSCCD Communications

At their regularly scheduled June 10 meeting, the Rancho Santiago Community College District Board of Trustees unanimously approved a recommendation to put a \$720 million general obligation bond on the November ballot.

If approved by local voters, funds from the proposed bond measure will authorize funding to renovate aging campus buildings, repair leaky roofs and deteriorating gas, electrical, and sewer lines, upgrade computer technology, improve access for disabled students, construct new classrooms to relieve overcrowding and expand the educational and training programs at Santa Ana College, Santiago Canyon College, the regional education centers, and the district operations center of the Rancho Santiago Community College District. To pass, the measure must receive at least 55% voter support.

"The funds from this bond will be tremendously timely and significant," said RSCCD Chancellor Marvin Martinez. "As one of the fastest growing community college districts in the state, we desperately need to upgrade classrooms/labs, prepare students/veterans for university transfer, and equip students for jobs in nursing, emergency response, and the building trades."

The decision from the RSCCD Board of Trustees came after a comprehensive review that included interviews with community members, surveys of past



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS
If approved, the bond will fund renovations and new construction at Santiago Canyon College and Santa Ana College campuses.

and present students, and a study of industry trends and needs.

"The Board of Trustees were adamant that we must keep college education at Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon

College affordable," Martinez said. "Furthermore, we must provide the type of job training to prepare our students and workers for good-paying jobs in emerging industries such as nursing, para-

edics, first responders, automotive welding, and the building industries. This is in addition to our commitment to preparing students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities."

ECOLOGY

RSCCD builds on environmental and sustainability efforts

RSCCD Communications

Rancho Santiago Community College District has been committed to environmental stewardship and sustainability for almost a decade. In 2015, the district ratified its inaugural sustainability plan, currently undergoing updates to align with contemporary environmental trends and regulations.

RSCCD has expanded its offering of classes promoting environmental responsibility. At Santa Ana College, the automotive technology program includes classes on hybrid and electric vehicles. Those graduating with a degree in Environmental Science at SAC will also now be required to take classes related to water recycling, land conservation, or the impact of air pollution.

Santiago Canyon College has renamed its Water Utility Program to Water and Wastewater Technology to align with state environmental guidelines. Both colleges have also continued to offer a robust curriculum of online or hybrid courses, reducing the number of students and faculty that commute to campus. Several measures have been implemented at both colleges to encourage



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS
The Rancho Santiago Community College District is committed to incorporating green design in new construction.

more sustainable behavior in students and faculty. In a significant step towards reducing plastic waste, the District has installed state-of-the-art hydration stations, encouraging students to embrace reusable water bottles as a convenient and eco-friendly alternative to single-use plastics. Bike racks and lockers have also been installed at SAC and SCC, making

it easier for students to avoid emissions-producing vehicles.

Hugo Curiel, RSCCD's facilities project manager, said that sustainable design also considers the quality of space when designing facilities, ensuring that they serve the needs of students for years to come. According to Curiel, newer buildings incorporate flexible social spaces with plenty of natural lighting and group study rooms that allow students to collaborate.

"Newer facilities provide social spaces that provide a friendlier, more inviting environment," said Curiel.

Newer construction on campus' have been designed with a strong focus on sustainability and energy efficiency. The new Science Center boasts water efficient landscaping and HVAC units, making the building 28% more efficient than required by code. Additionally, landscaping around both campuses have been updated to include drought-resistant, California native plants.

At Santiago Canyon College, old or outdated HVAC systems have been replaced or upgraded to improve efficiency. Roof systems on several buildings have also been updated to meet current

energy standards. Improvements to irrigation control systems and a new bioretention basin to help collect water runoff at SCC are just some examples of how the District is doing its part to reduce its footprint on the environment.

The district recently celebrated Earth Week with week-long events including a campus cleanup and promotion of green initiatives across the district.

Throughout Earth Week, both colleges came together to host a variety of events promoting sustainability and environmental awareness. At Santa Ana College, students and faculty came together for a cleanup, rolling up their sleeves to pick up litter and beautify their campus. Since 2022, Santiago Canyon College has held a weeklong "EarthFest" with a goal of celebrating sustainability and educating students on ways they can be more environmentally conscious. This year, the festival included a tour of the new bioretention basin to help filter and recharge water runoff before it goes to the ocean.

At SCC, the Associated Student Government established a "Green Operations Committee," which assists in the planning of sustainability events on campus.

ACADEMY

Giving high school students a boost toward college

Acquiring study skills and earning credits

By **Jenelyn Russo**
contributing writer

When Orange High School senior Adolfo Bello received his diploma earlier this month, he was one of 22 classmates to also complete more than 45 units of college courses through the school's Early College Academy, credits he will take with him as he heads to the University of Notre Dame in the fall.

A four-year program partnership between Orange Unified School District, Orange High School and Santiago Canyon College, the Early College Academy provides students the opportunity to graduate from high school while concurrently completing a significant amount of college-level coursework. With many of their general education requirements fulfilled, ECA students are able to enter college at a sophomore or even junior level, providing a potential savings in future tuition costs.

Bello was introduced to the ECA as an eighth grader at Yorba Middle School. When he saw what the program had to offer, it sparked his interest, and he applied ahead of starting at Orange High School.

"It's something I knew I could challenge myself with," Bello said. "And it was something I could gain valuable experiences from, such as preparing me for what college will be like after high school."

Beginning his freshman year, in addition to his high school classes, Bello took college courses each semester and during summer terms — courses such as American sign language, sociology, psychology and statistics, with all required textbooks and tuition at no cost.

The ECA program got its start five years ago and is currently offered exclusively at Orange High School, a Title I school, and provides a path for students to consider pursuing a college education. As of this spring, the program has graduated its third cohort for a total of nearly 70 students who have achieved IGETC, or Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum certification.

"You have this cohort of students where college is not a word that's common in their households," said Jason Parks, vice president of Academic Affairs at SCC. "So, by going there and demonstrating to students that they can be successful in college, it can change the narrative of how a student views higher education."

As part of the ECA program, SCC professors are on Orange High's campus each day to teach the college coursework during 1st and 2nd periods. Additionally, there are designated high school teachers who come alongside the students to mentor them and provide support.

"There's a really tight partnership between our professors and the high school teachers, and they work hand in hand,"



PHOTO COURTESY OF ADOLFO BELLO

Adolfo Bello, Orange High School Early College Academy graduate, will attend the University of Notre Dame in the fall.

said Loann Tran, director of Special Programs at SCC. "The students are getting this wraparound service of academic support. So if they're struggling, our professors can talk to their teachers to help them through this journey."

The teamwork between the Orange High teachers and the SCC professors

made a significant impact on Bello and his ability to complete the rigorous program.

"I enjoyed getting to work with a lot of amazing professors," Bello said. "For them to be able to foster our needs and provide us the learning environment that we needed was truly beneficial. ...



PHOTO COURTESY ORANGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Adolfo Bello, center, with Early College Academy classmates

ADMINISTRATION

Rancho Santiago Community College District celebrates Class of 2024

RSCCD Communications

Rancho Santiago Community College District awarded approximately 10,400 degrees and certificates to graduating students of Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College this year.

"Congratulations to our exceptional students and their families! As we honor this remarkable achievement, we celebrate every graduate's perseverance and commitment," said RSCCD Chancellor Marvin Martinez.

The celebration also extends to the faculty and staff who have supported our graduates along the way.

"Our faculty and staff have played an essential role in guiding our students to success. Their commitment to education and to nurturing our students' potential has been extraordinary. We thank them for their hard work and dedication," said Martinez.



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS
RSCCD Chancellor Marvin Martinez addresses graduates.

James

FROM PAGE 1

ability with technology resonated with me. I grew up with learning challenges, and I've always used technology tools to make me a more effective learner."

His work took on many forms. For example, he assisted students with visual disabilities. "Many students would get so good at reading tech-to-speech programs, they'd pump up the voice to 350 words per minute, far higher than the average reading speed. It's really impressive."

While working as alternate media specialist, James attended Embry-Riddle University, initially wanting to become a pilot. He shifted his focus, eventually earning a bachelor's in technical management in 2005. Primarily working online, James earned a master's in educational technology at Pepperdine University in 2007.

"Educational Technology is one of the most controversial disciplines," James said. "Every new technology seems to be banned by teachers at first." ... However, "(SCC) has always been very supportive of me and supporting learning with high-quality online classes."

Seeing a growing need for more online instruction, the college's then-VP of Academic Affairs named James distance education coordinator in 2013. He initially created automation that facilitated access to the campus' education tech tools, such as the learning management system, for both faculty and students. Later focusing on instruction quality, he designed an online teaching certification by curating and creating training materials incorporating, among other elements, instructional design, student authentic assessment and ADA accessibility. He's continually assisting faculty with tech and instructional support.

The work comes in hot and heavy from all directions. James' administrative obligations alone would floor most

Cudal

FROM PAGE 1

dent Government, and this last academic year, she applied her employment skills as ASG's Commissioner of Recruitment. As of this month, she will serve as ASG president for the 2024-2025 academic year.

As part of her ASG experience, Cudal has traveled to Washington, D.C. and attended the Student Senate for California Community Colleges General Assembly in Santa Clara, California.

"ASG opened an opportunity for me," Cudal said. "I really am passionate about helping people, helping my fellow students and advocating for them. ... We've created a family. It's something that we are very proud of as an organization, and I want to continue that."

Since she desires to become a professor, Cudal has also connected with SCC's TRiO Future Teachers Student Support Services program. With support from TRiO coordinator Berenice Mosqueda, she and her fellow TRiO members will be traveling to New York this month to tour Columbia, NYU and Princeton, edu-

cation destinations she never thought would have been possible just a few short years ago.

And Cudal is already putting those teaching skills to use by helping other SCC classmates as a peer tutor in several STEM classes, including chemistry and computer science.

"I'm very, very grateful to these people," Cudal said. "SCC is a big part of my life and not only opened opportunity for me but helped me to be a better person. I feel like it never would have started if I did not come here."

As Cudal walked across the stage at Fred Kelly Stadium in Orange with her fellow SCC Adult High School Diploma program graduates earlier this month, she felt a unique sense of pride, accomplishment and hope for her future with the knowledge that no matter her age, the sky is the limit.

"We might have all different backgrounds in life, and we might all have different paths that we want to go, but at the end of the day, education is very important," Cudal said.

"SCC has become my home. I feel safe, and I feel very welcome. We have a tagline (at SCC) that says, 'What happens here matters.' Everything that has happened to me here, it all matters."

people. He serves as co-chair for the college's Technology Innovations and Distance Education Committee; its Technology Committee; and the Technology Advisory Group (the District's tech committee). He's also a member of SCC's Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, Comprehensive Educational Planning, and Accreditation committees.

In addition to community outreach efforts, James teaches Educational Technologies and in the near future will likely be teaching AI for Educators. "Our students need (artificial intelligence) skills," he said. "AI promotes learning and one's natural abilities. It's an amazing teacher's tool to support learning and overcome barriers."

James' efforts are appreciated throughout SCC. "Scott has laid the critical foundation to ensure quality online education here at Santiago Canyon College," said Aaron Voelcker, dean of Institutional Effectiveness, Library & Learning Support Services. "Through his work, the college has a robust Online Teaching Certification program,

which is a requirement for all SCC faculty members teaching online courses. With the support of SCC's instructional designer, Amanda Carpenter, faculty are taught best practices for online instruction, learn about effective course design and learn how to make their online courses accessible and engaging for all types of learning styles."

"Working with (James) is awesome," said Carpenter. "He is constantly learning and eager to keep us informed as a campus by staying up to date on trending topics in the field. His extensive knowledge and dedication to continuous improvement have earned him the respect of everyone."

When asked what one piece of advice he'd give an educator, James said, "In every decision you make, pause to consider: 'Am I thinking in a growth mindset, and is this truly serving the best interests of my students?' Tradition often guides our choices, but it's important to question these precedents and embrace growth for the benefit of our learners."

RECOGNITION

SCC honors outstanding faculty, staff award winners

RSCCD Communications

RSCCD Santiago Canyon College recently recognized the recipients of the 2023-2024 Faculty Excellence Awards and Distinguished Classified Awards.

The Faculty Excellence Award honors the best examples of academic excellence from SCC's distinguished instructional staff as determined by students and peers.

The 2023-2024 Faculty Excellence Awardees are:

- Full-Time Faculty Excellence Award: Dr. Dora Escobar
- PT Faculty Excellence Award: Danelle Huggett
- PT CE Faculty Excellence Award: Guangjie (Jenny) Ge

An Associate Professor of Counseling at SCC, Escobar immigrated from Medellín, Colombia at 7, with her parents who instilled in her the values of sacrifice, perseverance, and the importance of education.

Their words, *"sea el ejemplo para la familia"* (be an example to our family) and *"la educación, nadie se la puede quitar"* (no one can take your education away from you), have driven her dedication to student success.

Escobar's educational journey began at Orange Coast College, where she earned her associate degree before transferring to Cal State Fullerton where she earned a degree in bachelor's in business administration. Escobar earned a master's in counseling, became a licensed marriage and family therapist in 2012 and recently defended her dissertation to earn her doctorate in Higher Education with a specialization in Community College Leadership from Northern Illinois University.

At SCC, Escobar has made significant contributions. She has served on the Curriculum and Instruction Council, Student Equity and Success Committee and co-chaired both the counseling department and District Assessment Committee. She played a key role in developing SCC's Equity Plan, creating programs for degree completion in STEM and social work, and implementing AB1705. In 2013, she received the SCC Adjunct Faculty Excellence Award.

Escobar's greatest joy is collaborating with students, supporting them through challenges, and celebrating their achievements.

The Distinguished Classified Award recognizes the SCC Classified employ-



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS
RSCCD board member Zeke Hernandez, SCC Foundation Board chair Beatriz "Betty" Valencia, FT Distinguished Classified Award recipient Yvette Orellana, 2022/23 Distinguished Classified Award winner Guadalupe Hernandez, SCC President Jeannie Kim and RSCCD board member David Crockett.

ees who best exemplify their dedication, work and team performance, and is an inspiration to the campus community.

The 2023-2024 Distinguished Classified Awardees are:

- FT Distinguished Classified Award: Yvette Orellana
- PT Distinguished Classified Award: Caralou Rosen
- SCC Spirit Award: Monique Marthell

Yvette Orellana has worked at Santiago Canyon College since 2021, her time at SCC has been a homecoming.

Orellana, a first-generation college student, is an SCC alumna who made the most of her time as a student. She enrolled in the Pathways to Teaching Program and earned five associate degrees, in Elementary Education, Elementary Teacher Education, and three liberal arts degrees with an emphasis in Social & Behavioral Sciences, Arts, Humanities & Communication and Mathematics & Sciences. She also earned two certificates.

Orellana transferred to California State University, Fullerton, where she earned a bachelor of science degree in child and adolescent development, with a minor in natural science. She worked in different areas of education ranging from preschool through college.

Orellana missed working directly with students and working in higher education and as fate would have it, was hired



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS
From left are Betty Valencia, Zeke Hernandez, Full-Time Faculty Excellence Award recipient Dora Escobar, SCC Academic President Craig Rutan, Jeannie Kim and David Crockett.

at SCC, she currently works in the Counseling and Career Development office, as the Career Guidance Coordinator. A former EOPS and Pathways to Teaching cohort student, Orellana said one of her professional goals was to return to SCC to give back to the college community in the same way her mentors assisted her.

She interacts with students and colleagues in the same spirit of concern and collaboration that she felt as a student at SCC, a spirit that continues to guide and encourages her to be a better person – including the consideration of continuing her education to earn a master's degree in counseling.

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^{*} ranked by EdSmart.org †DataWarehouse 2023