

COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOCUS

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BACK TO SCHOOL PHOTOS, PAGE 3

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOULDING, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Ryann Sell and Landon Thomas walk hand in hand on their first day of college Aug. 18 during the first day of classes for the 2025-2026 school year at Santiago Canyon College.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

SISTERS WORK TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF FELLOW STUDENTS

4 siblings share a purpose in ASG

By Lou Ponsi
contributing writer

For the four Lopez sisters, student government is a family affair.

Each of the sisters has either held, currently holds or is about to hold positions within Associated Student Government at Santiago Canyon College.

On a college campus, ASG serves as a student-run government body that advocates for students' needs, addresses students' concerns and works to implement initiatives to enhance students' experience.

The sisters credit their immigrant parents for instilling pride in their daughters, which fostered a desire to influence change in their community through service.

"From a young age, I've always been very empathetic toward other people

and other cultures, and I've always wanted to make a difference and help people feel like they fit in, like there's a place for them," said Valerie Lopez, 21, the second-oldest of the sisters and third to participate in ASG.

"I think we all kind of share that, and we've always wanted to make anything or anywhere we're part of better. I think as a family, it has led us to want to be a part of something bigger. And so, I think it's just a great place for us."

Tania Lopez, 26, the oldest sister, was the trailblazer, getting involved in ASG at SCC and setting a high bar for her younger sisters.

After graduating from SCC, Tania earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from Chapman University, with a minor in law.

Tania, who currently sells real estate while working toward a degree in real estate law, is thrilled to see her younger

SISTERS » PAGE 5



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Valerie Lopez and her sister Kayla, right, are this year's Santiago Canyon College ASG executive officers. Kayla is the ASG president and Valerie is the ASG vice president.



PHOTO COURTESY SEBASTIAN PINTEIA

Sebastian Pinteia says graduating from SCC was the best decision he could have made.

NEXT STEP

A Santiago Canyon education was his ticket to Stanford

Pinteia plans MD, MPH after university graduation

By Lou Ponsi
contributing writer

At first, Sebastian Pinteia didn't want anyone to know he was planning to attend a community college.

While attending Santiago High School in Corona, community college was "heavily stigmatized," Pinteia recalled. There was this misconception that community college was for students who didn't have the grades to get into a uni-

versity, he said.

But after researching the price of tuition at some of his preferred universities, Pinteia, 22, found the cost to be prohibitively expensive and made a last-minute decision to attend Santiago Canyon College.

Pinteia was also swayed by the SCC representative at a high school college fair he attended.

After graduating from SCC in June 2023, Pinteia was accepted at Stanford and is now proud to shout from the rooftops that beginning his journey in higher education at SCC was the best decision he could have made.

"First of all, it was the quality of teach-

STANFORD » PAGE 5

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Santiago Canyon College celebrates 25 years of excellence

Dear Santiago Canyon College students, families, and community members,



Jeannie Kim
president of Santiago Canyon College

Welcome to the Fall 2025 semester—a semester that carries special significance as we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Santiago Canyon College. For a quarter century, SCC has been a place of discovery, growth, and transformation, and today we proudly stand as a leader in higher education serving over 33,000 students just last year.

SCC continues to be recognized for excellence. We are ranked the #1 community college in Orange County, #6 in California (out of 116), and #16 in the nation by Niche.com. Our Veterans Program is ranked in the Top 10 in the United States. The reason for these rankings is because SCC excels in preparing students for transfer and careers.

We have one of the largest apprenticeship programs in California and in the United States, where our graduates earn an average medium income of \$262,000 just five years post completion.

Our Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics courses and programs are so highly valued that we recently formalized a direct pathway to Keck Graduate Institute for students interested in pursuing a Doctor of Pharmacy degree. Eligible students receive a Transfer Admission Guarantee to KGI's accredited program, with top-performing students qualifying for an additional \$20,000 each in scholarship support.

Students as young as 13 are starting with us through our dual enrollment and early college programs earning college credit for transfer to four-year universities such as UCLA, UCI, Cal State Fullerton, Stanford, Yale, and so many more. The reason is because these 1,500+ dual enrolled students (average age is 16) are successful! Their average GPA last year was 3.04 with the majority of the courses completed meeting I-GETC (now transitioning to CAL-GETC) transfer requirements to UCs and CSUs as well as private institutions.



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Students pass by information services and welcome tents on the Santiago Canyon College campus on Aug. 19.

Our Continuing Education program anticipates serving over 13,000 people this year, the majority of whom are our active and older adults. Additionally, we have the Medical Assistant, CNA, CNA-Acute Care, and Lactation Consultant programs that are being offered at the main campus or our Career and Workforce Preparation Center at 1572 N. Main St. And in the spring, we anticipate having the CNA program at Canyon High School in partnership with

Orange Unified School District.

For something fun and educational, I hope you will take advantage of our many Community Education classes including our newest, From Vines to Wines with Vince Ferragamo, former NFL quarterback for the Rams.

We hope you will continue to join us in celebrating Santiago Canyon College's 25 Years in our community. Please lean in to help us envision what we will be in the next 25 years as an institution of innovation where artificial intelligence is embraced, an ecosystem of support for the whole student is

manifest, and where students learn and grow to become the current and future workforce, earning living wages in high demand professions.

I wish every member of the SCC community a successful and fulfilling semester and year. Have a wonderful fall—and always remember, What Happens Here Matters!

Warm regards,
Jeannie G. Kim, PhD
President, Santiago Canyon College
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Copy Editor: Paul Davenport
Director of Communications: Caroline Wong

Have a story idea or comment for the section? Contact Caroline Wong at cawong@scng.com or 714-796-2202

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BACK TO SCHOOL

Fall semester

Thousands of students arrived on campus or logged into virtual classrooms during the week of Aug. 18, heralding the beginning of the 2025 fall semester.

Serving more than 33,000 students last year, SCC is ranked the No. 1 community college in Orange County and No. 6 in California by Niche.com. The college has one of the largest apprenticeship programs in the state, and its Continuing Education Program anticipates serving 13,000 people this year.

We caught up with some of the students on the first day of classes.



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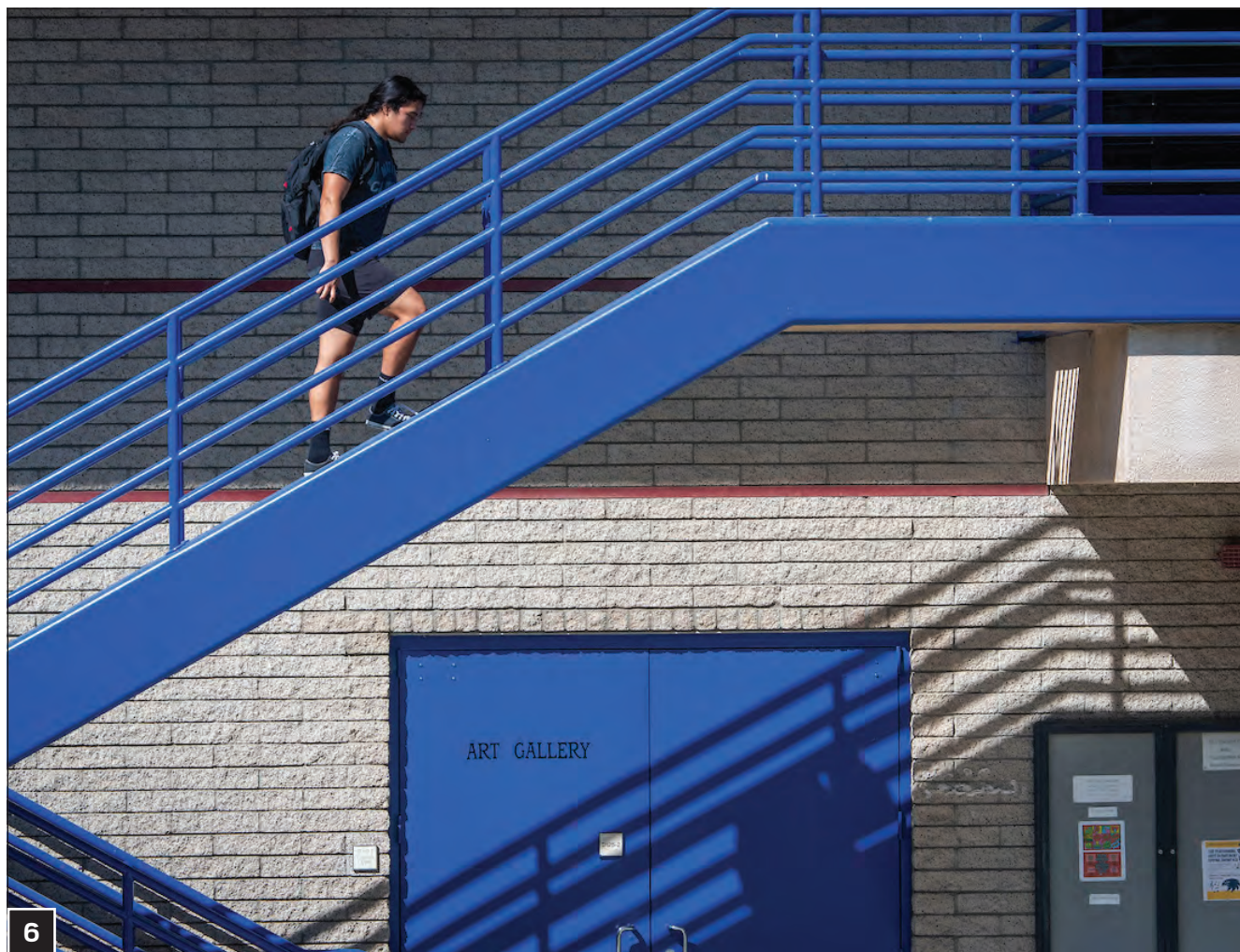
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Photos by Michael Goulding, contributing photographer August 18, 2025

1. High school friends, from left, Lindsey Vera, Astrid Vasquez, Vaimoana Taurotria, Callianne Rojas and Amy Campuzano gather before starting college together during the first day of classes.
2. A student arrives for the first day of classes on the Santiago Canyon College campus on Aug. 18.
3. Students try to get their bearings on campus.
4. John Amirehteshami plays Frisbee in the quad before heading to his first classes.
5. Dean of Students Joseph Alonzo, right, helps a student find his way.
6. A student takes the stairs to his destination.
7. Physical education instructor Lisa Camarco directs a student to his class.
8. One student uses old and new technology to find his way around campus.
9. Students arrive for the first day of classes.



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NEW PROGRAM

SCC/Keck partnership: A pathway to PharmD degree

Pharmacy school encourages Spanish-speaking candidates

By **Jenelyn Russo**
contributing writer

As the fall semester begins, Santiago Canyon College is launching a new partnership with Keck Graduate Institute to provide students with an accelerated pathway to a doctor of pharmacy degree.

Through this opportunity, students can complete a series of prerequisite courses at SCC and then apply for transfer to KGI's School of Pharmacy to pursue a PharmD degree. The partnership reflects SCC's ongoing commitment to providing students with diverse academic options.

"This aligns with the vision and mission of our college to create pathways and future potential qualifications for our students," said Martin Stringer, dean of SCC's Mathematics and Sciences Division.

As one of the seven independent private nonprofit institutions that comprise the Claremont Colleges consortium, the institute's focus is strictly on graduate applied life sciences and health care programs. The institute's School of Pharmacy has been preparing the next generation of pharmacy leaders for the last decade.

"We are excited about the relationship with SCC because it gives their students an opportunity to explore this program and take advantage of it," said Mohamed Abousalem, president at Keck Graduate Institute.

The PharmD program can be completed in as little as four years (after completion of prerequisite courses at SCC) and offers students three different certifications — community pharmacy, which prepares students for a career as a community pharmacist; clinical pharmacy, in which students can choose to become part of a health care system and provide coordinated care to patients; or industry focus, where graduates can work for biotech or pharmaceutical companies in research and development.

"We make sure that the curriculum is well-aligned with the market needs and the industry needs and also gives opportunities to connect with industry partners for mentorship, internships and then for employment," Abousalem said. "The unique academic brand that we have is all about hands-on education and experiential learning."

One of SCC's goals with this pathway is to challenge the perception that a bachelor's degree is a required step before pursuing post-graduate studies. Additionally, SCC aims to take the guesswork out of the transfer process.

"The pathways to transfer are often challenging, and different institutions have different requirements," said Jason Parks, SCC vice president of Academic Affairs. "Historically, it's been incumbent on the students to navigate these waters. We're taking the approach to navigate it before they get to us so that when they arrive, it's a clean pathway for them."

SCC students who maintain a 3.0 GPA in the required prerequisite courses are guaranteed admission to Keck's Doctor of Pharmacy program. All other applicants will receive a holistic review. In addition, the institute is offering \$20,000 scholarships for select qualified SCC students (\$5,000 per year over four years), which can be combined with other institutional scholarships or discounts.

"This sort of guarantee really provides that stability to students," Parks said.

Abousalem cited the growing need in Southern California for Spanish-speaking pharmacists, and with SCC a designated Hispanic-Serving Institution where roughly 60% of students identify as Hispanic or Latinx, the partnership and pathway are well-positioned to help meet this demand.

"One of the reasons for our excitement around this program with Santiago Canyon College is the chance to support the communities we are in and the region we are in by highlighting the opportunity to Hispanic students," Abousalem said. "They can come in, get this degree and then give back and use their knowledge of the Spanish language as an asset to not only succeed as professionals but also support their community."

In addition to PharmD program admission, Keck is offering SCC students guaranteed seats and waived fees for the school's Pre-Pharmacy Enrichment Program, a three-day summer course that gives prospective students a glimpse into the pharmacy profession. This allows SCC students



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Following the completion of prerequisite courses, the new PharmD program can be completed in as little as four years.

to connect with the institute early on and help them make informed decisions.

"We've found it to be more effective if we work with the community college administration to define those connections with their students, with the student counselors and with our counselors, to make sure that the information is made available to the students at the different stages of their journey at the community college," Abousalem said.

For students interested in pursuing the community college to PharmD path at Keck Graduate Institute, SCC is aligning communication through academic advisors as well as SCC's Division of Mathematics and Sciences to provide details on the required coursework and how to connect with the program and admissions resources.

Stringer stated that SCC will continue to pursue these unique academic program offerings to demonstrate to students that pathways to titles such as Doctor of Pharmacy are within their grasp locally.

"We're both creating a sense of belonging," Stringer said of the partnership between SCC and Keck. "We're both saying, you belong here, and we're going to make you successful."



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

SCC Vice President of Academic Affairs
Jason Parks

EDUCATION

For them, SCC was a stepping-stone to UC schools

Students who got help from TRiO

By **Brian Robin**
contributing writer

There was nothing in Yesenia Portillo's background growing up in an underserved family in Orange that illustrated she would eventually graduate with honors from UCLA. Nothing in Venuri Weerarathne's background growing up in Sri Lanka that revealed UC Irvine was in her future.

Nothing on the surface showed this was the path for both first-generation college students, that is, save for raw, unbridled intelligence mixed with a feral determination that refused to allow doubt to creep in.

Even when Portillo was working nights as an assistant manager at Little Caesars, along with a half dozen extracurriculars and a full load of classes at Santiago Community College. And even as Weerarathne walked onto the SCC campus in 2023, not knowing anyone or anything about college life other than she wanted to live it.

There would be no other acceptable path for either. And while their paths didn't cross at SCC, it too served as a common — yet necessary — launching pad. The assistance both Portillo and Weerarathne received at SCC opened doors and revealed opportunities neither of them knew existed.

In Portillo's case, that meant two things: the TRiO Program and filling every conceivable hour with extracurriculars. TRiO is a series of federally funded educational programs designed to support individuals from low-income families, first-generation college students or students with disabilities. The program offers services including counseling, tutoring, mentoring and financial assistance.

"I was really grateful to be part of this program. It opened doors for me," she said. "Honestly, if it wasn't for SCC and TRiO, I would never have considered UCLA. That bridged the gap in my education. Being exposed to that program helped a lot. They helped with the application process and helped me get exposure to multiple universities. TRiO allowed me to expand my options."

In the meantime, Portillo was expanding her portfolio. When she wasn't working at Little Caesars, there were the eight workshops she had to do as a Promise Scholar, serving as the public relations commissioner for the Inter-Club Council, working as a student assistant at SCC's first-year support center, where she gave back to a program that gave her a lifeline when she started at SCC in 2020.

And through it all, she put together a 3.75 grade-point average that — along with TRiO's support and eye-opening revelation that a UC school was realistic — brought her to UCLA in 2023.

"I never considered any UCs when I stepped onto UCLA's campus. The moment I did, I fell in love with the idea of being in L.A.," Portillo said. "Overall, it felt like I was in church. I fell in love with the campus and the diversity, and I felt instantly comfortable being there and feeling welcomed."

"SCC prepared me in the sense of being a full-time student, but the academics were different. UCLA was an R1 (research) university, and it was highly rigorous. I did face a lot of challenges adapting to the quarter system and academics, but I enrolled in summer courses to get a head start, and luckily, it helped me mentally prepare for what an actual 10-week quarter system was like."

Two years and a stint as a McNair Research Scholar — a TRiO-related program that provides students with research funding and mentoring — later, Portillo walked across the stage at her graduation, the proud owner of a 3.8 GPA in sociology with a minor in educational studies. She's now about to start a master's program in college counseling at Cal State Dominguez Hills.

From Sri Lanka to UC Irvine

Based on her emigration from Sri Lanka in 2022, you could say Weerarathne — who just graduated from SCC in May with a 3.67 GPA and associate degrees in business administration, economics and liberal arts — traveled a longer path than Portillo. And in a geographic sense, you'd be right.

But the old saying that it's not the destination, it's the journey serves as the theme to the trail that led Weerarathne to UCI. And SCC also played an integral role, even if it took her longer than Portillo to realize it.

"I went to SCC, and the first semester wasn't the best," she said, admitting to feeling overwhelmed and underinformed about what she was getting into. "After that, I started adapting and realized SCC has a lot to offer me. I didn't have any friends; there was literally no one I knew there. It took a bit to understand everything. I didn't know office hours existed."

"It was my first college experience, and on top of that, I'm a first-generation college student. My parents had never been to college. They didn't know how to help me. So, I was navigating college for all of us."

Like Portillo, Weerarathne discovered TRiO, which would eventually lead her to discover her current destination: the business and economics program at UCI. But before that, one counselor provided a necessary revelation that straightened what could have been a labyrinthine path.



PHOTO COURTESY OF YESENIA PORTILLO

Yesenia Portillo, SCC Class of 2023, graduated with honors from UCLA in 2025.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VENURI WEERARATHNE

Venuri Weerarathne is congratulated by SCC President Jeannie Kim in May. She heads to UC Irvine in the fall.

"She told me, 'If you want to achieve something, or if you need help, you have to ask. If you don't ask, you won't get help. Be brave enough to ask for help,'" Weerarathne said.

So Weerarathne shed her shyness and, like — Portillo — got past a rocky first semester and dived headlong into extracurriculars. She joined the Inter-Club Council and several other clubs, made friends and made other connections. One connection, a student services coordinator at SCC who noticed Weerarathne had a head for accounting, told her she should consider accounting as a profession.

Originally thinking that was boring, Weerarathne hesitated — until she learned about forensic accounting. Investigating fraud and rooting out corruption sounded a heck of a lot more interesting. And now the same course Weerarathne found as exciting as peeling paint is something she tutors other students in.

Now, Weerarathne is about to take her next step at UCI, a step she never saw coming two years ago. Like Portillo, that step came with more confidence and purpose than either of them ever realized.

RISING SCHOLARS

A life reclaimed: Charlie Nguyen discovered he loved learning

From incarceration to UC Berkeley

By Larry Urish
contributing writer

The message that Santiago Canyon College grad Charlie Nguyen has tattooed on his left wrist serves as a daily reminder of how far he's come after bottoming out at age 16: "No one is unworthy of redemption."

Imprisoned for nearly eight years after committing what he calls "a violent gang-related crime," Nguyen found his own redemption through persistence, hard work and whip-smart intelligence, along with crucial assistance from Rising Scholars, an empowering SCC program that serves incarcerated, formerly incarcerated and justice-impacted students facing similar challenges.

Today, Nguyen, a grateful, focused pre-law sociology major at UC Berkeley, continues to give back to those saddled with a rough background comparable to his.

"I was born to two parents involved in gang life," Nguyen said. "They consumed a lot of drugs, and I was literally born into drugs."

Adopted by his maternal grandmother, who raised him in a troublesome environment, he dropped out of school at 16.

Enrolled at SCC from 2021 to 2024, Nguyen earned four associate degrees: liberal arts, humanities, sociology and psychology, the latter two transferable to a four-year university. He managed this, incredibly, while incarcerated in Orange County Juvenile Hall, thanks in large part to Rising Scholars.

"I knew Charlie would be a successful student the first time I met him," said Albert Alvano, director of Rising Scholars and assistant professor and counselor at Santiago Canyon College's Division of Continuing Education. "I immediately saw his curiosity, his persistence and his advocacy for himself and his classmates."

For more than 30 years, before what was originally called "The Orange Campus" officially became known as Santiago Canyon College, faculty have taught noncredit college courses in OC jails, focusing on such topics as parenting, substance abuse and workforce

preparation. Counselors began visiting the off-site classrooms in 2016, offering guidance and post-release educational assistance. Two years later, as more formerly incarcerated students started reaching out for help on the Santiago Canyon College campus, Rising Scholars (originally called Project RISE), was created.

Last year, Project RISE was renamed Rising Scholars, two years after the program became a part of the California Community Colleges' Rising Scholars Network. Through Rising Scholars, SCC began offering college-credit classes in the three Orange County juvenile halls in the spring of 2021. Three years later, this off-site undertaking became known as the Rising Scholars Juvenile Justice Program, a nod to a grant of the same name furnished by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

Nguyen emphasized that Rising Scholars was essential to his extraordinary turnaround. "At 16, I decided that school simply wasn't for me," he said. "But the SCC counselors and faculty believed in me and gave me the space to be able to learn. They told me that, one, it's possible and, two, they're going to help me every step of the way. I found that I loved learning, and I wanted to go to college."

"I didn't know how to navigate higher education," Nguyen said. "That's the biggest role that Rising Scholars has played for me. They provided me with textbooks, helped me to connect with professors and furnished all of the tools I needed to succeed. ... I knew I was well on my way when I earned my first A in a real college course."

"We make regular visits to juvenile hall, lead workshops, provide guidance — anything to meet the specific needs of our students," Alvano said. "We also have counselors who work, primarily via Zoom, on educational planning. And in some cases, we provide laptops for our students, those deemed eligible by their probation officers."

Alvano stressed that Rising Scholars' ongoing success is a collective effort. "The key to this program is our group of hard-working counselors, our counseling assistant and our dedicated faculty, as well as great support from the college administrators. It's a team effort."

The first graduate of SCC's Juvenile Justice Program, Nguyen is passionate about social and criminal justice,



PHOTOS COURTESY OF AIDIN TEHRANI

From left, Dean Joanne Armstrong, Charlie Nguyen and Albert Alvano



Albert Alvano and Charlie Nguyen with the Berkeley bear flag

advocating for those often discounted by society. To that end, he serves as a program and outreach intern for the Boundless Freedom Project, which furnishes Buddhist- and mindfulness-based services to justice-impacted people, as well as advisory board coordinator for Cr8 Innovations, which seeks to furnish free housing to formerly incarcerated students. A future attorney, he'd like to one day focus on juvenile justice work or, more broadly, serving the public interest in some capacity.

"People believed in me before I believed in myself: my legal team, my judge in the case and the staff at Juvenile Hall," Nguyen said. "SCC counselors and faculty were critical in helping me get off my feet. Since they saw me for more than my mistakes, I now do my best to believe in others."

To those with a similar background, Nguyen said, "There are people who can help you. You just have to reach out. If you set your mind to a goal, anything is possible."

Sisters

FROM PAGE 1

sisters find their own voices and make an impact through ASG involvement.

"It's a full-circle moment for me," she said, "seeing my sisters involved in the same community activities that I once was. It almost feels like it's becoming a family tradition, which is really special."

Valerie Lopez, who is the incoming ASG vice president, started at Fullerton College, took some time off and then enrolled in SCC, getting involved in ASG during the 2024-25 academic year.

Kayla Lopez, 19, is the incoming president and Darla Lopez, 17, is entering her first semester and has committed to joining ASG.

Kayla said that early in her first se-

mester at SCC she initially felt nervous and unsure about her path. But when she visited the ASG booth at a campus resource event, she liked the vibe and was inspired by the diversity among ASG officers. So, she decided to join.

Tania's involvement a few years earlier was also a motivating factor.

"My oldest sister, Tania, was the one who told me she chose to go to SCC because it's a smaller campus," Kayla said. There are lots of resources, and it's easier to navigate the campus."

The structure of the ASG is akin to that of the U.S. government, divided into three branches.

The president oversees a 10-member cabinet of commissioners who focus on different areas of the college.

Cabinet members include commissioners of sustainability, publicity, recruitment, athletics and other areas.

The ASG vice president oversees 10

senators, who are either elected or appointed and serve as the legislative body.

The judiciary branch ensures that the ASG bylaws are followed.

All ASG officers are expected to adhere to certain academic standards to hold office, including enrollment in at least five units at SCC and maintaining a GPA of at least 2.0.

Kayla Lopez's first position in ASG was as the commissioner of athletics, which she held for a year and a half before becoming the director of outreach.

She plans to pursue several initiatives during her term as ASG president.

One of her goals is to create a billboard on campus where students can advertise their businesses, believing it will help students succeed and grow their ventures.

She would also like to see more public art on campus by organizing mural submission competitions.

Valerie Lopez worked on the initiative to have one student trustee represent SCC and another student trustee represent Santa Ana College, the other college in the Rancho Santiago Community College District.

Previously, one student trustee represented both colleges.

Kayla and Valerie have been actively involved in supporting undocumented students and are working to establish a Latinx Center on campus to provide resources and support for the Latino community.

"Being involved in the community is valuable, and even the smallest contributions can make a difference," Tania Lopez said. "It reminds me of something (Associate) Dean Justin Cruz ... of Fowler School of Law at Chapman University, once said. 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.'"

Stanford

FROM PAGE 1

ing, for sure," said Pinteá, an only child, whose father and mother are from Romania and New York, respectively. "It was also that the small community gave me the ability to take advantage of the opportunities we had, especially within student government, and being able to finally, I guess for lack of better words, do something."

Pinteá was awarded multiple scholarships, including a \$75,000 scholarship from Stanford, helping offset the cost of tuition.

At SCC, Pinteá was actively involved in student government, serving as the commissioner of sustainability in his first year and commissioner of administration in his second year.

While commissioner of sustainability, Pinteá planned various sustainability events, including Earth Week festivities in 2023.

He participated in the STEM Academy and was a member of Phi Theta Kappa, an international honor society that recognizes academic achievement among students at two-year colleges.

Pinteá also took advantage of other opportunities at SCC, including a trip to Washington, D.C., to speak with legislators about political issues.

Pinteá has been involved in various internships and research projects.

He said his experiences in high school and at SCC have unleashed a passion for exploring topics surrounding mental health and seeking answers to questions about human perception and thought.

"I got interested in mental health around freshman year of high school, though I wasn't sure where I wanted to take it," he said. "As I progressed throughout high school, my first idea was to major in psychology, but when

it came time to apply ... I wasn't sure if I wanted to go into medicine. I didn't think I'd be able to handle it."

But after taking general chemistry and a calculus class in biology his first semester at SCC, he decided to declare pre-med. "I thought, OK, I think this is something that might be feasible."

Pinteá said while he was at SCC, he was the only community college student to participate in the Biostatistics Epidemiology Summer Training Program at Columbia University, a program established to introduce undergraduates from underrepresented populations to biostatistics and cardiovascular and pulmonary disease research.

He is passionate about issues such as climate change and wants to help bridge the gaps between mental health, science and medicine. He envisions a future where he can make a significant impact in both medicine and environmental sustainability.

At Stanford, Pinteá co-founded Project AWISH at Stanford Children's Hospital, an initiative aimed at reducing hospital waste and promoting sustainable healthcare practices.

Pinteá is studying for the Medical College Admission Test and plans to apply to medical schools.

He intends to graduate from Stanford in June 2026 and pursue an MD and Master of Public Health joint degree and eventually work in academic medicine, focusing on environmental health and sustainable health care systems.

Shortly after graduating from SCC, Pinteá wrote on his LinkedIn profile:

"The day I graduated community college was the day that reaffirmed all those years of hard work and endless nights of extracurricular dedication. ... Words cannot express how thankful I am for my peers, family, and SCC faculty for getting me where I am today; the lines "it takes a village to raise a child" stuck with me during commencement because it certainly took a village to support my aspirations."



PHOTOS COURTESY SEBASTIAN PINTEA

Sebastian Pinteá wasn't sure about community college when he was in high school, but he was able to take advantage of many opportunities at SCC that earned him multiple scholarships to Stanford.



Pinteá co-founded Project AWISH at Stanford Children's Hospital, an initiative aimed at reducing hospital waste and promoting sustainable health care practices.

BEST OF ORANGE 2025

SCC selected runner-up for Best Education Services

RSCCD Communications

Santiago Canyon College has been named Runner-Up for Best Education Services in the inaugural Best of Orange 2025 awards, presented by the Orange Chamber of Commerce. The recognition was announced during the Best of Orange Awards and Board Installation on July 17 at Hotel Fera in Orange.

Chapman University placed first. SCC was one of 20 institutions nominated by members of the public. The Best of Orange awards celebrate excellence across multiple sectors, honoring local businesses and or-

ganizations that have made significant contributions to the Orange community.

The recognition reflects the college's ongoing commitment to providing high-quality, inclusive educational opportunities to a diverse student population. Santiago Canyon College is proud to be acknowledged by the Orange community for its excellence in education and service and is grateful to the Orange Chamber of Commerce for spotlighting the important role of local educational institutions.



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Santiago Canyon College faculty, staff, administrators and Foundation members accept recognition as Runner-Up for Best Education Institution in July in Orange at the 2025 Best of Orange Awards.

IMPROVEMENTS

Campus construction continues as semester begins

RSCCD Communications

Santiago Canyon College officially welcomed students back to campus on Aug. 18 for the start of the Fall 2025 semester, as work continues on the college's Campus Entrance Improvements Project - Phase 2.

To mark the first day and to direct students around the construction closures, SCC administrators, managers, and staff greeted students across campus, offering directions and support to help ensure a smooth start to the academic year. Despite the construction activity, the energy on campus remained positive and focused on student success.

The construction project is currently 12% complete and includes the rebuilding of the campus fountain and entry road, upgraded pedestrian walkways from the Chapman Avenue entrance through Strenger Plaza, and new hardscape and landscape improvements adjacent to Buildings D, E and the Lorenzo A. Ramirez Library.

"This project reflects SCC's long-term commitment to access, safety and the student experience," said Arleen Satele, Ed.D., vice president of administrative services. "We're excited to begin the new semester and grateful to our campus community for their patience and support during construction."

The Lorenzo A. Ramirez Library remains open, with access available through the south side of the building.

Lot 5 is closed for staging; ADA parking is available in Lots 1, 2, 6 and 7.

The project is expected to be completed in 2026. For updates, visit www.sccollege.edu or follow SCC on social media.



PHOTOS COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Construction crews work to clear and rebuild the entry road in front of the Lorenzo A. Ramirez Library.



Crews continue work on road and curb demolition in front of the Student Services building.



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