



PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

International students at Santiago Canyon College, President Jeannie Kim, in white, SCC International Students Program director Jetza Torres and Rep. Young Kim celebrate recognition of the program.

**DIVERSITY**

## INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM SUPPORTS STUDENTS FROM 26 COUNTRIES

### Numbers from abroad growing

By Nicole Gregory  
contributing writer

Students in SCC's International Students Program come from 26 countries from around the world, including China, Brazil, India, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, France, Mexico and Colombia. As the 2024 fall semester nears, enrollment is inching toward last fall's high of 101 students.

The number of international students has been growing steadily each year since the COVID-19 pandemic, the program's director, Jetza Torres, said. "We're doing very, very well in our program."

Santiago Canyon College has a reputation in the U.S. and abroad for its high-quality academic programs and student support services, Torres said. In May, she accepted an Export Achievement Certifi-

cate from the Deputy Undersecretary for International Trade Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce. The certificate recognizes businesses and educational institutions for their work with overseas markets.

The program recently was presented with a commendation from Rep. Young Kim, who represents California's 40th congressional district.

Students in foreign countries learn about SCC from their high school counselors, recruiters, educational agencies or friends and family.

They're attracted to SCC by the student-centered approach, personalized attention and its safe and welcoming environment, Torres said. They also appreciate the small class sizes where they won't get lost. "Most of our international students come from private high schools where they are accustomed to class-

rooms with fewer students," she said.

Business administration is a popular program among international students as are the many STEM programs, she points out.

The college accepts international students three times a year. "We have three intakes—we accept students in fall, spring and summer," she said, explaining that this is to accommodate the high school calendars in foreign countries. "Our work at the international office never stops because we are recruiting, we are accepting applications, reviewing applications and issuing those admissions letters all year round."

One recent SCC graduate, Muhammad Shahmir Shamim, 21, who was born in Pakistan and grew up in Saudi Arabia, had already enrolled in another U.S. college when he visited SCC at the invitation of a friend. He was immedi-

ately impressed with the friendliness of everyone he met on campus. He was even invited to sit in on a class he was interested in.

"Although they were full, they included me in the class," he said. "And it was really, really welcoming." He filled out all the paperwork as soon as he could and began attending SCC.

He encouraged his younger brother, Muhammad Shahwar Shamim, to also come to SCC. It wasn't hard to convince him.

"First, I'm already there, so I knew the atmosphere," said Shamim of his brother's decision to join him. "Second, because of how helpful everyone is at Santiago Canyon College — not just international students, but everyone."

Muhammad Shahmir studied computer science and will be transferring to

INTERNATIONAL » PAGE 5



PHOTO COURTESY OF CARI CANNON

SCC psychology professor Cari Cannon, right, a lifelong dog lover, has created a new animal behavior program.

**INNOVATION**

## Animal training program opens the door to careers

### New classes based in psychology

By Jenelyn Russo  
contributing writer

For those who have a passion for the furry friends in our community, Santiago Canyon College is offering a new Companion Animal Training program beginning this fall that will serve as a pathway to earning an associate's degree in the field.

The genesis behind the idea came from SCC professor of psychology Cari Cannon. A lifelong dog lover, Cannon had a dog about a decade ago that was a challenge to train, and her background in experimental psychology and animal learning prompted her to take a deeper dive into applied animal behavior to help her pet.

Now a doctoral-level animal behaviorist who has been privately consulting

pet owners for years, Cannon decided to bring her knowledge in this area to the SCC classroom and offer an affordable way for students to learn effective techniques in animal behavior and training.

"There's just so many myths about dogs and people misunderstanding dogs and misreading them," Cannon said. "I thought, I'm in the perfect position to create a cost-effective way for people to learn the scientifically valid and ethical approach to working with animals."

The major coursework for SCC's associate degree in companion animal training is based in psychology, but students can customize the degree path to suit their career goals. For those looking to pursue a veterinary medicine path, biology electives can be paired with the de-

TRAINING » PAGE 3



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OPERATIONS

# From student to officer: Committed to campus safety

RSCCD Communications



PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior District Safety Officer Elizabeth Motley brings 30 years of experience to her role.

With a career spanning more than 30 years, Senior District Safety Officer Elizabeth Motley remains crazy in love with her connection to Santa Ana College and the Rancho Santiago Community College District. Motley's journey from a student to a safety officer demonstrates her deep-rooted connection to the college, where she not only obtained her education but also got her start in a career in law enforcement.

Motley started with the SAC family the summer before graduating from high school through the Career Beginnings program. Shortly after graduating, she returned to SAC, where she began as a student worker for the campus safety department. Within a year, she was promoted to general office clerk, handling scheduling, payroll, and other clerical work. Aside from a brief period in the 1990s when she was laid off following the Orange County bankruptcy, Motley has worked as a full-time officer for over 30 years.

Chief David Waters noted that Motley's 30 years with the District have been invaluable.

"She knows everyone, and they know her. This type of relationship is at the core of our Community Policing efforts, and Liz serves as a role model for newer officers," he said.

On a typical day, Motley patrols the campus, unlocking doors for professors or aiding students with car troubles.

"It's still part of law enforcement, but it's part of the college community," said Motley. "I help our students, our staff; our visitors get where they need to go, help our students locate their classrooms on the first day of school, or jumpstart their cars if they have a dead battery, or even unlock their vehicles when they leave their keys in the car. I love making anything easier for them to progress here and get their degrees."

Waters agreed: "Liz goes to extraordinary efforts to provide quality service to the students. I recall a time when a student reported that someone had taken their water bottle. The reusable bottle

was expensive and a gift from the student's mother. Liz took the time to locate the incident on camera and found that another person had taken the bottle into a restroom, but the person walked out empty-handed. Liz then went to the restroom and sorted through the trash to find the stolen bottle."

While there have been many great memories during her past 30 years serving the Rancho Santiago Community College District, there have also been challenges.

Eight years ago, she faced a battle

with breast cancer; however, after nearly a year of successful treatments, she was eager to return to work and has been cancer-free since. Motley also said that she was the first safety officer in Santa Ana College history to become a mother.

"I became a mom during my tenure here, and they were able to accommodate me," said Motley. While pregnant, she was able to work in the office and took classes to become a dispatcher and continues to fill in when other dispatchers are unavailable.

While retirement may still be a few

years away, Motley's fondness for serving the students and faculty at Santa Ana College and the Rancho Santiago Community College remains unwavering.

Reflecting on the possibility of retiring one day, she said, "I'm looking forward to coming back and working as a reserve officer just because I love it here and want to be part of this community". She continues, "They're probably going to think I'm crazy, but I love it and feel like with my knowledge and expertise, I can really contribute to the goals they have in mind here at the campus."



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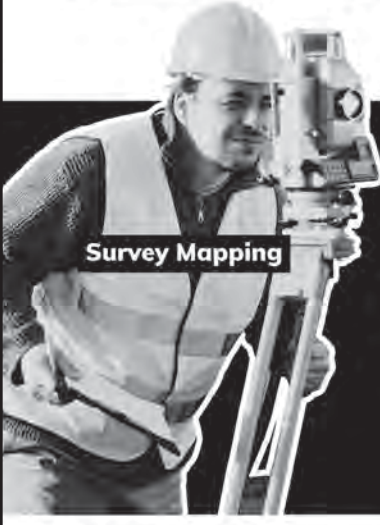
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DEVELOPMENT

# Enrollment soars thanks to innovative programming

## College rosters rising steadily past 3 years

By Lou Ponsi  
contributing writer

The Rancho Santiago Community College District has seen an increase in enrollment in its two colleges – Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College – in each of the past three years, and district officials credit the increase to its strategy of targeting specific demographic segments and having initiatives in place to ensure the growth continues to trend upward.

These approaches have become necessary with the number of students graduating from high schools in Orange County slipping downward.

“So, I think for us, the fact that we pivoted quickly to assess the data and look at whom we would be serving five years out has really benefited us,” said Enrique Perez, vice chancellor of RSCCD. “You can see it just in the dramatic increases in enrollment.”

In a recent PowerPoint presentation in front of the RSCCD board of trustees, Perez showed that the number of credit and noncredit students enrolled at Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College for the 2023-24 school year was 106,059, up from 94,187 the previous year.

Enrollment was at 79,932 in 2012-22 and 74,854 in 2020-21, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

Of the total number of students in the district in 2020-21, 1,330 earned an associate degree, certificate of achievement or certificate of proficiency; 854 students accomplished one of those milestones in 2021-22 and 1,319 did it in 2022-23.

Of the total number of students in the district, nearly 6,500 went on to a four-year university in 2021-22 and 2022-23 combined.

The driving forces behind the increase began with the district’s response to the pandemic, Perez said.

When schools and colleges everywhere shut down in March 2020, RSCCD was the last district to shut down classroom instruction and the first to bring students back to the classroom when the virus began easing up, the vice chancellor said.

“When you look at the 72 districts across the state as we do, it is really unprecedented,” Perez said. “And that had a lot to do with the leadership of our board to have the stomach to do that. We waited until the last minute because we know who we serve and those students who need to be on campus.”

The pandemic led to a dramatic spike in online classes, and the number of students who take online courses remains high to this day.

At about the same time the virus’ stranglehold began to ease up, the district had already decided to focus its enrollment efforts on two areas: dual enrollment and workforce training, which includes apprenticeships.

Through a dual enrollment partnership between the college district and Orange Unified School District, OUSD students can earn transferable college credits by taking college-level classes while still in high school.

While the dual enrollment program is open to all students, including those in private schools and outside the Orange Unified district, RSCCD targets economically disadvantaged students, said Jason Parks, vice president of Academic Affairs for Santiago Canyon College.

“We’re chasing students where college probably wasn’t spoken about in their homes,” Parks said. “And they may not know the opportunities. They may not have that confidence to try college. And so, I think we’re opening up that opportunity. I don’t know if there’s anyone out there that we’re not partnering with on dual enrollment.”

Another reason for the growth is the number of apprenticeships being offered by the district.

Santiago Canyon College ranks No. 2 among California’s 116 community colleges in the number of apprenticeships offered.



Santa Ana College students chat during a lecture. RSCCD enrollment has increased more than 40% since the 2020-2021 school year. PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER



Santiago Canyon College students study and work together between classes. PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

SCC currently offers 10 apprenticeships that serve about 5,400 students in fields that include carpentry, mechanics, surveying, cosmetology and construction.

Because of the success of its apprenticeship offerings, RSCCD Chancellor Marvin Martinez was appointed by California Community Colleges Chancellor Sonya Christian to take the lead on the Apprenticeship Pathway Demonstration Project, which aims to create a road map

for colleges to expand apprenticeships and give college credits for classroom instruction and on-the-job training in the curriculum.

“If you’re an apprentice, you get two big things,” Martinez said. “One is you get to be an apprentice and complete the hours, and so forth. But the other thing is that we can convert all of the hours that you’re generating as an apprentice into college credits.”

SCC 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 wastewater industry.

The college is also forging a partnership 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.”

## Training

FROM PAGE 1

gree plan. Public speaking or business-focused classes can be added for those students with an interest in opening their own training facility.

“SCC’s new Companion Animal Training Program embodies our commitment to providing innovative and relevant education,” said SCC Dean, Division of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, Michelle Samura. “This program is an excellent example of how we’re preparing our graduates to meet industry demands and make a tangible impact in their chosen fields.”

Cannon will be teaching the four major core classes, one per semester. As the only pathway of its kind in the state, all four classes will be offered online to make the program accessible to as many California residents as possible.

Students will begin the pathway with a companion animal psychology class where they will learn about animal behavior, with an emphasis specifically on dogs. Cannon feels the class is structured



PHOTO COURTESY OF CARI CANNON  
Cari Cannon’s animal behavior program can be applied to career paths or to family pets.

for anyone interested in improving their relationship with their pet.

“Even if somebody only wanted to take that class, they would learn so much about dog behavior that it would be transformative in their relationship with their dog,” Cannon said.

The second core class focuses on ani-

mal learning, the subject of Cannon’s doctorate, where students will study how animals think and learn, along with the underlying principles behind how animal behavior can be changed by experience.

The applied version of the animal learning course is the behavior modification course, the third class in the CAT Program degree path, where students will learn the science behind positive reinforcement and discipline techniques. This class also pairs well for students who are interested in working with those with developmental disabilities or who are looking to pursue clinical psychology.

The fourth course focuses on dog training and is similar to a practicum, where students will apply actual skills training on dogs, either their own pets or dogs that belong to friends or family. The hands-on class will provide students the opportunity to teach dogs basic training skills.

When it comes to training dogs, Cannon feels that many of the more popular programs currently in use include outdated techniques that are punitive in approach. She is excited to be using her extensive background as an animal behaviorist to introduce a pure positive or

force-free approach to SCC students that shows the science behind the effectiveness of these techniques.

“The single best way to get a well-behaved companion is to prevent problems, and I dream of a world where this knowledge that I have about dog behavior and the best way to interact with dogs is common knowledge for everyone,” Cannon said. “I’m looking forward to bringing something new to people who’ve never had an opportunity to learn about this topic.”

The hope is that in establishing this program, SCC will be able to provide future offerings in veterinary science, including a possible focus on equine studies.

“The CAT Program addresses a critical gap in California’s community college offerings and in our local communities,” Samura said. “By launching this unique program, we are opening doors to exciting career opportunities for our students while addressing a growing demand in our region for skilled professionals in animal behavior. We are making vital education in companion animal training more accessible and affordable, and we are proud to be at the forefront of offering this specialized training.”

REVENUE

# Fiscal agility keeps district budgeting on track

## Conservative approach meets evolving needs

By Nicole Gregory  
contributing writer

The Rancho Santiago Community College District is one of the fastest growing among California's 73 community college districts; last year it served approximately over 106,000 students. To meet the needs of the growing number of students, the district's leaders manage the increases and decreases in the state budget by being fiscally conservative and agile.

This hasn't gone unnoticed. The district recently earned high ratings and praise for its fiscal stability from two prominent bond-rating companies, according to Iris Ingram, vice chancellor of business services for RSCCD.

The fiscal year begins in July, but California's governor releases his budget proposal in early January and then legislative committees and groups affected by the budget weigh in to advocate for adjustments.

The University of California and the Cal State University systems as well as the Community College League of California make the case for their needs. "They each lobby for what they like, what they don't like and what they want," Ingram said.

Negotiating goes on through May when the governor provides a "May revise," Ingram explained. But from January to May, she and Adam O'Connor, assistant vice chancellor of business services, continually gather information about what the revised budget will probably look like.

"We build a budget based on those assumptions, and we update those assumptions monthly for our own internal district budget process," Ingram said. Faculty, students, staff, unions and administrators from both Santiago Canyon College and Santa Anna College are involved in that district process to create their own placeholder budget.

How much money schools receive from the state depends in part upon the number of students they have enrolled. Still, each year the governor's budget can call for decreases in some areas. Ingram and O'Connor are always prepared for this.

"Our district is conservative in its budgeting," Ingram said. "We typically budget for a 2% deficit factor, meaning we don't rely on 100% of our earned funding being allocated. Due to the state budget concerns, we increased this deficit to 3.55% for 2024-25."

The district also keeps emergency funds in reserve, just as individuals or households do. "Our board of trustees recently increased the minimum board policy contingency reserve equal to two months of budgeted expenses in the combined general fund," Ingram said. "In 2023-24, this reserve increased from \$26.8 million to \$54.4 million. As of the 2024-25 tentative budget, it increased again to \$63.2 million."

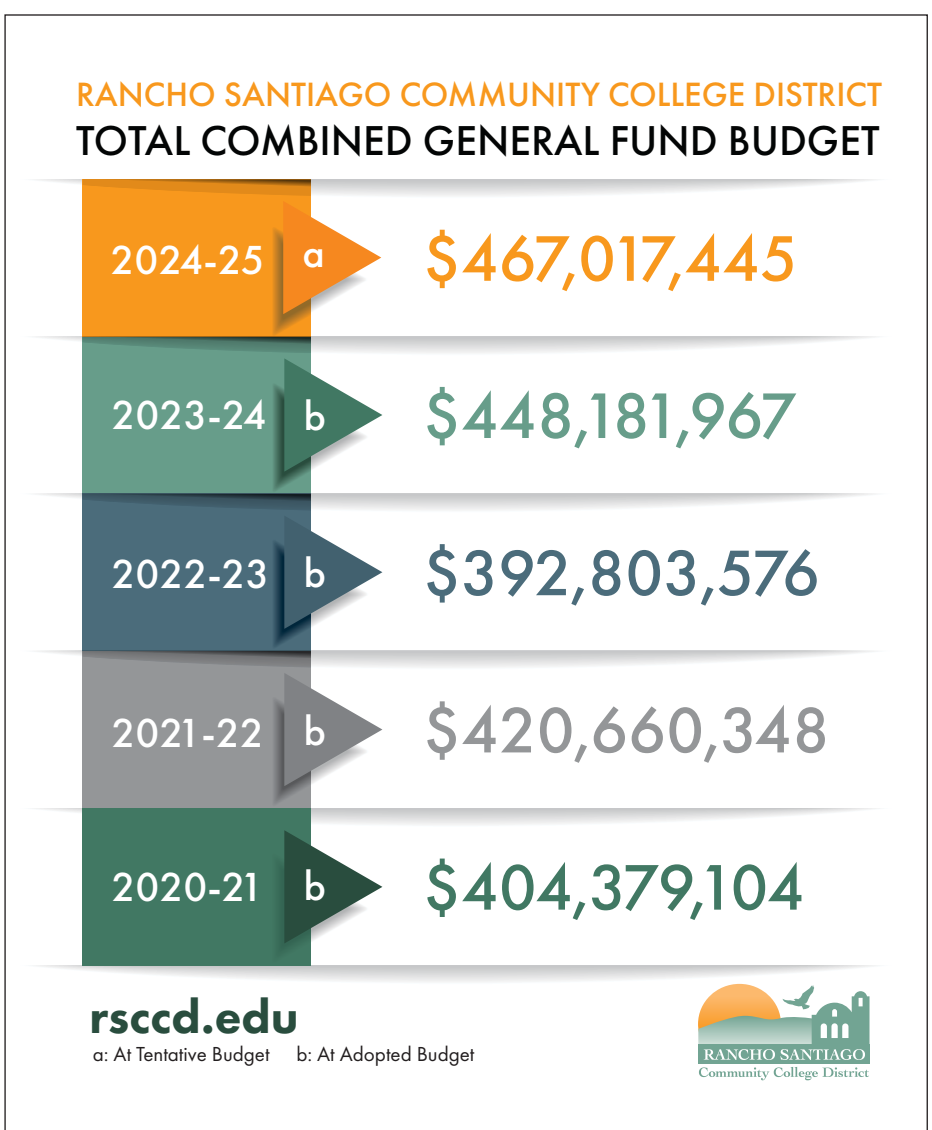
One decrease in this year's budget proposed by the governor is the cost of living adjustment, or COLA. Last year's budget allowed for an 8.22% COLA increase while this year the COLA increase is just 1.07%. But Ingram and her team



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS  
Iris Ingram, vice chancellor of Business Services at the Rancho Santiago Community College District



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS  
Adam O'Connor, assistant vice chancellor of Business Services



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

anticipated this decrease and planned accordingly. "The COLA going down was not a complete surprise," Ingram said. "We are constantly adjusting our budget assumptions."

The district continually updates five-

year projections based on several assumptions to plan for the future, according to Ingram. "We maintain healthy reserves and alternative forms of liquidity to minimize the impact of cuts or deferrals of expected revenue. And we

continually monitor costs," she said.

Liquidity means easily accessed funds such as retiree benefit funds and capital outlay funds, O'Connor said. While the district does not intend to borrow from these funds, it could for an emergency (and by law, the district would have to pay these funds back).

Scheduled maintenance of buildings, "to fix all those things when you own a building just like owning a house," said Ingram, is also a key part of the budget. "We have to keep money on hand to try to keep up," she said. "Sometimes the state gives us an allocation for scheduled maintenance and other times they don't. However, you still have to maintain your buildings — they're not necessarily always funded at the same level you count on. So what you do is, you have a plan."

O'Connor noted, "This year we got nothing in the current state budget for capital outlay maintenance purposes. But there've been other years where the state has been flush with budget, and they decide they can dump more money into that category, and we might get a very large allocation."

The district is not allowed to use its operating funds for the construction of new buildings; these must be funded separately — and that means going outside of the governor's budget to raise money. Last month the board of trustees voted to ask Orange County taxpayers to approve a bond of \$720 million for new buildings and infrastructure to help meet the needs of its fast-growing student population.

"We're projecting 10, 15 years into the future," Ingram said, "and how we're going to meet those needs of future students. That's why we're asking for approval of a bond."

The recent high ratings from the bond-rating companies may assure voters that this bond financing will be handled with the same responsibility the district has shown with all its finances, she said.

GROWTH

# SCC reports record numbers for summer 2024

RSCCD Communications

Santiago Canyon College is recording unprecedented enrollment for the 2024 summer intersession.

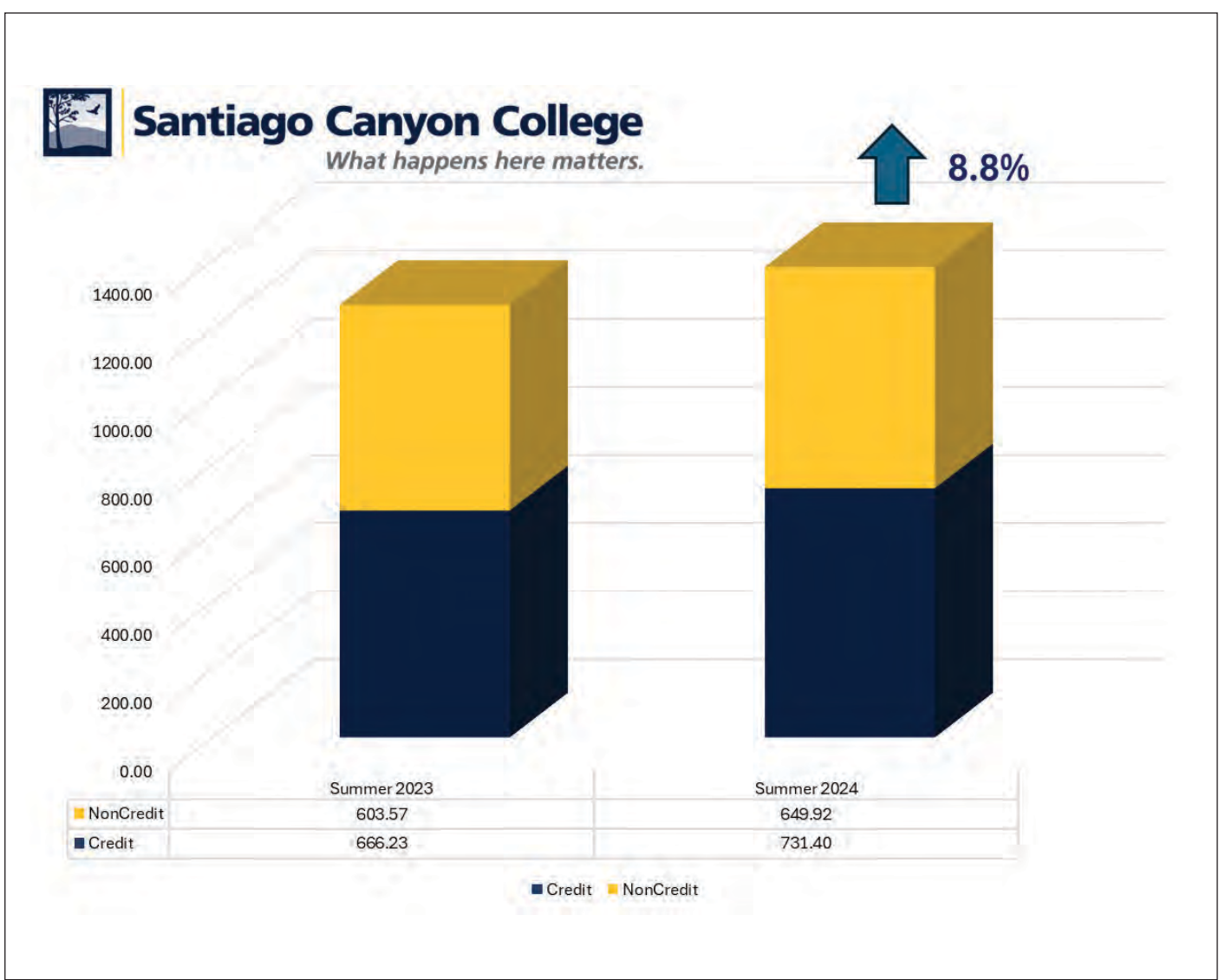
Full-time equivalent student enrollment at the college for the summer has increased by nearly 9% in credit and noncredit programs combined. The 1,381 FTES are the highest they have been over the past 10 years.

"SCC's summer 2024 enrollment appears to be the highest ever in the history of SCC since inception," said SCC President Jeannie G. Kim. "The summer intersession offers students a unique opportunity for intensive learning and exploration with focused curriculum taught by excellent faculty. We anticipate similar growth in the fall and spring semesters."

For 2024, the college was ranked eighth out of 116, as one of the best community colleges in California by EdSmart.org. SCC continues to be nationally ranked in the top 1% of U.S. community colleges by CollegeChoice.net and Niche.com.

Santiago Canyon College has also been selected as one of the top 10 Military Friendly Schools and Military Friendly Spouse Schools for the 2024-2025 academic year. The selection makes SCC one of only two California Community Colleges to receive this distinction.

In May, SCC's International Student Center received an Export Achievement Certificate from the U.S. Department of Commerce. The certificate recognized SCC for developing partnerships and business in the export markets of Brazil, Colombia and India, as well as the impact the college made on education service exports through its international student recruitment efforts.



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Summer enrollment figures at Santiago Canyon College show growth over last year.

## JUMPSTART

# Early college program makes higher education attainable

## RSCCD partners with Orange Unified schools

By **Lou Ponsi**  
contributing writer

A partnership between the Rancho Santiago Community College District and the Orange Unified School District provides students, particularly students from traditionally underserved backgrounds, the opportunity to earn transferable college credits while still in high school.

The RSCCD's Dual Enrollment program, also referred to as Early College, allows students to take community college classes taught by college instructors.

Dual Enrollment offers many benefits, said Jason Parks, vice president of Academic Affairs for Santiago Canyon College.

In a presentation to the RSCCD board of trustees recently, Parks informed the board that OUSD students in middle/high school who were enrolled in dual enrollment have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars by not going to directly to UCLA and millions of dollars by not going directly to USC.

Most importantly, Parks said, Dual Enrollment is about reaching those high school students who believe college is unattainable for a variety of reasons, especially their backgrounds.

"There's a lot of kids out there that don't know how to (get into) college, if you will," Parks said. "It's not something



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS  
Jason Parks, vice president of Academic Affairs for Santiago Canyon College

that their family talks about. Maybe their parents didn't go to college. Oftentimes they're immigrants. That's where my heart is. So often I've heard students use the phrase, 'college isn't for people like me,' and that's just sort of crushing to somebody who works at a college to hear those words."

In an op-ed penned by California Community College Chancellor Sonya Christian and George R. Boggs, president and CEO emeritus of the American Association of Community Colleges, the educators wrote that dual enrollment is

one strategy that can be used to address the challenges of a growing skills gap and inequity in the workforce.

The op-ed was published in April in "Diverse: Issues in Higher Education," a news site covering higher education.

"Establishing and expanding dual enrollment programs is a place to begin," Christian and Boggs wrote. "The California community colleges focus on equitable access by calling for all ninth graders to take at least a one-credit college course in which they explore potential careers and develop a preliminary college education plan that includes a minimum of 12 college credits during high school."

Dual enrollment is also a way to introduce students to college in "kind of a low stakes environment," Parks said.

Students who might otherwise have to work full-time right out of high school and not have the time to attend college are perfect candidates for dual enrollment.

"We're giving them that opportunity to say, 'hey, college is a thing I can do,'" Parks said.

Dual Enrollment also gives students the chance to build skills needed in the workforce, he said.

Students in the dual enrollment program are not required to take a certain number of college classes.

Some have earned college credits by taking a single class and others have taken as many as 10 college-credit courses, Parks said.

Some students from the 2024 graduating classes from Orange Unified earned 53 units, saving \$74,424, compared to

the published price of those courses at UCLA, Parks said.

While SCC offers a portfolio of classes specifically for dual enrollment students, those students have access to every class.

Students enrolled in the dual enrollment program can take the classes at their respective high schools, at the Santiago Canyon College campus, or online.

SCC staff members also have office hours at each high school in the district.

Equitable dual enrollment is a key component of "Vision 2030" a matrix for providing "focus, equity, and direction to California's 116 community colleges which serve two million students.

"Vision 2030 focuses on the students and future learners impacted by increasing income inequality and poverty," the Vision 2030 report states. "These include veterans, people with low incomes, K-12 dual-enrollment students, foster youth, and students who are justice-involved or justice-impacted."

Vision 2030 envisions a system of higher education more inclusive of all Californians, ensuring access points for every learner across race, ethnicity, region, class and gender, Christian wrote.

The initiative offers a pathway, with tailored support and exit points to transfer or complete a community college baccalaureate or obtain a job with family-sustaining wages," the chancellor said.

"I am excited that Vision 2030 reexamines what access means when we lead with equity," the chancellor wrote. "When students cannot find their way to college, it is our responsibility to bring college to them."

## International

FROM PAGE 1

UC Irvine. His younger brother worked hard so that he could graduate at the same time. He, too, studied computer science and is transferring to Cal State Fullerton.

The brothers credit their parents, both engineers and college professors in Saudi Arabia, for instilling in them the drive to get an education. Studying so far from home, they appreciate the support SCC provides.

"The international student program office takes pride in offering exceptional customer service in college experience to ensure a student's success," said Torres, admitting that her business background causes her to express the success in business terms. She has worked in international business and education for more than 20 years. "The program helps them integrate into the campus socially and academically so they can transfer to a four-year college. Our students are our priority," she said.

Looking back on their years at SCC, the Shamim brothers happily recalled the many social activities organized by

SCC's International Student Program, such as outings to baseball games and Universal Studios. During exams, students were taken to the beach to enjoy pizza and a bonfire to give them a break from the stress of studying.

International students bring a meaningful dimension to campus life, Torres said. "There is no doubt that hosting international students has many advantages for any U.S. education institution," she said. "It promotes global citizens, promotes intercultural understanding and enhances that diversity of perspective in class discussions. We can all benefit from that."

Whether in the classroom or outside, meeting students from other countries broadens the view of American students. "Just interacting with international students from different backgrounds enables all students to form new perspectives and perhaps see the world in a different way," Torres said. "Bringing people from around the world into campus is a great way to learn about the experiences of others and allow us to be more understanding and respectful of those differences. So, international students promote cultural awareness and enhance that diversity of perspective in class discussions."



PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER  
Jetza Torres received an Export Achievement Certificate from the Deputy Undersecretary for International Trade Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce in recognition of SCC's International Students Program.



PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

The International Students program broadens the perspectives of the visiting students as well as the students on campus who get to know them.

## CUTTING EDGE

## Spearheading a statewide promotion of apprenticeship programs

## Elizabeth Arteaga leading the way

By Larry Urish  
contributing writer

The powers that be at Santiago Canyon College realize that, while the college experience furnishes a host of opportunities, the professional and financial success of their students remains paramount. As such, SCC has been leading the way in apprenticeship programs, in which students are paid while learning in-demand jobs through a blend of classroom instruction and on-the-job training.

As a testament to SCC's leadership in this area, Elizabeth Arteaga, the college's dean of Apprenticeship Programs, was named to lead an effort to expand apprenticeship programs throughout California. The Apprenticeship Pathways Demonstration Project is a key element of California Community Colleges Chancellor Sonya Christian's Vision 2030 plan. Christian encouraged Rancho Santiago Community College District Chancellor Marvin Martinez to promote apprenticeship programs statewide; SCC's Arteaga is directing the overall operation of the project, which aligns with California Gov. Gavin Newsom's goal to serve 500,000 apprentices by 2029.

"Apprenticeship students earn while they learn," Arteaga said. "They learn occupational skills and get paid, hands-on training, and they practice all aspects of their trade. We want to make sure that every apprenticeship student can earn a living wage."

Santiago Canyon College, currently home to about 5,400 apprenticeship students, attracts students from throughout Orange County, the Inland Empire, San Diego and as far away as Kern County. "They can attend other community colleges, but they like ours because we provide them with a lot of extra services," Arteaga said. "For example, we hired a full-time apprenticeship counselor, to help students as they work through the program."

This support is comprehensive. "When someone enters an apprenticeship program, they become our student," Arteaga said, noting that they have access to counseling, health care, career planning, the computer lab and library, tutors and other benefits. "Everything is at no cost to the student. There's no



Elizabeth Arteaga, dean of Apprenticeship Programs at Santiago Canyon College

tuition because apprenticeship students are exempt from paying any dues." Programs last between 18 months and five years, depending on the chosen profession. Upon finishing an apprenticeship, the student receives a credit certificate of completion or a college degree - and a world of practical experience.

While the emphasis has been on "traditional" apprenticeship programs - focusing on union trades for people who primarily work with their hands and requiring that students meet union eligibility - one key aspect of the Ap-

prenticeship Pathways Demonstration Project, which involves 25 of the 116 California Community Colleges schools and is funded by the CCC State Chancellor's Office, stresses "nontraditional" apprenticeship trades. This includes IT, health care, cybersecurity, early childhood education and financial services, among many other professions.

Arteaga's role in spearheading the project is multifaceted. "I've been working with the community colleges to assist them, helping them establish apprenticeship programs in new and innova-

tive careers," she said. "An apprenticeship program isn't created overnight. It involves working with the employer, the Division of Apprenticeship Standards and the U.S. Department of Labor."

Arteaga brings a wealth of experience into her dual roles as SCC's dean of Apprenticeship Programs and leader of the statewide project. Prior to her current position, she served as dean of SCC's Business and Career Education Division, a position she held from May 2019 to January of this year. "I supervised all aspects of the planning, funding, staffing, delivery and evaluation of all instructional programs and services in the service area," Arteaga said, "and I provided direction and support to faculty in the development, revision and evaluation of curriculum and materials."

She previously served as associate dean of Business and Career Education; small business deputy sector navigator for the California Community Colleges Economic and Workforce Development Program; and associate director of the Orange County Small Business Development Center. On top of all that, she currently serves as regional vice president of the California Community College Association for Occupational Education. Given her wide-ranging background, Arteaga is well-prepared to lead the Apprenticeship Pathways Demonstration Project, working closely with RSCCD Chancellor Martinez and SCC's president, Jeannie Kim.

Along with its emphasis on growing nontraditional apprenticeship programs, "This initiative seeks to provide community college credit for apprenticeship classroom instruction and for prior learning experiences through credit for on-the-job training," Arteaga said. Another Project goal, she added, is to encourage apprenticeship students to stay on their educational journey in the college system, including continued technical education and associate degrees as well as California Community College baccalaureate degrees in such fields as physical therapy assistant, dental hygienist, automotive tech management and biomanufacturing.

Arteaga stressed that the statewide push to bolster apprenticeship programs can have a positive impact far beyond the individual student. "We hope this effort will help break the cycle of poverty and provide access to true economic mobility," she said. "And we want to expand diversity, equity and inclusion, to ensure that students of any background have access to any degree pathway that aligns with their chosen field."

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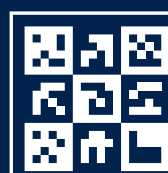
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