

# COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOCUS

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PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

From left, Asiya Syed, Emily Metcalf and Genevie Rodriguez walk to class Aug. 19, the first day of the fall semester at Santiago Canyon College. More photos, Pages 4 and 5.

## 25TH ANNIVERSARY

# LEARNING, ENROLLMENT KEEP GROWING AT SANTIAGO CANYON COLLEGE

## Cutting-edge programs, opportunities offered

By Nicole Gregory  
contributing writer

Santiago Canyon College has a lot to celebrate as it approaches the 25th anniversary of its official accreditation. Enrollment continues to climb, and this year the college ranked eighth among California's 116 community colleges based on academic quality, affordability and student retention rates, among other factors, by the independent college ranking research organization EDsmart.org.

The school offers associate degrees, certificates and transfer programs in business and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), health sciences, humanities and other areas. Over the last 25 years, the campus has

expanded, recently adding a new Health Sciences building and the Johnson Student Center.

SCC was a well-kept secret for far too long, said President Jeannie G. Kim. When she arrived in January 2023, her goal was to change that.

"My first order of business was to make sure that people really knew what SCC was — the excellence of our faculty, the top-notch, award-winning teaching that we were doing, the fantastic successes of our students as they went off to transfer institutions such as UCLA and Stanford and to Ivy Leagues, as well as to our local institutions such as Cal State Fullerton and UC Irvine. It was really to make sure that people knew that we were here and that we had been doing excellent work for all these years."

Those efforts paid off. "Our credit

program enrollment is up by 12.2% in comparison to last year," said Kim, who highlighted the college's accomplishments during the annual Convocation on Aug. 15.

SCC's noncredit program enrollment is up 21.2% for the year, she said. This program "is for all California residents who want to go into workforce development arenas or up their skill sets," she said. "It's 100% free to them as California residents."

In addition, SCC has been identified as a military-friendly school. "We're proud of the fact that we are a destination for folks coming out of the military," Kim said.

As the college has become more widely known, students come from outside of Orange County, outside the state and even outside the country. "We are a des-

ination for all students who just want to be able to get a good education, whether it's through a typical credit program that leads to transfer or an associate degree, or just to be able to up their skill sets on the workforce development side," Kim said.

Although marketing may have contributed to SCC's enrollment growth, Kim notes another important factor.

"We already had a really good product," she said. "We already had great academic programs. We have the second-largest apprenticeship program in the state, with over 5,700 apprentices and 55 degree programs and certificates. We have the only code enforcement program in California, and water apprenticeships, child development apprenticeships. We are doing the training and development

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PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

RSCCD Chancellor Marvin Martinez promotes expanding opportunities for students.

## VISION 2030

# RSCCD chancellor: 'We have a space for you here'

## Strategic plan ensures equitable access

By Lou Ponsi  
contributing writer

The Rancho Santiago Community College District continues to implement initiatives designed to make college education and job training available to a broader segment of the community.

These innovative programs are all part of Vision 2030, the California Community Colleges' strategic plan, designed to ensure equity in success, access and support to anyone seeking an education, particularly those who wouldn't have thought a college was an option.

By implementing the directives within Vision 2030, the district has increased the number of apprenticeships offered by its two colleges, grown its dual enrollment program for high school students

and added a new bachelor's degree, all resulting in an overall spike in enrollment.

For the 2023-24 school year, RSCCD had a total enrollment of 106,05 between its two colleges, up from 94,187 in 2022-23 and 79,932 in 2021-22.

"The message is that we have a space for you here," Chancellor Marvin Martinez said. "We have a spot for you in the classroom, and we are proving it every year by the access we're providing."

Santiago Canyon College has a total of 5,600 students enrolled in one of the college's 10 apprenticeship programs, among the most of the state's 116 community colleges.

Santa Ana College, the other of the district's two colleges, has more than 100 apprentices, up from zero a year

VISION » PAGE 5



## Register for the Santiago Canyon College Flag Football League!

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COMMUNITY

# Leveraging artificial intelligence to help small businesses

## Development Center partners with RSCCD

By Larry Urish  
contributing writer

To some people, the mere mention of artificial intelligence brings to mind a dystopian image: armies of digitally controlled bots lording over their “meat puppets,” who slave away at the whim of their mechanical overlords.

Roger Lloyd is not one of these people. Keenly aware of the advantages of using AI, Lloyd helps businesses get started and thrive through his work at the Orange County / Inland Empire Small Business Development Center. One of 62 such networks (composed of more than 1,000 separate locations) throughout the country, the organization furnishes free consulting, training and resources, thanks to the efforts of some 100 local business owners and industry experts. Lloyd serves as director of the Small Business Development Center’s Marketing Center, hosted and supported by the Rancho Santiago Community College District.

Rather than fear artificial intelligence, the key to working with AI, Lloyd stressed, is to understand how to leverage it as a stunningly powerful productivity tool. “The human brain is the most powerful thing in the world,” said Lloyd, who ran an AI consulting firm from 2015 to 2019. “Creative thought will never be replaced. But about 80% of our time working is transactional (busy work), and only 20% is creative. AI allows us to flip that, to 80% creative, 20% transactional.”

The Marketing Center focuses on AI growth strategy and digital marketing to support small businesses through one-on-one consulting and group training. “Some of the areas we focus on include digital-presence optimization, brand development, email marketing, maximizing social media presence, building strategic marketing plans and using AI with a focus on marketing and content marketing,” Lloyd said.

“By hiring business owners who are expert consultants, we bring a foundation of growth in AI and marketing to our business community. ... Thanks to funding from the Small Business Administration, the California Office of the Small Business Advocate and other local organizations, this service is at no cost to business owners.”

Rancho Santiago Community College District plays a key role in this service. “Their mission is to educate the future workforce and to stimulate local economic development,” Lloyd said. “By hosting the Marketing Center, they support this mission.”

In addition, “The district is behind various community efforts to promote the Marketing Center as a resource for small business owners,” said Mike Daniels, Orange County / Inland Empire Small Business Development Center’s network director.

The potential of what AI can do for small businesses boggles the mind. For example, applying for a government contract, which includes going through a painstaking request-for-proposal process, could take six to eight hours. “In our testing with AI, we can do that in about 64 seconds,” Lloyd said. Creating a monthly social media calendar, which includes postings across the key channels (Instagram, LinkedIn and so forth) took 10 to 20 hours just three years ago. Using artificial intelligence, Lloyd said, it can be done in less than 30 minutes.

“We recently worked with an IT services provider, using AI to create automated emails that were personalized, and in only three months, they increased their sales by 10%,” Lloyd said. “And for a consulting company, we used (automated) language translation. By doing this, we opened up a brand-new market for them. In only a month, they’ve already doubled their lead opportunities.”

The services provided by Lloyd’s Marketing Center team are primarily hands-on. “We bring in experts from across the country (via Zoom) to provide training in AI applications and digital marketing,” Lloyd said. “One of the unique offerings we provide is a four-week AI certificate program, composed of four group sessions and four one-hour one-on-one



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Roger Lloyd, director of the Small Business Development Center’s Marketing Center hosted by the Rancho Santiago Community College District


meetings. This program begins with the foundational elements of effectively using AI, then includes practical applications: for example, creating social media calendars, videos and marketing plans based on a businesses’ analytics. So far, we’ve had over 100 business owners complete this AI certificate program.”

And these services extend beyond group teaching and one-on-one consulting. Last July, the group partnered with the Orange County Regional Consortium to host “Building an AI-Ready Community.”

“We brought together 50 people representing four different groups: workforce development, education, city government and small business owners,” Lloyd said. “The event was aimed to help cre-

ate a workforce coming out of our colleges that’s ready to support small business owners.”

The partnership with the Rancho Santiago Community College District is critical and appreciated. “Through the RSCCD’s comprehensive educational programs and the OC/IE SBDC’s expert business guidance, the partnership is committed to ensuring that both emerging and established businesses have the support they need to thrive,” Lloyd said. “This alliance is a testament to our shared ambition for innovation and growth, reinforcing the region’s economic stability. The District is leading in this area. ... And they’re very supportive of everything I’m doing at the Small Business Development Center.”



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\* ranked by EdSmart.org †DataWarehouse 2023

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**Managing Editor:** Jennifer Karmarkar  
**Project Manager:** Caitlin Adams  
**Creative Director:** Tom Halligan  
**Senior Graphic Designer:** Marissa Chamberlain  
**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](mailto:cawong@scng.com) or 714-796-2202

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## RETIRING

# Jose Vargas: A career built on inspiring learners

## Continuing Ed VP has worn many hats

By **Jenelyn Russo**  
contributing writer

After 24 years of leadership, Santiago Canyon College Vice President of Continuing Education Jose Vargas is set to retire at the end of this month. Vargas served in a number of crucial roles for the college, including stepping in as interim president during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as his current role in which he has overseen the exponential growth of SCC's Division of Continuing Education.

Born in Mexico, Vargas migrated with his family to the U.S. when he was 6 years old. The oldest of six children, he grew up in the Lincoln Heights area of Los Angeles, and when he graduated from high school, he intended on entering the workforce with no plans of continuing with his education.

While pursuing a short-term technical trade program, Vargas reconsidered his chosen path and decided to enroll in East Los Angeles College.

"Somewhere in that period, I figured this can't be it for me," Vargas said. "I needed to do more."

Vargas put his studies at ELAC on pause when he joined the U.S. Army, and while finishing his commitment through inactive duty, he returned to ELAC to complete his associate degree in general education as a first-generation graduate. His love for math combined with his technical background in electronics led him to the adult education arm of Los Angeles Unified School District as a vocational math instructor. His new role as an educator inspired him to pursue administration, and he shifted his focus to becoming a principal.

"I charted out exactly everything I had to do to become a principal, and I started going after it," Vargas said.

After earning a bachelor of science degree in business administration, with an emphasis in computer information systems, and a master of arts degree in educational administration from Cal State Dominguez Hills, Vargas served as a principal in Los Angeles Unified Adult Education until joining SCC as the dean of Instruction and Student Services.

Within a year, Vargas was named vice president of Continuing Education, and he helped to guide the department through significant growth. He will leave his position having achieved record-breaking numbers for the college in this area, but it wasn't without its challenges.



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Jose Vargas, Santiago Canyon College vice president of Continuing Education

After several years of increasing enrollment, the U.S. faced a recession in 2008, resulting in severe budget cuts in education. As Vargas and his team worked to rebuild the school's continuing education enrollment numbers, the department was hit with another setback.

In 2012, the state-of-the-art building that SCC Continuing Education called its home since 2005 was deemed unsafe, forcing the department to vacate the space. Classes were moved to various locations, including SCC's main campus in Orange, a model that is still in place to this day.

"We were somewhat in survival mode ... and I did my part to find places in the city where we could move into and continue our education," Vargas said. "Shutting down the program was not an option."

Despite not having a centralized campus building, the growth of SCC Continuing Education remained strong until another curveball arrived – a worldwide pandemic. During that same period, Vargas stepped in as SCC's in-

terim president and helped guide the college through a new way of delivering education.

"COVID forced us to experiment and transition to an online education format," Vargas said. "The beauty of distance education is that now it allows us to reach students that are outside of our service area. So if you're in California, we can service you."

After serving as interim president for 14 months, Vargas was named interim vice president of Academic Affairs and interim vice president of Student Services before moving back to his current position. His accomplishments in his roles include advancing state legislation to provide adult education course funding that is equal to standard credit courses.

"It says that all Californians are equal, all Californians are valued and all Californians have a right to pursue education, regardless of where they begin," Vargas said.

The 2023-2024 academic year saw SCC's highest Continuing Education enrollment ever, exceeding 3,000 full-

time equivalent students, which translated into approximately 13,000 students served. Ranked fifth in the state in terms of size for adult education at community colleges, the numbers reflect how SCC is filling a need for Californians, both local and statewide.

"Without the service that we provide, there would be millions of Californians who would be greatly underserved and would not have the ability or opportunity to benefit from this great country and this great state," Vargas said.

Once he officially retires on Aug. 28, Vargas and his wife, Maribel, will spend time with their family and grandchildren, travel and explore what his next steps might be. As he reflects on his time at SCC, it was serving the adult student community that has been the most impactful.

"The most important part for me is serving the adult students that are in need of the services that adult education offers," Vargas said. "I hope that whatever work I've done, that there've been many who have been able to benefit from it."

## ADMINISTRATION

## New RSCCD vice chancellor of human resources named

RSCCD Communications

The Rancho Santiago Community College District has announced the appointment of Kristin D. Olson as the new vice chancellor of human resources. Bringing her extensive experience and expertise to oversee all facets of the district's human resources department, Olson assumed her new role on July 29.

In her new position, she will manage labor negotiations, employee recruitment, selection and discipline, fringe benefit administration, and risk management. She also will oversee the district's Equal Employment Opportunity, Title IX, and ADA/504 activities, and provide strategic leadership for districtwide professional development programs.

"I am excited for this huge challenge and am grateful that the committee saw me as a good fit," said Olson. "I look forward to taking my experiences, background, and education to support district innovation while improving skills and training programs for our employees."

Prior to her appointment at RSCCD, Olson served as the associate vice president of human resources at Long Beach Community College District. She has also held leadership roles with the Santa Clara County Office of Education, Lynwood Unified School District, and Bassett Unified School District.

Chancellor Marvin Martinez said, "We are excited to have Kristin join our team. She brings a wealth of experience to this crucial role and is driven to see each employee develop to be the best."



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Kristin Olson is the new vice chancellor of Human Resources for the Rancho Santiago Community College District.

## Anniversary

FROM PAGE 1

of the workers who are actually building the infrastructure of California and beyond. Those kinds of jobs are critical in our community right now."

Another point of success is the students themselves, as they continue their journey after leaving SCC. "Our students do really well," Kim said. "We have such a large number of students who transfer to UCLA and to USC, and to Stanford and to Harvard."

Support for students at SCC is key, evident in a unique transfer program called a reverse transfer from Cal State Fullerton.

"We're in a deep partnership with Cal State Fullerton where students who may not have done well at Cal State Fullerton or were academically disqualified after doing their freshman year there can be sent from Cal State Fullerton to SCC," Kim said. "They are being sent to us so that they can experience success, get a year under their belt with a higher GPA, with or without the same major that they had originally. They then have a guaranteed transfer right back

into Cal State Fullerton. We don't leave anybody behind in their academic progress."

For these students and many others, one major benefit is SCC's small class sizes. "We definitely deliver that small, private-college feel," Kim said. "It's a very calm and nestled environment, so it feels like a private college."

The future looks bright for SCC, with a new partnership with the city of Orange and Orange Unified School District to develop a Middle College High School. The goal is to prepare high school students for medical occupations in the many Southern California hospitals. A bond measure on the November ballot, if passed, will help fund the project as well as a Veterans and Student Life Center on campus.

Official celebrations for SCC's 25th anniversary will begin this fall and continue through 2025 with a gala, concerts and other events for the college and surrounding community.



PHOTO COURTESY RSCCD COMMUNICATIONS

Jeannie Kim, president of Santiago Canyon College

BACK ON CAMPUS!

# FALL SEMESTER

More than 8,000 students arrived on campus or logged into virtual classrooms during the week of Aug. 19, heralding the beginning of the 2024 fall semester and the college's 25th year. We caught up with some of the students on the first day of classes.

## SANTIAGO CANYON COLLEGE BY THE NUMBERS\*

(Fall 2024)

Number of students enrolled

**8,028**

Enrollment by gender

**51%** Female   **48%** Male   **1%** Undisclosed/nonbinary

Enrollment by age group

Under 18	18 to 25	26 to 35	Over 36
<b>19%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>

Enrollment by ethnicity (top 5)

Mexican/Chicano	White	Hispanic, Other
<b>39.24%</b>	<b>30.62%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>
African American	Vietnamese	
<b>3.43%</b>	<b>3.14%</b>	

Source: \*Data as of 8/20/24. Based on students enrolled in college credit courses, excluding students enrolled in apprenticeship courses.



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7



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9



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1 - Nina Griffin, left, and Caitlyn Moffitt check out the student organizations welcoming students Aug. 19, the first day of the fall semester at Santiago Canyon College in Orange.

2 - Fernanda Noriega smiles at friends as she walks to class.

3 - Catalina Maldonado, right, chats with a colleague.

4 - Fredy Hernandez, center, walks to class on the first day of the new school year.

5 - ASG vice president Daniel Barragan, left, and Ashley Gonzales speak with a new student.

6 - A new student begins her first day of the fall semester at Santiago Canyon College.

7 - DJ B-Rokk of Cali 93.9 welcomes students on their first day of classes.

8 - ASG vice president Daniel Barragan, left, and Ashley Gonzales speak with a new student.

9 - Riley Vigil passes through the arch welcoming new students to campus.

BACK ON CAMPUS!

# FALL SEMESTER



1



2



5



3



4



6

1 - Ava Espinoza poses for her new ID photo.

2 - Veronica Rocha, right, and DJ B-Rokk of Cali 93.9 welcome students to campus.

3 - Yandel Pineda, left, and Julia Damaso walk to class on the first day of the fall semester.

4 - Emmanuel Azpeitia, left, and Ashley Gonzales chat before their first class.

5 - Rick Bitney, right, of SCC's Veterans' Resource Center talks with a new student on the first day of the fall classes.

6 - Ali Shehab, left, and Amir Larigani walk to class on the first day of the fall semester.

RATING

## RSCCD tops state rankings for adult/continuing education

RSCCD Communications

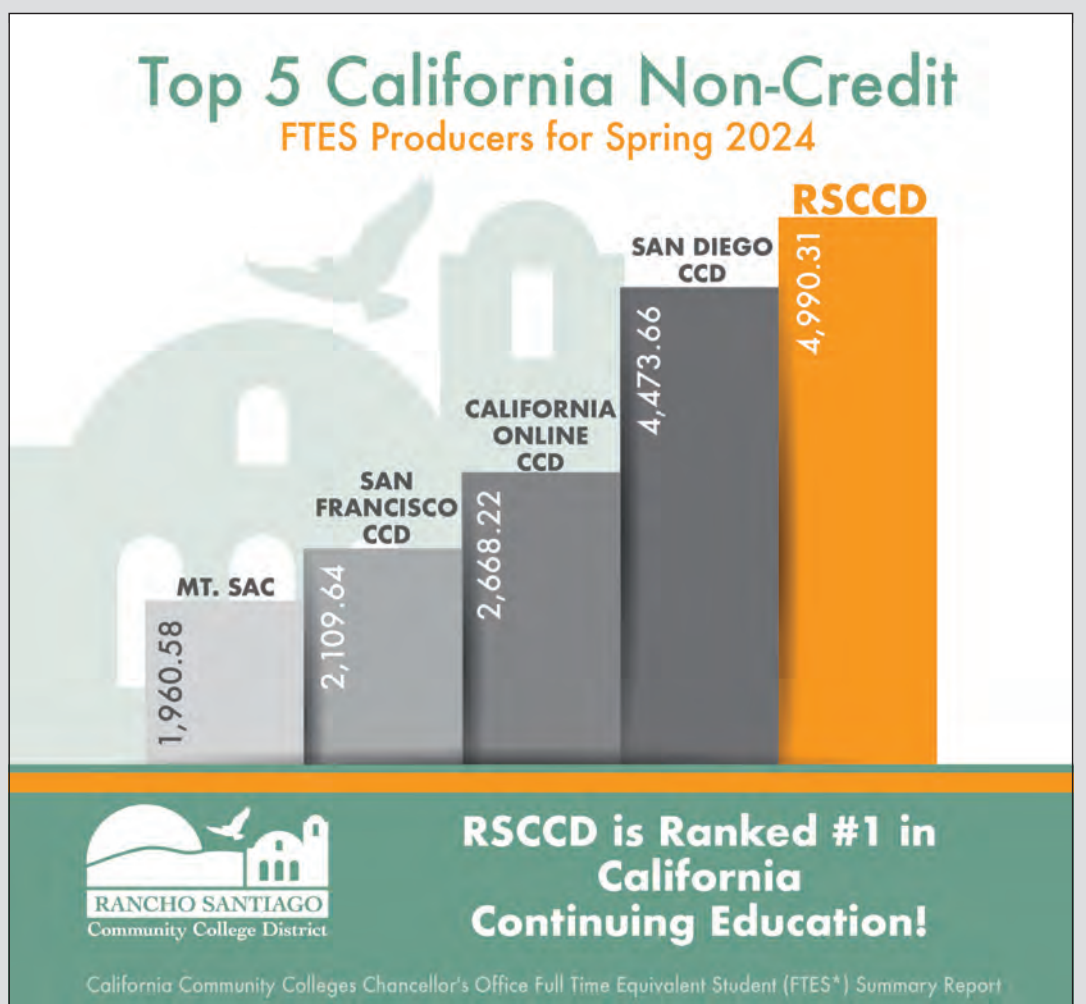
Meeting the evolving needs of nontraditional students in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Rancho Santiago Community College District, which encompasses Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College, has emerged as California's top destination for Adult/Continuing Education.

According to a Data Mart Full-Time Equivalent Student Summary Report from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, RSCCD recorded nearly 5,000 full-time equivalent students (4,998.31) for spring 2024. The FTES value is a calculation of the total hours of student instruction over the Spring 2024 semester, with one FTES equivalent to 525 hours of instruction.

Reflecting on the district's ranking, Chancellor Marvin Martinez highlighted RSCCD's commitment

to understanding and responding to the changing needs of the community. "While we still see record numbers of 18-year-olds coming through our doors, we are also welcoming a new wave of students who are 28 years old, 38 years old, and older, who have different needs and are looking to us to fulfill their educational goals and realize their dreams," Martinez said.

"I am most impressed that we now lead the state in Adult and Continuing Education generated by our two colleges. Many other top-ranking college districts have achieved their status with three, four or more colleges," he said.



## Vision

FROM PAGE 1

ago, along with a dean to oversee its apprenticeship program.

Due in large part to RSCCD's success in that area, California Community Colleges Chancellor Sonya Christian called on Martinez to lead the Apprenticeship Pathways Demonstration Project, an initiative intended to provide students in its apprenticeship programs with a direct path to credit degrees and credit certificates.

Since it was launched one year ago, the Apprenticeships Pathways Demonstration Project allocated \$200,000 to 25 colleges to increase the number of apprenticeships being offered.

"So, they generate enrollment, and so many of those students are on a path

to earn an occupational certificate or possibly be close to earning an associate of arts degree," the chancellor said. "And that was a big part of the program, and the reason it's so important for us is that we don't have to apply for grants to pay for the bills of running this program. Because these students are earning enrollment, we get appropriations. That's the money that we use to pay for the cost of the program. So, it works out well for us."

Students also have the option of earning a college degree or certificate along with every apprenticeship, Martinez said.

The district's Dual Enrollment program, also referred to as Early College, allows students, particularly those from traditionally underserved backgrounds, the opportunity to earn transferable college credits while still in high school.

RSCCD administers the program through a partnership between the Rancho Santiago Community College District

and the Orange Unified School District.

Santiago Canyon College had 2,400 students in the Dual Enrollment program in 2022-23, 600 more than in 2021-22.

"It is really an opportunity for students, while currently in high school, to get college credits, said Jason Parks, vice president of Academic Affairs for Rancho Santiago Canyon College, who oversees the Dual Enrollment program. "That's kind of the highbrow of it. But I think more importantly, it's about reaching those students who are in high school and college is not something that their family talks about. Maybe their parents didn't go to college. Oftentimes they're immigrants."

Santa Ana College is among 12 community colleges statewide to offer bachelor's degrees.

The college offers bachelor's degrees in occupational studies and paralegal studies and will soon offer a bachelor's

degree in automotive technology.

"For the most part, all these degrees cost less than \$11,000 a year," Martinez said.

To continue expansion, the Rancho Santiago Community College District board of trustees in June authorized a \$720 million districtwide bond for Santiago Canyon and Santa Ana colleges.

If approved by voters in November, funds would go toward renovating aging campus buildings, repairing leaky roofs and deteriorating gas, electrical and sewer lines, upgrading computer technology and improving access for disabled students.

The measure also calls for the construction of new classrooms to relieve overcrowding and expand the educational and training programs at the two colleges, the regional education centers and the district operations center.

A condition of the measure is the legal guarantee of fiscal stewardship and accountability.

EXHIBITION

# Works of local artist to be shown at SCC Art Gallery

RSCCD Communications

Selected works of local artist David Michael Lee will be featured in Santiago Canyon College's first art show and reception of the Fall 2024 semester. The exhibition, *Passive Aggressive Cuboids*, will be celebrated from 4 to 6 p.m. Sept. 12 at the SCC Art Gallery (in the D Building).

Lee holds a bachelor of arts in photography and studio art from Columbia College in Chicago and a masters of fine art in drawing, painting and printmaking from Cal State Fullerton.

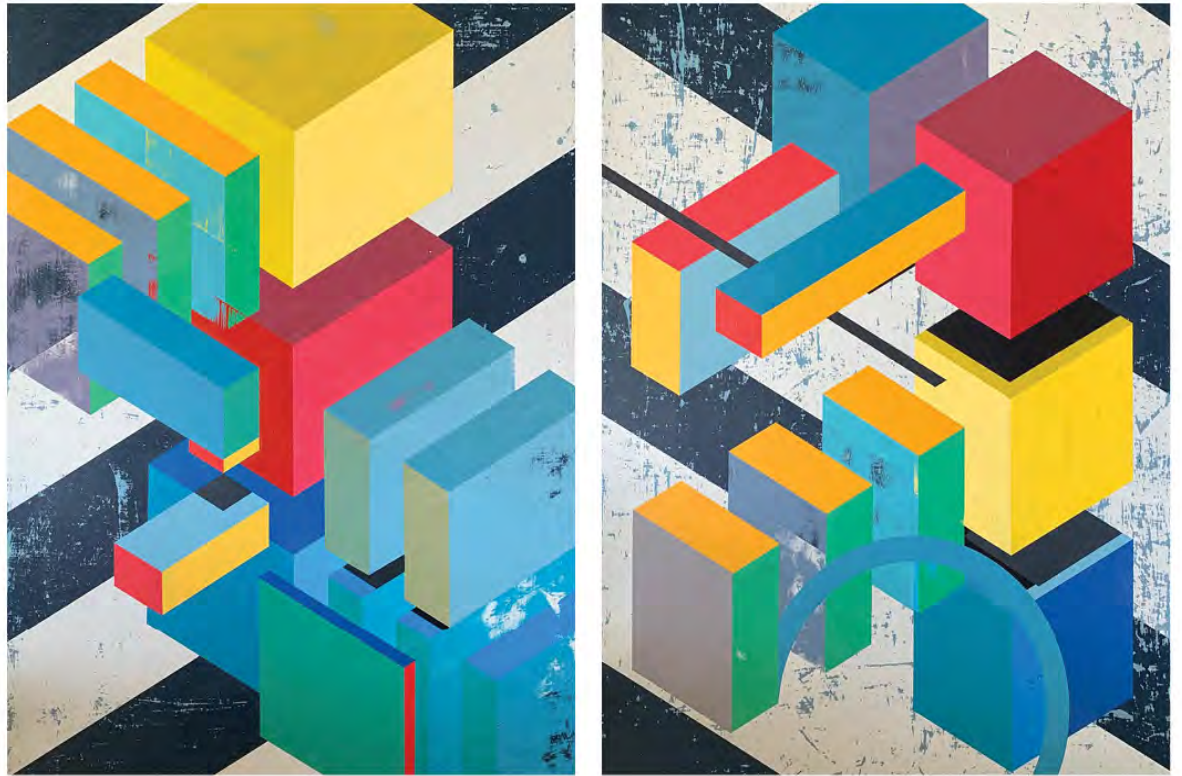
Lee has worked in higher education since 2002, engaging a wide variety of students and allowing the opportunity to constantly hone his craft as a painter. He serves as the director/curator of the Coastline College Art Gallery in Newport Beach. His work has been exhibited throughout Southern California and has been included in several public and private collections.

"I appreciate the simplicity of a cube, a shape that can resemble a box, a gift, or a suitcase. The cube is a basic form that we encounter in various aspects of life, from Christmas presents to stacks of wood pallets, or even inventory at big box stores," Lee said. "I believe that if you create something with enough strength, it can endure indefinitely. So, then it's like placing your ideas or objects in a box, safeguarding them without discarding them entirely."

"You can preserve things that may never see the light of day again. However, what you recall being inside that box might not necessarily align with what actually transpired — almost like a blend of memories. This is the structural underpinning of my paintings."

*Passive Aggressive Cuboids* runs from September 3 through October 3, with gallery hours from noon to 3 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday or by appointment. Admission is free. The community is invited to visit the SCC Art Gallery.

## SCC ART GALLERY PRESENTS



### PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE CUBOIDS

SELECTED WORKS BY OC ARTIST, DAVID MICHAEL LEE

**GALLERY RECEPTION: SEPTEMBER 12, 2024 FROM 4-6PM**

GALLERY HOURS: MON/WED/THUR 12PM - 3PM

SHOW DATES: SEPTEMBER 3 TO OCTOBER 3

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