

WORKFORCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

NEWSLETTER

SPRING EDITION • 2025



Dear Leadership Teams,

As we move into spring, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible work we've done together over the past few months to support and strengthen workforce and economic development across California. February was a particularly meaningful time for our system as we celebrated Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month, highlighting the vital role our career education programs play in shaping the future workforce. Our Career Education programs continue to provide students with the skills, training, and hands-on experience needed to meet the demands of high-growth sectors.

February was also Black History Month, an important time for colleges to celebrate the contributions of Black leaders, innovators, educators, and students who have shaped our communities and institutions. This work will soon be amplified by the new "Black Serving Institution (BSI)" designation for colleges and universities that excel in serving Black and African American students. Signed into law last year, [Senate Bill 1348](#) coupled with Vision 2030's focus on equity will ensure Black and African American students will achieve more when they enroll in a program that is meaningful to them.

In March, the California Community Colleges also cemented a partnership with the Port of Los Angeles to create new career pathways and workforce development opportunities in the goods movement industry. This [MOU](#) directly supports blue economy initiatives and is one in a series of partnerships between colleges and industry that will uniquely position students to receive both classroom and hands-on experience to prepare them for high-demand, high-growth careers.

Thank you for your continued leadership and dedication to advancing opportunities for our students.

Thank you,

Anthony Cordova

Anthony Cordova
Vice Chancellor, Workforce and Economic Development

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WEDD PROGRAM UPDATES

Access the latest monthly insights, news and progress reports regarding Workforce and Economic Development on the Program Updates and Newsletters [webpage](#).



California Community Colleges

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Capital Campaign Successes

ARVIN EDUCATION CENTER

In February, The **Bakersfield College** Arvin Educational Center officially opened, marking a historic moment for the city of Arvin and its residents.

The center was made possible through Measure J funding (\$500 million) and the collaborative efforts of local leaders, educators, and community members. The Arvin Center provides a range of academic programs and student services designed to support local students in their educational journey. Courses offered at the Arvin Center include:

- General Education (GE) courses for transfer to CSU, UC, not for profit, and private universities.
- English for Multilingual Students (EMLS) English Classes to support English learners.
- Non-Credit courses, including basic computer skills for workforce readiness.
- Career Education Training:
- Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Training for students pursuing emergency medical careers.
- Biology, Human Anatomy, and Physiology courses for healthcare-related fields.
- Statistics and English for various academic and professional paths.

For more information, please visit the Arvin Educational Center [website](#).



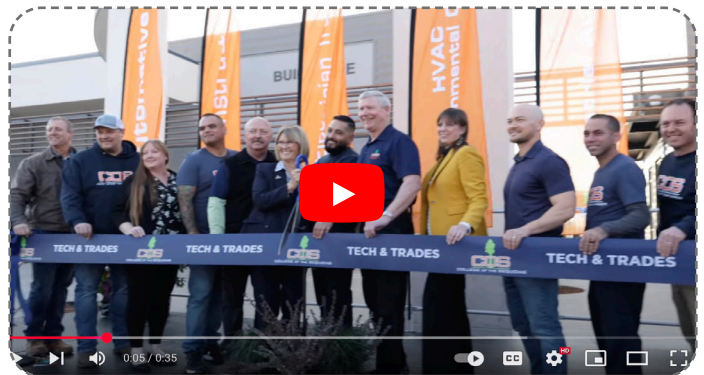
(PHOTO - Arvin Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony)

APPLIED TECHNOLOGY & TRADES COMPLEX

Last month, the **College of the Sequoias** Applied Technology and Trades complex opened its doors with more than 450 people in attendance, including 150 different employers. This \$55 million state of the art building, funded by local bonds and College of the Sequoias' reserves, will provide students with hands-on experience that aligns with industry standards and boasts modern classrooms, workshops, and labs that house an array of robotics and control systems.

The Applied Technology & Trades Complex is home to the following programs:

- Automotive
- Construction
- Environmental Control Technology (HVAC)
- Electrician Training
- Industrial Automation
- Industrial Maintenance Technology
- Mechanized Agriculture (Equipment Technician)



(WATCH NOW - Grand Opening of the Trades Complex at College of the Sequoias Tulare Campus)

Positioning Students for the Future

SAN JOAQUIN DELTA COLLEGE CAREER EDUCATION TRAINING MEETING

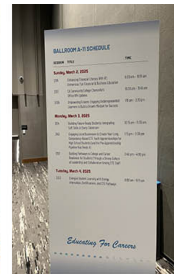


(PHOTOS - Tony Cordova, Vice Chancellor WEDD at the Career Education Training Meeting)

At the end of January, Vice Chancellor Tony Cordova joined the CTE Transitions Meeting at San Joaquin Delta College. CTE Transitions are designed for grades 9 through 12 and provide students with a planned sequence of study in a career education field as well as the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school. CTE Transitions leads to post-secondary educational programs that result in certification in high paying/high demand careers. Students get hands-on training and education, and develop strong academic skills needed for analytical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork while also opening themselves up to a wide variety of career choices and opportunities.

2025 EDUCATING FOR CAREERS CONFERENCE

In March, Dean LaCandice Ochoa presented at the **2025 Educating for Careers conference** with Senior Advisor Don Harjo Daves-Rougeaux where they discussed K-14 programs, dual enrollment partnerships, and the Digital Center to support the future of learning.



(PHOTO - Don Harjo Daves-Rougeaux, Chair of the Los Angeles Regional Consortium (LARC), Dr. Narineh Makijan and Dean LaCandice Ochoa

APPRENTICESHIPS

APPRENTICESHIP WEEK HIGHLIGHT

With community colleges leading the way in achieving the governor's goal of 500,000 apprentices by 2029, the Chancellor's Office co-hosted three **Apprenticeship Pathways Demonstration Project Regional Workshops on Apprenticeship Program Creation & Expansion.**

During these workshops, California community colleges, including college presidents, CIOs, Career Education deans and faculty, as well as partner organizations, join subject-matter experts on the fundamentals of building apprenticeship programs, curriculum development, Credit for Prior Learning, and the role of key stakeholders, including intermediaries and employers.

Three workshops took place across the state and are a crucial part of the effort to equip college teams with the knowledge and tools they need to build effective apprenticeship programs.



(PHOTO - Regional Training #1 - American River College - January 24)



(PHOTO - Regional Training #2 - Rio Hondo College - February 21)

MAINTENANCE TECH APPRENTICESHIPS PROGRAM GRADUATION



(PHOTO -The Wonderful Company Graduation Class with Vice Chancellor Tony Cordova)

In May 2023, **The Wonderful Company Career Center** started its partnership with **Bakersfield College** to launch the Maintenance Technician Apprenticeship (MTA) program, with the goal to provide students invaluable skills to prepare them for successful careers in the industrial automation industry.

This program aims to train 100 apprentices by 2026 via their 12-month paid program that combines hands-on training with four Bakersfield College-accredited courses taught by the in-house subject matter experts at the WCC. These courses cover mechanical systems, basic electronics, electrical motors and controls, and occupational safety. The courses can also be applied toward an associate degree or bachelor's degree in industrial automation. Congratulations to the February 2025 class of graduates!

ROOTS OF JUSTICE

On Tuesday, February 25, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors officially recognized **MiraCosta College** *Roots of Justice Day* in honor of the program's impact on improving the lives of Transition Scholars through holistic healing and career development.

At the board meeting, Kat Soto-Gomez (Sociology) and three Transition Scholars students accepted the award for their collaborative efforts with Career Education and the Horticulture Department. With support from the MiraCosta College Foundation, Soto-Gomez recently secured a Prebys Foundation grant through its Healing through Nature initiative to expand these efforts supporting formerly incarcerated students.

Grown initially with an investment from the college's Strong Workforce Advisory Group, Roots of Justice fosters hope, community, and career skills through sustainable urban community gardening. The new grant, Seeding Justice Empowerment Circles, enhances the program by integrating mental health and wellness initiatives.

"Roots of Justice illustrates how intentional, collaborative efforts across multiple departments can create healthier, sustainable, and rewarding futures for students and our communities," said Associate Dean Benjamin Gamboa who manages the Strong Workforce Program at MiraCosta College.



(PHOTO -MiraCosta College Roots of Justice Day Event)

2025 COADN CONFERENCE

In March, Dean LaCandice Ochoa attended the Spring 2025 California Organization of Associate Degree Nursing (COADN) Conference. The conference, "*Transforming Nursing Education: One Leader at a Time – Conceive it - Believe it - Achieve it*" was held in Monterey from March 9-11. The conference featured updates from key nursing organizations, including the Organization of Associate Degree Nursing (OADN), Chancellor's Office, and the Board of Registered Nursing (BRN).

Additionally, sessions covered topics such as the integration of Artificial Intelligence in nursing education. This energetic conference was another example of the California Community Colleges leading the way and transforming nursing education in our state.



(PHOTOS -Dean LaCandice Ochoa attending COADN Conference)

Welcome NEW DEAN



The Workforce and Economic Development Division (WEDD) is excited to welcome Chèri Fortin, our new Dean of Workforce!

Chèri comes to us with more than 30 years in education and has served as a tenured faculty member for nearly two decades; she also taught in the K–12 sector for 15 years. Chèri holds a Bachelor of Arts in Education, with concentrations in bilingual education and multicultural studies, and a Master of Fine Arts in Theatre. Before joining WEDD, Chèri served in the Chancellor's Office Academic Affairs Division, where she played a key role in advancing the California Community Colleges Baccalaureate Degree Programs. We are excited to have Chèri as a critical part of the team. Dean Fortin is assigned to Perkins, EWD, and Education Programs.

You can reach Dean Fortin at cfortin@cccoco.edu

Please join us in welcoming her to the team!

VASTHY REPAK



(PHOTO -Vasthy Repak, Student)

When Vasthy Repak was young, her parents pushed her to pursue higher education. Her father who made his living in construction, and her mother who stayed home to care for their family, instilled the value of education in their kids. At first, Vasthy did not take the advice too seriously, but her goals soon changed.

"In high school, it really didn't dawn on me that I needed to go to college," says the Los Angeles native. "In my first years of high school, I only looked forward to being done with school at the age of 18 and entering the workforce."

Without AP classes or the exams needed to apply to a four-year college, she registered at Los Angeles Harbor College, not knowing what she wanted to study. Now 33, Repak has earned Associate and Bachelors degrees at community colleges and has enjoyed a successful career as a dental hygienist. Repak went on to get a Master's in Social Work and now works part-time as an academic counselor, guiding students to achieve their dreams. "If I could do it, you can too," she tells them.

Repak's educational pathway was paved with opportunities through a degree completion program at West Los Angeles College, which now offers a Bachelor of Science in dental hygiene. Vision 2030 aims to increase the number of students who earn a Bachelor's degree in a California community college by 30%. This effort promotes equity by eliminating geographical barriers and the lack of capacity at four-year institutions, as well as providing a more affordable pathway to a higher degree.

Repak completed her Associates Degree (AS) in health sciences at Harbor College then transferred to West Los Angeles College to complete her AS degree in dental hygiene. When the college began its baccalaureate program, she eagerly completed an extra year to earn her BS. With her degree, Repak went on to work full-time as a dental hygienist. But she aspired to more.

"My long-term goal was to obtain a master's, but it wasn't until the pandemic that I realized the direction I wanted to go in," she says. "In private practice, I mentored several high school and college patients. Many were struggling to transition back to normal life after the shutdown, mentally and academically. I realized there was a great need to help the next generation. I really enjoyed helping them."


While working full-time, Repak took online courses at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, and graduated with a Master's in Social Work. Her training brought her full circle back to West Los Angeles College, where she first interned and now works part-time as an academic counselor. Her training also enabled an internship in Bosnia, the country of her husband's birth.

Repak's next goal is to obtain a clinical social work license. "I understand how important it is to build trusting relationships to help students achieve their goals," she says.

She says she owes much of her success to the California Community Colleges system, and we are so impressed with her drive and success!


STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES

Do you have a success story you would like to share with us? We would love to hear about it! Use this form to submit your story for our growing list of students who are making a difference and achieve greatness as they continue their journey after attending our incredible community colleges.

 **California Community Colleges**
SUCCESS STORY

Add a Success Story
Please use this form to add a student success story to our collection!

erin.gibb@arroyowest.com

[Switch account](#) 

The name and photo associated with your Google account will be recorded when you upload files and submit this form. Only the email you enter is part of your response.

* Indicates required question

Email *

Program Type *

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

Use this [form](#) to submit your story to the story bank!

IMPACTFUL PROJECTS

NEW MOU WITH THE PORT OF LOS ANGELES

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the Port of Los Angeles have signed an agreement to collaborate on initiatives to better prepare students for careers in the evolving goods movement industry. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) brings together the resources of the college system, which is the largest provider of workforce training in the nation, with America's busiest container port.

The MOU focuses on critical issues facing the maritime industry, including zero-emission operations, decarbonization, environmental stewardship and changing technologies, and incorporates opportunities for communities across Southern California to receive training to obtain the skills necessary to fill the career needs in these areas.



(PHOTO -Port of Los Angeles)

- Partnership activities outlined in this MOU include:
- Collaborating on how to create career path opportunities for community college students
- Improved job-seeking processes for community college students and alumni, especially in high-demand job categories
- More opportunities for community college students to participate in user experiences and research activities
- Port informational sessions at community college career centers
- Providing Port experts for career and recruitment fairs on community college campuses

Partnerships like this one are vital to the California Community Colleges' Vision 2030 which prioritizes skill building for jobs that pay living wages. The system serves the largest and most diverse student body in California higher education, making community colleges pivotal in developing the state's workforce while strengthening its society and economy.

PREPARING FOR THE GREEN AND CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE



(PHOTO - 2025 NEVC Annual Conference)

Climate action is a key sector within Vision 2030 and Chancellor Christian along with Chancellor's Office staff participated in the National Electric Vehicle (EV) Consortium's 3rd Annual Conference titled "Let's Learn from California". The event itself focused on California's EV adoption and sustainability efforts.

During the event, the chancellor, WEDD leadership and representatives from Porterville College and Kern Community College District discussed the future of EV and green technology in higher education with industry leader, Zeronox, which specializes in Lithium Batteries, EV, Renewable Energy, and Electric Powertrain.



California Community Colleges