



SAN DIEGO
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
DISTRICT

City College • Mesa College
Miramar College • Continuing Education

MAY 2016

WE

With
Excellence

Growing Demand

San Diego City
College's Seeds@
City Urban Farm is
preparing students for
careers in sustainable
agriculture.

Story on page 10.



It Takes a City



From left, SDUSD Superintendent Cindy Marten, San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer, Chancellor Constance M. Carroll, and UCSD Associate Vice Chancellor Mary Walshok at the OpportunityWORKS press conference held at Qualcomm's Thinkabit Lab.

The San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) is playing a key role in a new, collaborative, citywide effort aimed at preparing the community and students for jobs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics-based fields. There will be a special emphasis on people from underrepresented communities so that they can contribute to an ever-evolving, high-tech workforce.

San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer's effort evolved from an OpportunityWORKS task force on which I was honored to serve as co-chair. The goal was straightforward: create a national model for building an innovation economy in which every resident has the skills to contribute. The program aims to do so by closing the skills gap, improving access to affordable education, and connecting residents to opportunities in the city's growing job market.

The new initiative offers a number of strategies to make this happen, including:

- Calling for the SDCCD to help strengthen "bridge programs" for graduating high school and college students that will help them transition into in-demand job sectors;
- Urging major companies to replicate Qualcomm's Thinkabit Lab — a combination of a lab, maker space, and classrooms led by Qualcomm engineers and career coaches who help sixth- to eighth-grade students from all cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds;

- Engaging the philanthropic community in funding areas primed for growth;
- Creating a Workforce Cabinet to bring together leaders from education, business, philanthropy, and labor to build a stronger San Diego; and
- Developing more internship opportunities.

In short, the initiative focuses on the truism that it takes a city to build a strong economy and educate our students.

As the largest workforce trainer in San Diego County, the SDCCD has a tradition of joining forces with industry partners, civic groups, and others to ensure that the students served are provided with state-of-the-art job preparation. Since the majority of jobs, especially in new fields, require some level of college education, the District's colleges have seen significant growth in career-technical courses and programs. The mayor's proposal to include local government in this equation is most welcome and will ensure the effective coordination of all participants in workforce training.

The San Diego Community College District is committed to help further develop the initiative and will eagerly support the effort.



Constance M. Carroll, Ph.D.
Chancellor

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WE—With Excellence Magazine

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Serving the Community

San Diego City College President Anthony E. Beebe and San Diego Community College District Board of Trustees President Maria Nieto Senour were recently honored by a Barrio Logan community group for their contributions in expanding educational opportunities in underserved areas — contributions that include bringing the César E. Chávez Campus to Barrio Logan.

The accolades come from Barrio Station, a grassroots community organization that provides programs for neighborhood youth, families, and seniors.

“We have a wonderful working relationship with the San Diego Community College District, which has done a fantastic job in bringing a new campus to Barrio Logan and opening up educational opportunities for our youth,” said Rachael Ortiz, Barrio Station’s Founder and Executive Director. “Maria and President Beebe have really gone above and beyond, and we want to recognize them for their work.”

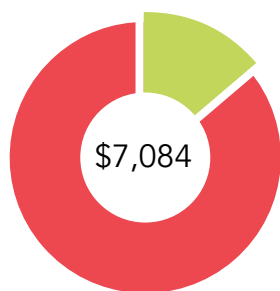
President Beebe, who formerly served as President of San Diego Continuing Education, earned Barrio Station’s Lifetime Achievement Award. Barrio Station lauded the longtime educator as “The People’s President” and applauded him for “exemplary leadership in the conception and development of the César E. Chávez Campus and inclusion of community input into the design while serving Southeast San Diego and Barrio Logan communities.”



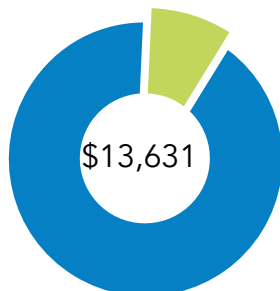
Trustee Senour was honored with the César E. Chávez Humanitarian Award. Barrio Station praised Senour for being an “advocate for the realization of the initial and permanent César E. Chávez campuses in Barrio Logan; as a champion for inclusiveness and diversity among staff and students; and for her life’s dedication to social justice.”

Cost of Community College

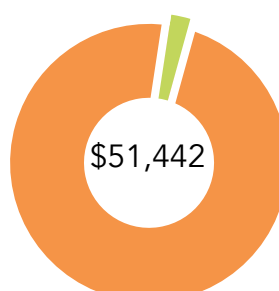
Comparing the SDCCD’s one-year enrollment fee of \$1,142 to other institutions.



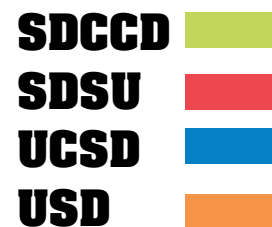
You save
\$5,942/yr
attending SDCCD



You save
\$12,489/yr
attending SDCCD



You save
\$50,300/yr
attending SDCCD



Comparison of in-state tuition/fees.



Harbor Drive Pedestrian Bridge at night.

A solo exhibition by photographer Abe Ordover was held at the City College's Fine Arts Gallery earlier this year. Ordover's work has been the subject of museum and gallery shows in New York City, Atlanta, Raleigh, Dallas, San Diego, Palo Alto, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Nashville and Tallahassee. William Zimmer, contributing critic for the New York Times, noted that, "Ordover's work owes a debt to impressionist painting."

C Building Renovated

The Radio, TV, and Film, and the Dance, Music, Drama, and Theatre departments at City College have a new, modern home thanks to a \$21.1 million renovation of the C Building.

The C Building, also known as the Center for Media and Performing Arts, will better serve students through improvements that include a new television studio for the Emmy Award-winning, student-run weekly "Newscene" broadcast, state-of-the-art video editing suites, a film screening lab, two new dance studios, a music recording studio, an electronic piano lab, a costume design lab and workshop, a make-up room, green room, performing arts dressing room, and more.

The reborn, 50-year-old building is being considered for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification. Sustainable features include the use of recycled material, water-efficient plumbing fixtures that will reduce potable water use by more than 40 percent, and high-efficiency heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems.

Award-winning KSDS Jazz 88.3 will continue to be broadcast from its studios in the L Building across the courtyard.

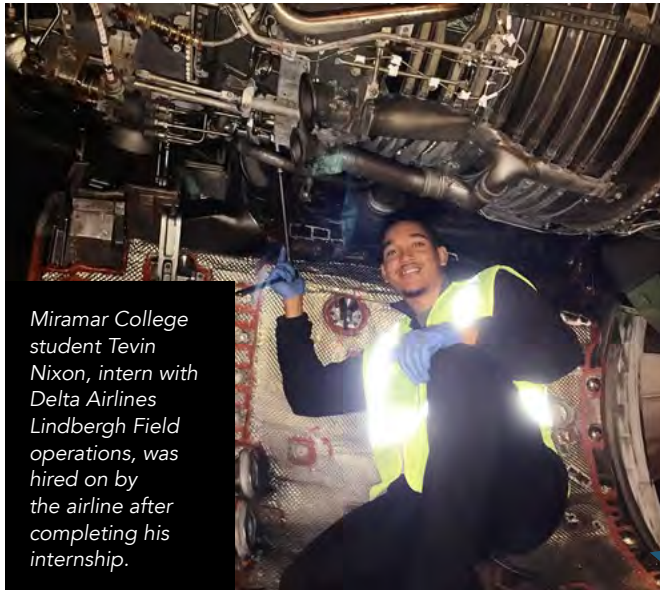


César E. Chávez Car Park Dedication

SDCCD's staff, faculty, and students, as well as many members of the community, came out on March 23 to celebrate the dedication of San Diego Continuing Education's new César E. Chávez Car Park in Barrio Logan.



Flying High at Miramar



Miramar College student Tevin Nixon, intern with Delta Airlines Lindbergh Field operations, was hired on by the airline after completing his internship.

Students in Miramar College's Aviation Maintenance Program are landing internships with Delta Airlines.

Miramar College has offered an aviation maintenance program to the community for decades, and Delta recently approached the college to help it meet its future labor needs. "A lot of their mechanics are nearing retirement age, and they recognized they were going to have a shortage of mechanics," said Larry Pink, chair of the Miramar College program, who noted that because of the high cost of living in San Diego, the airline was interested in grooming people already living in the area to help fill the pending gap in staffing.

Tevin Nixon became the first student to take part in the paid internship program last fall, and he followed that up this spring when the airline hired him after his internship ended. Genevieve Cindrich became the second Miramar College student hired into the internship program and has been working the overnight shift on weekends, doing everything from lubing landing gears to conducting inspections.

"We're very happy to have this relationship, and that Delta chose to work with our students," Pink said.

Miramar College has the only FAA-approved maintenance training facility in San Diego and Imperial counties.



The San Diego Community College District, along with City, Mesa, and Miramar colleges and Continuing Education would like to congratulate all the students graduating this May.

Job well done!

CONGRATULATIONS

we tweet



@SDCCD
SD Community College

Meet @SDMiramar instructor
@FitExpertJess the "Yoda of Yoga"



JESSICA MATTHEWS
YOGA TEACHING ESSENTIALS INSTRUCTOR



Building a Legacy

President Pamela T. Luster played a critical role in making San Diego Mesa College the first community college in the state to offer a bachelor's degree. She works tirelessly in expanding outreach and equity efforts both on and off campus. She has guided one of California's largest community colleges through an unprecedented transformation that has seen construction of seven new buildings, including centers for math, science, and allied health.

Through it all, the San Diego Mesa College President has been driven by two goals: "My eyes are always focused on creating the conditions so our students are successful," she said. "And I want

San Diego Mesa College to be a place where people will want to come to work, a place that will continue to attract the best and the brightest out there."

She has earned praise from throughout the region and beyond.



Dr. Pam Luster is one of the best things that ever happened to Mesa College and the San Diego Community College District. She is a visionary, high-energy, and deeply student-centered president who provides leadership for every aspect of the college. I enjoy working with her and invariably learn something new and important whenever we interact. We are happy to have her here.

President Luster's priorities at Mesa College include:

- Successfully implementing the baccalaureate degree program in Health Information Management, which is expanding this fall to include juniors.
- Ensuring that Mesa College is preparing itself and its students for the economy of the future.
- Hiring the best. "Who you hire is going to have a huge impact on the legacy of the campus," said President Luster, noting that 80 faculty members have been hired in the past three years.

Most of all, President Luster's focus is with the more than 24,000 students who enroll at the Clairemont campus each semester. "I am constantly examining what the college is doing and if it is doing everything possible that is conducive to helping students succeed."

She is especially committed to ensuring Mesa College is accessible to all.

"President Luster is a highly regarded national leader and expert in advancing equity efforts in community colleges," said Dr. J. Luke Wood, Director

of the Doctoral Program in Community College Leadership at San Diego State University and Co-director of the Minority Male Community College Collaborative. "She is deeply committed to the community college's mission of open access and creating better life opportunities for society's most disadvantaged."

President Luster didn't set out to become an education pioneer. She launched a career as an audiologist while teaching part-time at West Valley College near San Jose. When the Chair of the Disabled Students Program became ill, she was asked if she wanted an interim job.

"I thought it was awesome. I loved doing it and found it amazing that they would pay me for this," she said.

She left West Valley College as Dean of Career and Workforce Development and went to work at Las Positas College in the city of Livermore, where she served as Interim Vice President of Instruction, Vice President of Student Services, and Dean of Academic Services.

President Luster came to Mesa College in 2011. Almost immediately, President Luster reached out to nonprofits and civic organizations in the region to build stronger ties to the college and put Mesa on the map as a leader of equity and excellence, not only in the region and the state, but in the nation.

President Luster said "It's important that we get the word out to let people know about the amazing things we are doing here."



Growing Demand



San Diego City College has planted the seeds to meet a growing demand for sustainable agriculture, thanks to a burgeoning program that is preparing the next generation of farmers.

At the core of the Sustainable Urban Agriculture program is Seeds@City Urban Farm, which comprises three plots totaling about an acre on which everything from sunflowers and Swiss chard to basil and green onions are grown.

Students manage the planting, harvesting, advertising, and pricing of the produce.

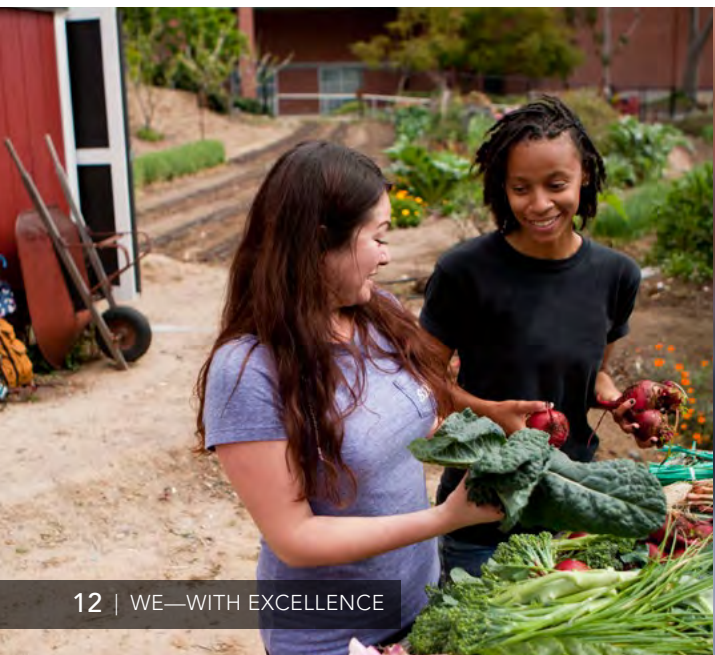
"This is not backyard gardening," said Dr. Minou Spradley, Dean, Engineering and Technologies, Mathematics, Sciences, and Nursing. "The farms are our outdoor classrooms in a program developed to train students for jobs in the agricultural industry, which is one of the biggest employers in the state of California."

“The farms are
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in the state of
California.”

- Dean Minou Spradley — Engineering
and Technologies, Mathematics,
Sciences, and Nursing



The fresh and organic crops grown at the Seeds@City Urban Farm are available for purchase from the program's farm stand. For more information visit sdcity.edu. From left: Assistant Professor Erin McConnell, students Veronica Eisner and Kristopher Monterroso, Agriculture Marketing Instructor Paul Sommers, and student Valarie Reece.





The program, which offers three certificates and one Associate of Science degree, is undergoing unprecedented growth and may soon expand. Erin McConnell, a City College Assistant Professor of Agriculture and the Sustainable Agriculture Program Manager, was recently hired as the program's first full-time faculty member. Courses are becoming more rigorous, and administrators are developing a "transfer model curriculum" to provide graduates of the City College program priority in applying to California State University campuses that offer bachelor's degrees in agriculture.

"This is a pretty exciting time for us in the program," McConnell said. "There's a whole shift in the way people see food right now, and that's led to a resurgent interest in agriculture."

Some produce is sold to students, faculty, staff, and community members at a farm stand near 16th and C streets. Dean Spradley said the program is also working toward providing a portion of the harvest to the campus food pantry.

"It's really among the finest fresh produce you'll find in San Diego," said Paul Sommers, a City College adjunct professor who teaches a direct marketing class.

City College student Kris Monterroso spent a recent afternoon bunching fresh-picked greens from the main farm near the Saville Theatre. "This is an incredible program," said the former Navy corpsman, who plans to transfer to San Diego State University before starting a career in the field of sustainable agriculture. "It's all hands-on."

The program evolved when a group of City College professors decided to create a farm on campus in the heart of San Diego's East Village for the purpose of supporting the campus community, as well as an apprenticeship program. In 2010, the Sustainable Urban Agriculture program was launched, with Seeds@City Urban Farm as the outdoor classroom. The Sustainable Urban Agriculture program was later moved to the Department of Life Sciences, and significant upgrades were made to the curriculum to boost scientific rigor, improve job readiness for students, and prepare students for transfer to four-year university programs.

"It's amazing how far this program has come since we first started so many years ago," Dean Spradley said.





Learning and Earning

ABC Instructor Eric Kliebenstein demonstrates to ABC Electrical Apprentices how to properly terminate transformer delta-wye configurations with an emphasis on the importance of proper XO connections which are necessary for the stabilization of the electrical system.

Apprenticeship Programs Connecting Students to Jobs

San Diego City College student Jerry Diaz couldn't have found a better work-study program.

Diaz is among 750 students enrolled in one of several San Diego Community College District-affiliated apprenticeship programs that require participants to take classes on theory and technical training before or after their on-the-job learning at venues ranging from laboratories to construction sites. Diaz, a sheet metal worker who fabricates and installs air conditioning ducts, is set to complete his four-year apprenticeship in June.

"This is a great opportunity," he said. "It gave me the chance to buy a home and provide a good life for my family."

Thanks to \$1.1 million in new state grants recently secured by the San Diego Community College District, apprenticeship opportunities in the region are about to expand.

San Diego Miramar College has secured a \$600,000 Innovative Apprentices for the Life Sciences Industry grant to establish new apprenticeship opportunities in nine areas: microbiology quality control technician; chemistry quality control technician; regulatory compliance associate; regulatory affairs specialist; clinical research coordinator; quality assurance associate/GXP auditor; clinical trial assistant; drug safety advocate; and clinical data coordinator.

“This is a great opportunity. It gave me the chance to buy a home and provide a good life for my family.”

-Jerry Diaz, San Diego City College student

Miramar College — home of the Southern California Biotechnology Center — will be the lead education agency in partnership with apprenticeship sponsor Rx Research Services Inc. Rx Research Services will place at least 30 apprentices at more than 17 companies. The apprentices will receive paid on-the-job training for quality and regulatory positions where entry-level median wages range from \$31 to \$36 per hour.

San Diego City College received a \$500,000 grant to work with San Diego Continuing Education, Palomar College, and Southwestern College, to better prepare students in becoming registered apprentices as carpenters, electricians, machinists, pipefitters, plumbers, and sheet metal workers. The focus will be on increasing the number of participants from underserved populations. The grant will assist about 200 students in securing registered apprenticeships.

Both grants are funded through the California Apprenticeship Initiative and come through the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

“Workforce development is a major focus of the San Diego Community College District, and these grants will go a long way in enabling the District to strengthen programs that contribute significantly to our regional economy,” said SDCCD Chancellor Constance M. Carroll.

Apprenticeships are as popular as ever. More than 197,500 people enrolled in apprenticeship programs across the country in 2015, bringing the total number of apprentices to 447,929 — up from 375,425 two years earlier, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Demand for apprentices continues to grow. Nearly one in five people in the construction workforce is over the age of 55, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a workforce shortage of 1.6 million construction professionals by 2022. Twenty percent of construction crews working on publicly funded contracts must be apprentices.

The work is not easy.

“It can be challenging,” Diaz said. “You could find yourself working 10- or 12-hour days then having to go to class for two and a half hours. When you factor in the study time and having to keep your grades up, it's not easy but it is worth it.”

Diaz takes his City College-sponsored classes at the San Diego County chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors Inc., in Poway. He enrolled in the program after the recession took too great of a toll on his work installing hardwood floors. After submitting an application, he was invited to take an entrance exam, went through an orientation, and agreed to commit for the full four years. Associated Builders and Contractors began placing him at various job sites a short time later, and pay raises came every six months. Jobs included a retrofit of the air conditioning system at the Alvord Unified School District near Riverside and Hubbs Hall at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

After completing the apprenticeship program and taking the journeyman's licensing examination, Diaz plans on enrolling at City College this fall to earn a degree in construction management.

Jerry Diaz, sheet metal worker, is set to complete his four-year apprenticeship in June.



A smiling male student with dark hair, wearing a dark hoodie, is sitting at a desk in a computer lab. He is looking towards the camera. In front of him is a large white computer monitor. To his right, another person's hands are visible typing on a keyboard. The background shows other computer monitors and a ceiling with exposed wiring and lights.

“Promise” Pilot Launched

The first group of 200 students is being selected to take part in a San Diego Community College District pilot program for the local implementation of the America's College Promise free community college effort.

Some 175 of the selected students are graduating seniors from the San Diego Unified School District. The remaining 25 are San Diego Continuing Education students who are moving on to college-level work.

The San Diego Promise program is intended to ensure that no deserving local students are denied the opportunity to go to college because of lack of resources.

“I am delighted that the San Diego Community College District is joining the national and statewide movement to make community colleges free for deserving students,” said SDCCD Chancellor Constance M. Carroll. “We will have a local impact by ensuring that students in the pilot program will come to City, Mesa, and Miramar colleges from local high schools and from the Continuing Education division. This will be a great benefit for students.”



Mira Mesa High School students. The school is a key feeder to Miramar College.

Promise-type programs have been gaining momentum since President Barack Obama's 2015 State of the Union Address, in which he proposed that community college be free for all hard-working students. Here in California, 1.1 million community college students already pay no fees as part of the highly successful Board of Governors Fee Waiver program. Still, many California students face significant financial hurdles in completing their community college education, especially because enrollment fees represent a small percentage of the actual cost of attending college.

Chancellor Carroll, who serves as a member of the California College Promise Committee, said a few community college districts have begun exploring similar Promise programs. In addition, several California legislators have introduced bills that would expand financial assistance to needy students.

Students in the San Diego Promise program will be required to be enrolled in at least 12 units for both fall and spring, participate in eight hours of community service each semester, and maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0. Chancellor Carroll said the District is starting with a pilot program in fall 2016, in preparation for broader implementation in fall 2017.

There will be three direct benefits under the pilot program. Students who receive state or federal financial aid will have the balance of the cost of their enrollment fees paid, ensuring free access. Students who do not receive state or federal financial aid, but still have financial need, will have their enrollment fees paid outright. Additionally, many students will receive up to \$1,000 in grants for textbooks and related instructional supplies.

The estimated cost of the first year of the pilot is \$215,000, which will be paid with non-state funds. Fundraising efforts are being ramped up at each of the foundations that support the District's three colleges and Continuing Education in order to support the program into the future.



Anthony E. Beebe, Ed.D.
President
San Diego City College

Student Receives Prestigious Academic Honors



2016 New Century Scholar, Issanna Loughman, with Charles Klein, Nevada/California Regional Coordinator for Phi Theta Kappa, and Math Instructor at De Anza College; and California Community Colleges Chancellor Brice Harris.

The phrase “You can’t judge a book by its cover” certainly applies to Issanna Loughman. Many San Diego City College students incorrectly assume that Loughman studies cosmetology because of her pink hair, but she’s sported that color for half her life.

Certainly an individualist, Loughman is also intelligent and determined, two qualities that led to her being named to the 2016 All-USA Community College Academic Team. Only 20 students from more than 1,900 nominations were selected for this prestigious honor, which comes with a \$5,000 scholarship and special medallion that was presented to Loughman and City College President Anthony Beebe in Chicago during the American Association of Community Colleges Convention on April 12.

That’s not all. Loughman was also selected for the 2016 All-California Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Team and designated a New Century Scholar for being the top scorer in the state, an honor accompanied by a \$2,000 scholarship.

These are significant achievements for someone who never thought she was smart enough to be an honors student or even transfer to a four-year college — someone City College’s president refers to as “a remarkable person.”

A Challenging Start

Loughman was born and raised in New Hampshire, and moved to New York City at 21. A year later she moved to California and began spreading her wings professionally.

Then, tragedy struck. Loughman was diagnosed with a degenerative disc disease. She couldn’t walk for an entire year and underwent spinal surgery.

“I became very depressed because I was indoors and in pain all the time,” she said. “I decided to go back to school originally to get out of the house. I needed to be around people.”

Loughman began her studies at City College in fall 2013, choosing a psychology major and child development and American Sign Language minors. Her first year, she used a walker on most days to get to her classes — a walker she covered with glitter.

“That first year I was in and out of the hospital because of complications from my surgery. The pain was so intense, but being in school gave me something to dedicate my time to,” Loughman said. “Even if I was in the hospital, I would do my assignments. I never fell behind, and having things to keep me mentally stimulated was so important.”

Blossoming at City College

As Loughman’s health improved, so did her college activities. She became a student worker for the Institute for Human Development, created three programs, and was inducted into two national honor societies: Psi Beta and Phi Theta Kappa. And she made the Dean’s List twice, with a GPA of 3.94.

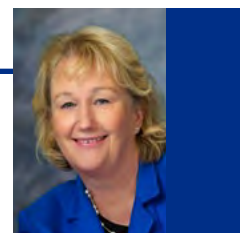
Loughman credits her experiences at City College with opening her eyes to what was possible for her.

“I was able to realize my potential because of the faculty and students, especially the psychology faculty,” she said. “I have done all I can to give back to City College because in my opinion there is no better place to go to school.”

What’s To Come

Loughman has big plans for her future, including earning a bachelor’s degree in developmental psychology with a minor in child and adolescent mental health services. She’s already been accepted at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo and is awaiting a response from New York University.

Loughman also wants to earn a doctorate in clinical psychology, so she can provide therapy to children with mental illness and conduct research to support positive policy change concerning the treatment of children in residential psychiatric care. Given her track record, she seems destined to succeed, a pink shooting star.



New Exercise Science Center a 'Game-Changer'

"This facility is a game-changer," Astian Agraz said as he eyed the rows of state-of-the-art fitness equipment on the first floor of San Diego Mesa College's Exercise Science Center, which opened this spring.

Agraz, the linebacker and Mesa football team captain, wasn't just talking about wins and losses.

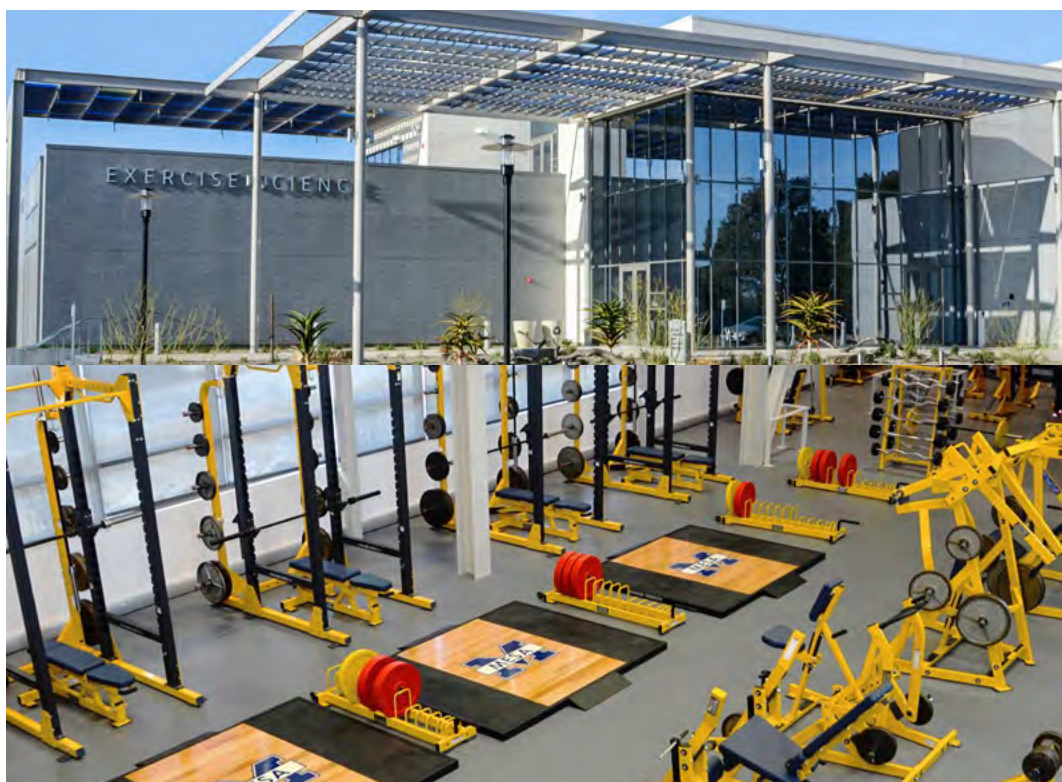
"People are seeing this new facility and new equipment and starting to understand what exercise science is all about," Astian said. "Our old facilities were beat up, so coming here, it's a lot bigger, with new weights and new machines. This facility wins by a landslide."

The building definitely has a wow factor.

A high-volume ceiling dominates the first floor lobby that leads into the weight training area. Aerobics and spin rooms are just around the corner. They open to an exterior exercise plaza, which leads to the athletic training room complete with a wet lab, treatment room, and offices. The second floor includes administration and faculty offices, a fitness lab and cardio area overlooking the equipment below, and an exterior exercise roof terrace.

The two-story, 27,200-square-foot steel structure is slated to be a geographic campus landmark, strategically situated on the new Sunrise Plaza entry and adjacent to the multi-use Mesa Commons that will open this fall.

"I believe that college athletics, physical activity, and exercise science play an important role in a well-rounded college education," President Pamela T. Luster said at the facility's grand opening event in April. Luster is also president of the California Community College Athletic Association, which oversees intercollegiate athletics across the state.



"It definitely will bring a long-awaited recruiting aspect for our coaches," said Kevin Hazlett, department chair and assistant athletic director, who led the building's design team along with instructor and former coach Manny Bautista.

With the addition of sand volleyball in 2015, Mesa College now has 21 athletic teams. All will use the facility for training and conditioning classes, which are open to all students.

Asked what he's most proud of, Hazlett quickly answers, "The student reactions to the facility have been remarkable."

Astian agrees. "The mindset of everyone has changed, especially among student athletes. Now that we have this facility, it's really motivating us to work extra hard."



Patricia Hsieh, Ed.D.
President
San Diego Miramar College

New Fire Chief Learned Trade at Miramar College



When new San Diego Fire Chief Brian Fennessy returned to San Diego Miramar College this past January, he said, "Wow, what a change, what a difference."

Twenty-six years earlier, Chief Fennessy was a cadet in the October 1990 fire academy, which held classes on the southeast portion of campus. "There was this long set of stairs right by where we trained, they are still there today over by the police academy, and every time someone made a mistake in our class we had to run those stairs in boots. I remember it well," Fennessy said.

A quarter-century later, the one-time cadet now succeeds Javier Mainar as San Diego's 17th fire chief. Fennessy was sworn in last November.

Fennessy has 38 years of firefighting experience. As an 18-year-old, fresh out of John Muir High School in Pasadena, he joined the U.S. Forest Service and traveled the West Coast on a "hot shot" crew. After 13 years working for the federal government, he was encouraged to apply for a job in San Diego. He was hired in 1990 and graduated the fire academy in February 1991. A few years later, he earned his bachelor's degree in business administration through

a distance-learning platform. "What I tell people is 'Don't wait to get your education.' I went back to school so late in my career and it was hard, but I had to do it in order to be promoted."

Chief Fennessy preaches the need for education to aspiring firefighters. He believes the current Fire Tech program at Miramar College can assist in helping one become employable and prepare individuals to navigate the rigors of a fire academy. "I couldn't compete with people who are getting jobs now; they are coming in the door with degrees from Miramar College, volunteer experience, and having worked part-time. What we've told people is be prepared for the entrance interview and make sure you stress to us why you want to serve."

Fennessy's top order of business as chief, outside of keeping the public safe, is to promote diversity recruitment.

"I think when you get people from different cultural ethnicities, and you get women in there, and you go to a firehouse with so many different perspectives, it is just very healthy."



The Power of Positive Thinking

When you meet San Diego Continuing Education (SDCE) student Michael Calimee, you'll want to be as close as possible to his enthusiasm, and with any luck, you'll also catch his positive attitude and infectious smile.

"I use the power of I am," Calimee said. "You can say I am clumsy, or you can say I am strong. So instead of a negative I am, think of a positive I am and you will get through your day."

His theory has shown a positive impact on his mental health. At age 20, Calimee is one of the most recent graduates from SDCE's High School Diploma Program. He gives credit to the success he had at SDCE to his counselor Esther Matthew and his instructor Sean Caruana, who made a difference which allowed him to complete the program.

"Michael has had a difficult life, and I felt privileged that he opened up to me about it," Caruana said. "Despite his obstacles, he came to class every day and put forth his best effort."

SDCE's High School Diploma Program is rigorous. In the past year, the program has implemented an accelerated path and students are rising to the higher expectations. The program has seen a 189 percent increase in completion rates.

"It was my teacher who made sure I did my work and motivated me to finish," Calimee said. "When Sean read my story about my life, it inspired him. When he told me that, it touched me because when I realized someone else went through what I went through, it motivated me."

Attending school regularly and working toward his goal was building Calimee's confidence. His success also helped him battle against a negative environment in his household, where he was labeled as lazy.

"They said I was lazy and taking too long to finish school," he said. Refusing to believe it, Calimee was up early and setting his own path for success. In addition to taking classes at SDCE, he was volunteering at a prep school in his neighborhood by helping with the after-school program. Calimee was spreading the healing power of positivity wherever he could.

His success at SDCE was supported by mentors, role models, and people who believed in his ability. "Esther was the best counselor I've ever had," Calimee said. "I thought I was going to have a counselor who was rough and bossy. She was actually listening and she explained things to me. She always has a smile, that's what's great about her."

Calimee is currently employed with a local security company, and he plans to enroll in the Criminal Justice program at City College. His long-term goals are to join the military and to one day become a San Diego police officer.

SDCE's High School Diploma Program is a joint program with the San Diego Unified School District that helps students complete this important educational milestone when the traditional high school system has not worked for them.

Taking Control

Madeline Loewe-Pollock has taken control of her future. The former high school dropout enrolled at San Diego Continuing Education to earn her diploma and ace all of her classes before transferring this spring to San Diego Mesa College. Loewe-Pollock, 20, exemplifies the 1,400 or so San Diego Continuing Education students who transition to City, Mesa, or Miramar College annually after earning a certificate or high school diploma. We asked Loewe-Pollock a few questions about her experience.

Q. How has Continuing Education changed your life?

Continuing Education has changed my life in every way. It was the place where I realized I was capable of more than I gave myself credit for in the past. It gave me a second chance at a good life and a good education.

Q. Why did you choose San Diego Continuing Education?

I was researching what the best way was for adults to get back in school and earn a diploma, and when Continuing Education popped up I read about it and I loved the sound of it. I immediately called and got an appointment so I could get started.

Q. What was it like to get your high school diploma?

I felt so much happiness and pride, it was overwhelming, and it was one of the best moments in my life. I also felt a little sad, though, just because I was going to miss my teachers and counselor so much. They were so helpful and encouraging every single day, and they meant a lot to me.

Q. What advice would you give to a high school dropout interested in going back to school?

Go for it! There's nothing better than accomplishing something that you thought you would never be able to do, and I know anyone can do it. The staff at Continuing Education is so helpful and all they want is for each and every student to succeed.

Q. How do you relax before taking an exam?

I relax by going over the material one last time before the test, and then I eat a snack and watch a funny video on YouTube or Vine just to kind of loosen up.

Q. What's your favorite spot at Mesa College to relax?

Either the Learning Resource Center or outside of the Mesa Café on a bench under a tree.





Johnny Romero, Continuing Education student, is working his way to a career in the auto body and paint profession.



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From left, active-duty military and student veterans Francis Rowe, Randall Dexter with his service dog Captain, and Karina Miranda.