



## A Message from President Kim Lopez

### **Weekly Update: 3-28-25**

Dear Cañada Colleagues,

### **Olivia Cortez-Figueroa, Cañada College Classified Employee of the Year**

At Wednesday's board meeting, I had the pleasure of recognizing Olivia Cortez-Figueroa as Cañada College's Classified Employee of the Year. Olivia began her SMCCCD career in the Financial Aid Office at CSM and transitioned nearly five years ago to Cañada as our College Recruiter. On campus and within our community, her dedication to equity and student success is not just *part* of her job—it is her personal mission. And, Olivia has made it her life's work to break down barriers, open doors and ensure that every student—regardless of background, immigration status or life circumstance—has a chance to succeed.

Olivia is the face of Cañada College in the community and her impact can be felt in so many ways. By collaborating with local high schools, she is the bridge between secondary and higher education, providing students with valuable support. She has created welcoming spaces for first-generation, undocumented and BIPOC students, guiding them through complex enrollment processes and ensuring they feel seen, valued and empowered. And her leadership doesn't stop there. Olivia mentors a diverse team of student campus ambassadors, equipping them to support their peers and become campus leaders, multiplying the impact of her work across our student body.

Olivia is not just an advocate, she is a passionate force for change. Whether she's leading application workshops at local high schools, running Super Registration events to simplify enrollment, or partnering with community organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, she shows them that college *is possible*—and that they *belong here*. She meets students where they are—whether that's in a classroom, a community center or at an outreach event—always with the same energy, professionalism and student-first approach. Olivia's passion, tireless dedication and belief in every student's potential make a lasting impact on Cañada College and our entire community. We are beyond grateful for her work – congratulations, Olivia!



### **Please Provide Feedback on our Institutional Self Evaluation By 5 p.m. TODAY**

The public comment period on the first draft of our Institutional Self Evaluation Report (ISER) will close today, March 28, at 5 p.m. [Drafts of each of the four accreditation standards are available here](#). Please feel free to make comments directly in the drafts or email members of the ISER Writing Team directly: [Hyla Lacefield](#), Faculty Accreditation Lead or [Karen Engel](#), Dean of PRIE and Accreditation Liaison Officer.

### **Please Attend Upcoming Webinars on Student Form Updates**

SMCCCD is updating student forms and embedding them into the Student Success Links. This change has advantages, including streamlining the process for students, improving staff workflows and replacing fillable .pdfs with an automated system. Please attend one of these webinars to better understand the change. The system will go live on April 1. A special webinar for Deans will be held on March 28.

March 28, 10 to 11 a.m. - [Deans training](#)

March 28, 1 to 2 p.m. - [SMCCCD webinar](#)

*APRIL 1, REGISTRATION form goes live!*

April 9, 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - [SMCCCD webinar](#)

April 11, 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - [SMCCCD webinar](#)

### **OYE Conference at Cañada College**

Last Saturday, Cañada was proud to serve as the host location of the OYE conference - for the 13th year! The OYE Conference brought more than 600 community members to campus including the San Mateo-Foster City School District who bussed in 100 middle schoolers.

This event was made possible thanks to the collaborative efforts of various community partners, including Cañada's own dedicated team of employees and students: Maria Huning, Olivia Cortez-Figueroa, Outreach Campus Ambassadors, Middle College, Adolfo Leiva, Rachel Corrales, Anthony Lim, Martyns Kanu, John Kenny, Diego Payan, Melissa Maldonado, Brianna Chavez, Alexis Arevalo Murillo, Sharon Song, John Ohara, Wissem Bennani and the Facilities Team. This year's conference included a welcome from Redwood City Mayor, Elmer Martinez Saballos, and Keynote Speaker Michelle Vilchez, CEO of Innovate Schools. It also featured a series of workshops aimed at empowering attendees, one of which was an intergenerational workshop led by Cañada's SparkPoint Staff to discuss ways to make money smart decisions and change mindsets about Making Money Moves.



## **Unity Technologies Visits Apprenticeship Program**

The Cañada Apprenticeship program recently welcomed representatives from Unity Technologies for an engaging campus visit and student showcase. Guests included Joy Horvath, Senior Program Manager at Elevate; Elana Congress, Senior Product Marketing Manager at Unity Learn and Bradston Henry, Senior Advocate – Education at Unity Learn.



The visit began with a campus tour, followed by an interactive session with Digital Art & Animation and Game Design students. During an informal demonstration and Q&A, students presented work from Professor Randy Angle's class and a new campus navigation app developed by Menlo Studio students. The Unity team offered valuable insights and perspectives, answering student questions and sharing their expertise in game development and digital media. The visit provided an inspiring exchange of ideas, reinforcing the connection between industry leaders and emerging talent.



### **Cañada College PTK Chapter Earns Top Honors at Regional Convention**

The Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) chapter of Cañada College recently attended the Nevada-California Regional Leadership and Awards Convention, earning several prestigious recognitions:

- Outstanding Honors in Action Award for its MacBeth Effect project
- Regional Awards for collaborative efforts with other chapters, as well as its coat drive and book drive initiatives
- Distinguished Advisor Awards presented to two of its advisors, Autumn McMahon and Paul Roscelli
- Regional Vice Presidency won by Drew Choueiri, representing the chapter

The PTK chapter thanks the following departments and programs for their invaluable support: ASCC, Middle College, Drama and English Departments, Marketing, ITS, Office of the President, Office of Instruction and PRIE.



### **Cañada Participates in AANAPISI Day at SFSU**

Last Friday, the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander S.T.A.R. (Success, Transfer, Access, Relevance) Program participated in the annual AANAPISI Day campus visit to San Francisco State University (SFSU) alongside CSM and Skyline College. Students had an opportunity to hear from a student panel, learn about the transfer admissions process, attend a financial literacy workshop and participate in a poetry writing workshop from two SFSU Ethnic Studies professors. It was a full day of learning and community building. Visit [this link](#) for more information on the AANHPI S.T.A.R. Program at Cañada College.





## Digital Art & Animation Program Represented at Game Developers Conference

Cañada College students attended the Game Developers Conference (GDC) in San Francisco last week with Digital Art & Animation Program Faculty Coordinator, Hyla Lacefield. The conference allowed students to gain valuable industry exposure and network with peers and professionals alike. Cañada College was well represented with a booth, demos and swag!



## VROC Open House

Earlier this week, the Veterans Resource and Opportunity Center (VROC) held a two-day Open House, welcoming Veterans, Dependents and the campus community to explore the newly renovated space. Guests had the chance to meet the VROC team, learn about available resources and enjoy food and conversation in a warm, welcoming environment. A standout feature of the renovation is a vibrant red accent wall proudly displaying the official seals of each U.S. military branch - creating a space that honors and reflects those it serves.



## Honors Transfer Program (HTP) is Making Records!

The Honors Transfer Program (HTP) is setting new records and achieving remarkable success! HTP students continue to excel and the numbers speak for themselves:

- *The highest number of Honors Transfer Students recorded since 2017.* Measured each year in May, there were 120 students in 2024 and currently 140 HTP students (with rolling admissions)
- *Highest honors course enrollments since 2021* per the 2023-2024 PRIE report: 226 students
- *Higher than average Honors Transfer Alliance Program (TAP) acceptances to UCLA:* In 2024, 86% of our HTP students were accepted to UCLA. That's 3% higher than other California community college honors transfer programs (Cañada non-TAP acceptances were 21% and the overall acceptance rate at UCLA was only 9%)
- *The most Honors Contract Proposals ever recorded in HTP:* 78 contract proposals in the 2024-2025 academic year
- *Highest completion rate of Honors Contracts since 2018:* 76%, and 80% for students who took the Honors Research Seminar IDST 150 (prior averages were 66%)
- *First-ever Honors S.T.A.R. Collaboration* (see photo below of Mary Ho launching the event)
- *Five Honors students accepted to present at the Western Regional Honors Conference* in Denver, Colorado and grants funded to fly out this April 3-5!
- *The most HTP students ever to apply to the Bay Honors Research Symposium (BHC)* this spring: 17 students
- *The most students accepted at the Bay Honors Research Symposium since 2011!* Eight HTP students were among only 40% of the 248 applicants invited to present

This year, the Bay Honors Research Symposium will be held at UC Berkeley on April 26. Cañada-selected BHC presenters will be refining their talks and practicing at the [Cañada College Honors Research Showcase on April 10 and 11](#). All are welcome to come and support them. Please [RSVP](#) for the presentations and lunch.



I wish you a wonderful Spring Break! My next Weekly Update will be sent on Friday, April 11.

Sincerely,  
Kim