

President's Board of Trustees Report

The President's Monthly Report to the Board of Trustees, Campus & Community

Celebrating 99 Years of Community, Growth & Transformation

June 2025



SBVC GRADUATES LARGEST CLASS EVER

San Bernardino Valley College marked a historic milestone on May 23, 2025, by graduating its largest class ever during Commencement at San Manuel Stadium. A total of 1,765 students were honored, with more than 2,500 degrees and certificates conferred—the highest number in the college's nearly 100-year history.

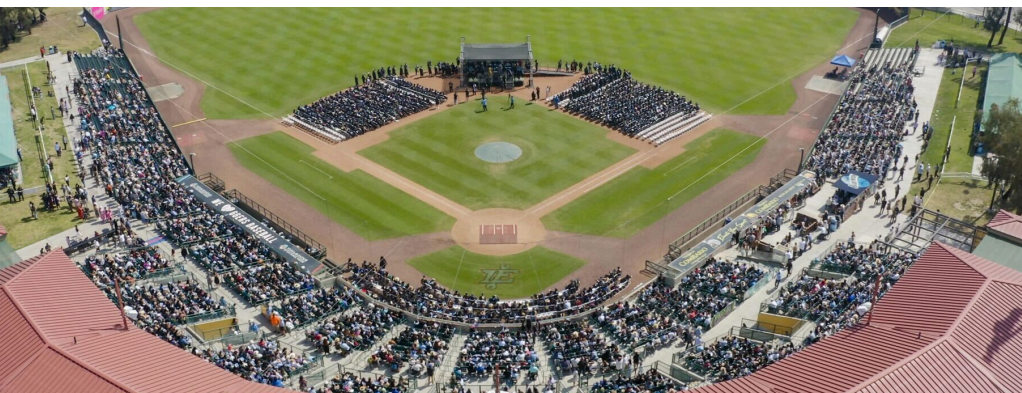
The ceremony celebrated not only academic achievement but also resilience and diversity. Among the graduates, 12% earned a 4.0 GPA, and many were the first in their families to earn a college degree. The top hometowns represented were San Bernardino, Rialto, Highland, Colton, and Fontana.

Jesse Chavez-Cordova, a first-generation student and former Highland City Councilmember, delivered the student address. After re-enrolling at SBVC to finish his degree while managing hearing loss, Chavez-Cordova shared how the college helped him rediscover his voice and direction. He plans to continue his studies in strategic communications at Cal State San Bernardino.

SBVC President Dr. Gilbert J. Contreras and SBCCD Chancellor Dr. Diana Z. Rodriguez delivered keynote remarks, emphasizing student perseverance and community impact.

A new campus spirit chant—"Go Valley, Valley Up!"—was introduced for the first time, with students raising a hand symbol resembling a peace sign to show pride and unity.

The ceremony was livestreamed for broader access, and hundreds tuned in remotely. SBVC extends deep appreciation to faculty, staff, and volunteers who made the event a success, exemplifying the college's mission of transforming lives through education.



GOAL 1

ELIMINATE BARRIERS TO
STUDENT ACCESS & SUCCESS.



GOAL 2

BE A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, INCLUSIVE,
& ANTI-RACIST INSTITUTION.



GOAL 3

BE A LEADER & PARTNER IN
ADDRESSING REGIONAL ISSUES.



GOAL 4

ENSURE FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY
& SUSTAINABILITY.

SPOTLIGHTING OUR SUCCESS



SBVC CELEBRATES STAFF, FACULTY AT SPOTLIGHTING OUR SUCCESS DINNER

The Applied Technology Building was decked out for the event in blue and white decor, with crystal goblets and floral centerpieces on each table. Attendees walked a red carpet with photo opportunities before enjoying a buffet dinner catered by the Culinary Arts program.

Spotlighting Our Success has been held for three decades, and is a "monumental tradition, a real signature event in our 99-year history," SBVC President Gilbert Contreras said during remarks. "We get to spotlight the incredible people who make San Bernardino Valley College one of the top-performing community colleges in the nation. Each of you, from our dedicated instructors to our staff, plays an important part in our mission."

Staff and faculty nominate colleagues in several categories, with up to two winners in each field. The event also celebrates advances in academic rank and retirements — together, Elaine Akers, Maria Valdez, Mark Williams, and Peter John Stanskas had a combined 98 years of service. Stanskas, who passed away in early 2025, was made professor emeritus along with Colleen Calderon.

The evening's winners include:

- Arts and Humanities Achievement Award: Carol Damgen, Communications faculty
- Academic Success and Learning Achievement Award - Arnaldo Torres, library media clerk
- Student Equity and Success Achievement Award: Naomi Lara, administrative assistant, Student Equity and Success
- Student Engagement and Wellness Achievement Award: Marie Maghuyop, student engagement specialist, Student Engagement and Wellness
- Social Sciences, Human Development and Physical Education Achievement Award: Kimberly Jefferson, Social Sciences, Human Development and Physical Education faculty
- Honored Retiree: Yolanda Simental, Nursing director
- Innovator of the Year: Danielle Graham, Social Sciences, Human Development and Physical Education chair
- Manager of the Year: Uvaldo Sifuentes, Campus Technology Services director
- Excellence Award: Amy Avelar, Science faculty
- District Employee of the Year: Joe Cabrales, Educational and Student Support Services district dean
- Outstanding Service Award: Matthew Kim, web developer, Marketing, Creative Services and Public Affairs
- Outstanding Adjunct Professor: Brenda Orozco, counseling faculty, Counseling and Matriculation
- Outstanding Professor: Anthony Blacksher, Social Sciences, Human Development and Physical Education chair faculty; and Jessy Lemieux, Science faculty
- Classified Employee of the Year: Patrice Hollis, financial aid coordinator; and Sylvia Romo, admissions and records specialist





SBVC AWARDS OVER \$800K IN SCHOLARSHIPS

San Bernardino Valley College proudly celebrated the achievements and aspirations of 577 students at its annual Scholarship Awards Ceremony on Tuesday, May 6, 2025. Held in the college's historic Auditorium, the event marked a major milestone, with 825 scholarships awarded, totaling an impressive \$800,000 in financial support exclusively for SBVC students - the highest amount ever disbursed to students in a single year.

The evening began with a special donor reception honoring the individuals, families, and organizations whose ongoing generosity made the scholarships possible. The reception offered donors a unique opportunity to meet the students who received their endowed awards. Among the esteemed guests were community leaders, SBVC faculty and staff, and loyal supporters committed to uplifting local students.

SBVC President Gilbert Contreras highlighted how reducing financial barriers enables students to focus on their education and future careers. "For almost 100 years, people have come here with a dream and left with a future," said Contreras. "At San Bernardino Valley College, 70% of our students experience at least one form of basic needs insecurity. Scholarships matter at San Bernardino Valley College."

The audience was moved by two exceptional SBVC nursing students, Lina Feng-Yang and April Ruelas, who shared their inspiring personal stories. Feng-Yang, whose family immigrated from China to Venezuela, boldly moved to the United States on her own to pursue a better future. She is graduating this May with a 3.9 GPA and began the SBVC nursing program in 2024. Her passion for equitable healthcare and language accessibility promises to make her a compassionate and effective provider.

Her fellow speaker, Ruelas, a local student from the Inland Empire, spoke about her journey as a single mother striving to break generational cycles and build a better life for her family. "Échale ganas, mija," she recalled, which translates to "Keep going, daughter"—a powerful mantra that fuels her determination to succeed and inspire her child.

The event celebrated not only academic excellence but also the strength of the SBVC community and the perseverance of its students. Over the past four years, the SBVC Foundation has awarded more than \$2.5 million in scholarships and over \$5 million in support for campus programs, demonstrating its unwavering commitment to educational equity and student success.

SBVC HOLDS FIRST GRADUATION FOR AERONAUTICS STUDENTS



San Bernardino Valley College's Aeronautics graduates are ready to soar to new heights — but first, they celebrated together at the inaugural Aeronautics Graduation and BBQ on May 16.

Nearly 40 students participated, along with families and friends. The event was also an open house of lab and classroom facilities, and "seeing our hangar and interacting with our airplanes and staff gave all of our visitors a better understanding of what their graduate was busy doing at our college," Prof. Francisco Gonzalez said. Graduates also received a gift: FAA grant-awarded toolboxes.



SBVC HONORS BLACK GRADUATES WITH ANNUAL BLACK GRAD CELEBRATION



Spirits were high during the 45th Annual Black Grad Celebration on May 17, honoring the accomplishments of dozens of graduates from San Bernardino Valley College and Crafton Hills College. The evening was filled with laughter, food, music, and live entertainment. This event was founded in 1980 by the San Bernardino Community College District's Black Faculty and Staff Association as a way of celebrating students who persevered and completed their educational journey.

SBVC HOSTS NUESTRA GRADUACIÓN FOR LATINX GRADUATES OF CLASS OF 2025

More than 500 people gathered on May 18 for the Nuestra Graduación, a celebration of academic achievement and Latinx culture. Organized by the Latino Faculty, Staff & Administrators' Association (LFSAA), the event honors the "diverse journeys of Latinx students, ensuring that each student's experience is recognized in a way that resonates with their identity," LFSAA President Aida Gil said. The festivities included music from a mariachi band, speeches from campus and district leaders, and the presentation of special Latinx stoles "symbolizing pride and connection to their heritage."



SBVC CELEBRATES THIRD ANNUAL LAVENDER GRAD FOR LBGTQ+ STUDENTS & ALLIES



LGBTQIA+ graduates and allies celebrated their accomplishments on May 13 during the Lavender Grad, hosted by Prof. Todd Heibel with music provided by DJ Les. This was the third Lavender Grad held on campus, with 12 students participating in the festivities. A highlight was one of the graduates sharing that "it took him 18 years and several different schools to get to this point, and they credit the supportive environment of SBVC, specifically STAR Program, that believed in him when he didn't believe in himself," said Student Engagement Specialist Marie Maghuyop.

SBVC HOLDS GRAD CEREMONY FOR ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER STUDENTS

Open to all San Bernardino Valley College and Crafton Hills College graduates, the API Grad on May 8 marked the achievements of Asian and Pacific Islander students. The afternoon celebration included performances by Pasefika Student Union and Taiko Mix and remarks from Sefa Aina, Associate Dean and Director of the Draper Center for Community Partnerships at Pomona College, who spoke about the strength of each graduate's ancestors and how community played a role in their educational journeys.



SBVC HONORS PACIFIC ISLANDER CULTURE WITH ISLANDER GRAD



On May 3, local Pacific Islander graduates came together for Island Grad, an evening recognizing their culture and community. The event kicked off with the Oli Aloha welcoming chant, and included the presentation of scholarship awards and stoles and several traditional dance performances.