



# PRESIDENT'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

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

## SBVC Marks First Black History Month with BSI Designation

San Bernardino Valley College celebrated its first year as an official Black-Serving Institution (BSI) with a festive brunch February 4, featuring music by the Giancarlo Jazz Band, a catered meal, and a sparkling cider toast.

"May this gathering remind us where we come from, recognize the work we are doing now, and keep us moving forward," said San Bernardino Community College District Black Faculty Staff Association President Veada Benjamin-Hill.

The brunch honored several faculty members, staff, and students for their leadership and service to SBVC and the community, including EOPS Counselor and Associate Professor Keenan Giles, who said his and his colleagues' work at SBVC "is about a higher calling." Fellow honoree Stephanie Lewis, Dean of Mathematics, Business, and Computer Technology, agreed, sharing that the community is the reason she's stayed at SBVC for 20 years. "We have to be exemplars for our students," she added.

Student honoree Alaysha Nash encouraged her fellow Black students to finish their degrees and become leaders in their professions. "I'm thankful for a school that gives me space to be a leader," she said.

SBVC President Gilbert J. Contreras celebrated the contributions of the Black community throughout the college's 100 years and its recent BSI designation. He reaffirmed SBVC's commitment to continuing "our journey to elevate Black excellence" while "defining this institution and region as a place of opportunity for everyone who wants access to a better way of life."

This year's honorees were: Wilma Cochrane, Matriarch Legacy Award; Keenan Giles, Torchbearer Award for Justice, Leadership & Mentorship; Dr. Stephanie Lewis, Transformational Access Award; Quincy Brewer, Excellence in Athletic Leadership Award; April Dale, Institutional Impact Award; Alaysha Nash, Emerging Leader of Distinction Award; Kathy Kafela, Umoja Collective Impact Award; and Dina Walker, Community Leadership & Service Award.



# Sold-Out “Centennial Journey” Gala to Feature Restored 100-Year-Old Buick



San Bernardino Valley College's sold-out, black-tie gala “Centennial Journey” will feature a walkway of classic cars, including a 1926 Buick Standard 6 - Model 28 that is being restored by members of the SBVC automotive program.

The car walkway is a tribute to Route 66, which was officially established in 1926 — the same year as San Bernardino Valley College.

“SBVC’s Centennial Journey isn’t just about looking back on our first hundred years — it’s about driving forward into the next century,” said San Bernardino Valley College Foundation Executive Director Mike Layne.

Automotive faculty member Edgar Pelayo started restoring the Buick in the fall, inviting current and former students into the Applied Technology Building's street rod lab to help with tasks, like painting. He started the work from scratch, taking the car apart, stripping it to bare metal, and hand cutting and welding pieces.

“I’m learning as I go, too — I’ve never had a 100-year-old car,” said Pelayo, who used to run his own shop.

At the gala on March 27, attendees will be able to get up close and admire the Buick, a piece of history Pelayo said is hard to find in the car world. It’s also personal for SBVC’s automotive community. Instructor Craig Hopkins, who was helping Pelayo with the restoration, passed away in December, so “we’re making the car kind of a memorial for him, too,” Pelayo said.

## SBVC Sees Highest Spring Enrollment in Over 30 Years



San Bernardino Valley College notched its highest spring semester enrollment in more than three decades, with a total of 15,064 students enrolled as of mid-February.

This is a jump from 13,541 in spring 2025 and the highest spring enrollment going back to 1993, the first year of records available from the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office.

About 69% of students enrolled in at least one online class, while 41% opted for in-person classes. SBVC also remains a stronghold for first-generation college students, who represent 47% of the student body.

## APIA Holds First Lunar New Year Celebration

Students, faculty, and staff welcomed the Year of the Horse during the Asian and Pacific Islander Association’s (APIA) first-ever Lunar New Year event.

Attendees wrote down new year’s wishes and goals, colored pages with zodiac animals and other Asian-inspired images, took photos with Blue, and enjoyed fortune cookies, Asian candy, fruit, and dumplings. Lunar New Year, which officially started February 17, follows the Chinese lunar calendar and is a time for those who celebrate to put up red decorations, enjoy big meals, clean their homes, and visit family.

Student Engagement Specialist Marie Maghuyop hopes the APIA event will become an annual celebration.

“It’s the centennial year,” she said. “I wanted to see how we could make this happen.”



# Hundreds of Students Apply for Commencement at Grad Check Fest



More than 200 Wolverines braved the rain to prepare for commencement at the Counseling Department's Grad Check Fest February 11.

In addition to meeting with counselors to apply for graduation and pre-registering for commencement festivities, students enjoyed breakfast and lunch, churros, a mobile coffee bar, special T-shirts, a photo op, and upbeat music. There was also a resource fair where students could learn more about San Bernardino Valley College's affinity groups, get information about the Alumni Association and SBVC Foundation scholarships, and meet representatives from the University of Redlands and California Baptist University.

Counseling staff have been helping students apply for graduation since the start of the spring semester, and Grad Fest brought them together in one place, making it easier to guide more students through the submission process.

"It was a productive and rewarding day, and we're glad so many students were able to take advantage of the support available," Counselor Debbie Orozco said.

## Dr. Contreras Presents at Networking Club



President Gilbert J. Contreras attended a meeting of the SBVC Networking Club on February 4, sharing insights with students about the importance of forging connections while staying true to their authentic selves.

The club meets weekly and gives members a place to learn social and professional networking. Contreras told the students that while he networks all the time and this strengthens him as a leader, "it isn't something that came naturally — I was shy."

A chance encounter might lead to opportunities, he said, like when two students who spoke at the President's Circle Luncheon in November received job offers from business representatives in attendance. He also praised the Den2Den Housing Pathway Program, a collaboration between SBVC and Cal State San Bernardino.

"That would have never happened if there wasn't a connection between the chancellor and the president, and me and the chancellor and the president," Contreras said. "Networking produces results as you get people in the same room."

## CENTENNIAL SPOTLIGHT

# Sarah Gomez Erlach

Sarah Gomez Erlach dedicated her life and career to caring for others and ensuring migrant workers in California had access to quality health services.

The San Bernardino native graduated from San Bernardino Valley College in 1945 with a nursing degree and immediately joined the U.S. Army, serving as a career military nurse for 34 years in both the Army and U.S. Army Reserve, where she was promoted to the rank of colonel. She was the first Hispanic student to enroll at the University of California, Berkeley's School of Nursing, and after earning her bachelor's degree in 1949 worked for the Alameda County Health Department.

Alumni Hall of Famer Sarah Gomez Erlach

Gomez Erlach played a pivotal role in improving health care for migrant workers, writing the state of California's Rural Health legislation plan in the early 1970s. This became the Primary Health Care and Community Service Division, which set up 75 rural health clinics and continues to offer programs today. When she retired in 1988, Gomez Erlach was serving as chief of the division.

For her work, she received the University of California, San Francisco's prestigious UCSF Medal and the UCSF Alumni Board's Award for Excellence as a Pioneer in Primary Health Care for Underserved Groups. Gomez Erlach, who was inducted into the SBVC Alumni Hall of Fame in 1995, died in 2015.

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

# Jazmyn Tonumaipea

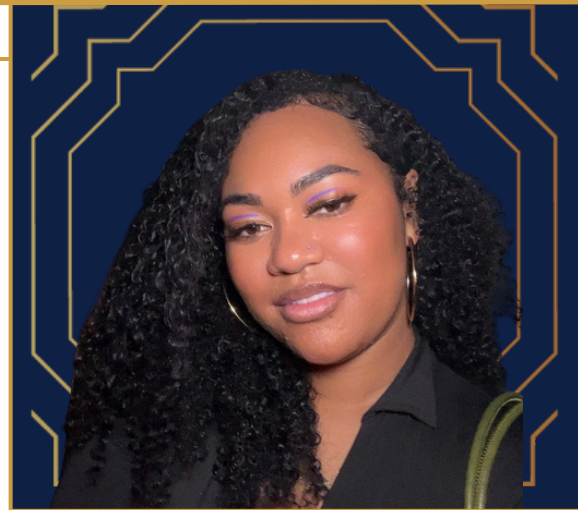
When Jazmyn Tonumaipea enrolled at San Bernardino Valley College, it wasn't just for her — she also did it for her family.

"A lot of my motivation comes from leading by example," Tonumaipea said. "I want my child and my brothers to see that there are no limits to what you can achieve when you have a community behind you, a strong sense of purpose, and a clear vision for your life."

SBVC offered everything the Ontario resident was looking for when it came to furthering her education. A Sociology, Communications, and Ethnic Studies major, Tonumaipea dove into campus life, becoming involved in the Honors Program, Umoja Tumaini, Pasefika Student Union, and the Participatory Governance Taskforce.

She is also a Valley 360 volunteer, a Center for Community College Partnerships Scholar at UCLA, and serves on Associated Student Government as Vice President of Marketing. Tonumaipea ran for the position to "show that non-traditional students, including student parents like me, can be active, visible, and influential on campus," she said.

Tonumaipea is Black and Samoan, and while growing up, culture was a "source of solace," she said. Joining the Pasefika Student Union gave her "another space to stay connected to culture, community, and support, which is something I believe all students should experience." By being an active member of the campus community, Tonumaipea is both improving the student experience for her fellow Wolverines and developing close bonds with faculty and staff. "My favorite thing about attending SBVC is the people who show up for students with consistency, compassion, and real support," she said.



Jazmyn Tonumaipea