



PRESIDENT'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

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

SBVC Celebrates Historic Centennial Commencement



More than 1,500 blue-clad graduates were awarded degrees and certificates at San Bernardino Valley College's centennial Commencement on May 16.

As cheering family and friends watched from the field and bleachers, graduates, dignitaries, and faculty walked into SBVC Stadium to "Celebration" by Kool & the Gang, before the music transitioned to "Pomp & Circumstance."

SBVC President Dr. Gilbert J. Contreras welcomed graduates and attendees, then shared a monumental statistic. "Class of 2026, you are the largest graduating class in the 100-year history of San Bernardino Valley College!" he declared.

San Bernardino Community College District Chancellor Dr. Diana Z. Rodriguez also reminded graduates that they were making history. "This is our 100th birthday year and you are a huge part of it," she said. "Years from now, people will look back at photos from this day and see you, the centennial class."

Class speaker Brittany Wall said the Class of 2026 was defined by rising above challenges and circumstances. "So here's to 100 years of excellence at San Bernardino Valley College," she said. "We are adding ourselves to that legacy."

California State Senator and SBVC Distinguished Alumna Eloise Gómez Reyes noted that "for a century, this institution has opened doors to Dreamers, workers, parents, immigrants, veterans, first-generation students, and anyone willing to believe an education could change the trajectory of their life."

At the close of the ceremony, drones lit up the sky and showcased iconic images from SBVC's history.

SBCCD Celebrates Nuestra Graduación at SBVC

About 200 Hispanic, Latino, and Chicano San Bernardino Community College District students honored their cultures and traditions at the Nuestra Graduación ceremony May 9 at San Bernardino Valley College.

Graduates and their families enjoyed tacos from Espinoza Market, music by a mariachi band, and photo opps. One of the most meaningful moments occurred when graduates received their colorfully-striped serape sashes, said Aida Gil, president of the Latino Faculty, Staff & Administrators Association.

"The sash represents care, support, and sacrifice," Gil added. "It is a symbol of appreciation for their steadfast perseverance and for choosing Valley as their home."

SBCCD Chancellor Dr. Diana Z. Rodriguez, SBVC President Dr. Gilbert J. Contreras, and SBVC Vice President of Instruction Leticia Hector were on hand to celebrate with the graduates.



SBVC Hosts First Black Grad Ceremony as BSI



San Bernardino Valley College hosted its first Black Grad ceremony as a Black-Serving Institution on May 8.

Organized by the San Bernardino Community College District Black Faculty & Staff Association, the event has been held for 46 years and honors Black graduates from SBVC and Crafton Hills College.

The ceremony recognizes the "accomplishments of the student demographic that has historically been the lowest performing and least likely to complete," said EOPS/CARE Counselor Keenan Giles. "The gathering is of cultural importance and significance because of its symbolism of Black Excellence, and serves as a family-oriented, informal show of communal support for our graduates. We are intentionally celebrating and honoring what it means to be Black in higher education."

This year, about 75 graduates from both campuses attended Black Grad, along with more than 200 family and community members, SBVC President Dr. Gilbert J. Contreras, and SBCCD Chancellor Dr. Diana Z. Rodriguez.

Lavender Grad Recognizes LGBTQ+ Graduates

Nearly a dozen LGBTQ+ graduates gathered together on April 27 for the Lavender Graduation, a ceremony honoring their achievements while at San Bernardino Valley College.

Students were joined by family, friends, and members of the campus community, and received special rainbow stoles to wear during graduation. Toi Thibodeaux, program director of the IE LGBTQ+ Center at TruEvolution in Riverside, served as the keynote speaker, a first for the event. Graduates were also invited to share their thoughts in front of the crowd.

This was the fourth annual Lavender Graduation, and the ceremony has "grown tremendously" over the years, said Student Engagement Specialist Marie Maghuyop.



API Grad Honors SBVC's Asian and Pacific Islander Graduates

As their friends and family watched, nine Asian and Pacific Islander (API) students were feted during the API Grad on May 7.

San Bernardino City Unified School District Board Member Dr. Scott Wyatt served as the event's keynote speaker. Students also had the opportunity to address the audience, and many shared "words about their journeys and the guidance and support from their families," said Student Engagement Specialist Marie Maghuyop.

This was SBVC's third API Grad, and participating students were given commemorative stoles to wear during commencement.



STEM-MESA Graduation Ceremony Recognizes Science, Math, Tech and Engineering Grads

Ahead of commencement, more than 50 STEM students participated in the festive STEM-MESA Graduation Ceremony on May 1.

Friends and family joined the students for a special brunch on campus. The first STEM-MESA Graduation Ceremony was held in 2025, and was such a success that it is now an annual event.

STEM graduates leave SBVC prepared to continue their studies or launch careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.



SBVC Holds First Grad Ceremony for Dreamers

San Bernardino Valley College's Dreamers Resource Center held its inaugural Monarch Graduation ceremony on April 30, with each student receiving a gift bag, certificate, and sash.

The name of the event honored the migratory monarch butterfly, which has become a symbol for many undocumented people in North America.

The Dreamers Resource Center was established in 2015 and offers undocumented students with counseling and academic and peer advising.

Participants praised the center, with one saying it has "empowered me to continue pursuing my academic goals and build a better future for my family."

Another called it a "game-changer" that helped her "through this tough journey. Trying to raise my two daughters and working full time and going to school was extremely challenging."

Coordinator Evelyn Ruiz said the event was particularly memorable because it coincided with SBVC's centennial.



CENTENNIAL SPOTLIGHT

Jack Brown



**SBVC Hall of Fame Alumnus
Jack Brown**

Jack Brown was committed to giving back to the community that raised him.

The San Bernardino native served as executive chairman of Stater Bros. Markets for more than 35 years, and his philanthropic efforts included launching Stater Bros. Charities in 2008. The nonprofit has invested more than \$54 million in a variety of causes, including fighting food insecurity, cancer research, education, and helping veterans.

Brown entered the grocery world at age 13, when he started working as a box boy at Berk's Market Spot. He attended San Bernardino Valley College in the late 1950s, where he studied business administration and served as founding president of SBVC's first Greek fraternity, Beta Tau Omega.

"Valley College was a tremendous first step in my career," Brown said in an interview with the SBVC Foundation. He went on to attend San Jose State University and UCLA and joined the U.S. Navy.

Throughout his life, Brown donated his time to causes that improved life in the Inland Empire. He was the founding chairman of Children's Fund of San Bernardino County and a board member of local chapters of the American Red Cross, Goodwill Industries, and YMCA. His dedication to service earned him regional and national recognition, and in 1993 he became the first SBVC alumnus to receive the California Community College Distinguished Alumni Award. Brown, a 1991 inductee into the SBVC Alumni Hall of Fame, died in 2016 at age 76.

Aeronautics Grad's Career Takes Flight

Cassandra Soto has always been interested in airplanes, and when she saw a San Bernardino Valley College flyer seeking aeronautics students, she took action.

Soto spotted the advertisement while working at Amazon Air, and quickly got in touch with an SBVC counselor to learn more about the Aviation Maintenance Technician program.

"As the questions started rolling, the more I realized, hey, this is something I'm interested in. Let me give it a try," she said. "Before I knew it, three years passed."

During that time, she went on a field trip to Gulfstream and participated in national maintenance competitions with classmates. At one event, she connected with Alaska Airlines, which led to a job she will start after graduation.

Soto's journey to becoming an aircraft mechanic included driving from Perris for classes and taking advantage of exam vouchers and the BookSaver program. The financial support was a blessing, she said, along with networking opportunities at job fairs and competitions.

"They helped me build up my resume and it's probably the reason I was able to land a job with Alaska in the first place, because they helped me so much with all of these things," Soto said.

