

CITRUS *view*

LATEST NEWS FROM CITRUS COLLEGE



Outstanding colleagues honored with new award

Five Citrus College employees were recently honored at Flex Day. Pictured (L-R): Areej Qasqas, Tommy Reyes, Darla Ramirez, Gwen Harris and Dr. Elaine Lipiz Gonzalez.

Citrus College recently recognized five employees for their significant contributions to the campus community.

During Flex Day on Feb. 17, Dr. Greg Schulz, superintendent/president of Citrus College, and other campus leaders announced the inaugural recipients of the newly established Outstanding Colleagues Award.

The 2026 honorees include:

Gwen Harris

Schedule and Catalog Analyst

Known for going above and beyond, Ms. Harris has played a vital role on campus since 2014. As schedule and catalog analyst, she assists with the development, preparation and timing of class schedules by working with academic and student services divisions.

Colleagues described Ms. Harris as creative, committed and inclusive. Others praised her ability to make every individual feel seen, heard and valued.

Elaine Lipiz Gonzalez, Ed.D.

Dean of Counseling Programs and Services

An experienced professional, educator and leader, Dr. Lipiz Gonzalez began serving as dean in December 2023. She works with multiple constituency groups on campus, including managers, faculty, classified staff, professional experts and students.

Peers consistently praised Dr. Lipiz Gonzalez as a team-player and collaborator who leads with empathy and compassion. She was also lauded for being an attentive listener and someone who holds an unwavering commitment to helping students reach their educational and career goals.

Areej Qasqas

Adjunct Faculty, History

Since joining the campus community nearly a decade ago, Ms. Qasqas has had an enormous impact on her students. She teaches history and government courses and serves as co-advisor of Beta Nu Eta, the college's chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) honor society.

In this role, Ms. Qasqas works closely with students and supports them as they enhance their academic and career leadership skills.

Darla Ramirez

Administrative Secretary II (retired)

From 2015 to 2025, Ms. Ramirez supported countless staff and students in her role as administrative secretary II.

Known for her passion, thoughtfulness and dependability, she routinely went above and beyond performing a variety of technical, secretarial and administrative support duties in the natural and physical sciences subdivision.

Tommy Reyes

Faculty, Architecture

Mr. Reyes joined the campus community as a full-time instructor in fall 2022 and teaches multiple courses each semester. In addition, he oversees the college's Architecture Club and mentors students as they take on large architecture projects, including Showers of Grace and Pando Populus.

Teammates credited Mr. Reyes for fostering an inclusive and collaborative learning environment for students. They also praised him for his integrity and empathy.

Construction management program leads state with accreditation



Citrus College Construction Management students visit Los Angeles World Airports facilities during a field trip in summer 2024.

The Citrus College Construction Management program has become the first community college program in California to earn accreditation from the American Council for Construction Education (ACCE), marking a significant milestone for construction education in the state.

ACCE serves as the premier accrediting body for construction-related academic programs in the United States. This accreditation is widely recognized as a benchmark for success, and it sets Citrus College apart.

To receive accreditation, the Citrus College team completed a comprehensive self-study, working closely with industry representatives and ACCE officials. This collaborative process led to several curriculum adjustments in order to meet

industry standards and the college's academic requirements. The self-study was then submitted to ACCE in May 2025, and an official accrediting team visited the Citrus College campus in October 2025 to conduct their review.

"Special thanks to the administrators, staff and students at Citrus College who took part in our site visit in the fall, as well as to our construction management industry advisory board (IAB). We couldn't have achieved this milestone without you," said Roberto Loya, construction management faculty member. "Industry accreditation is vital because it helps employers recognize quality candidates who have the education and training to make meaningful contributions to their profession. It signals that our students have met high standards of competence."

College honored for its commitment to student-veterans

For years, Citrus College has excelled at serving student-veterans and helping them reach their academic, professional and personal goals.

In March, VIQORY, a veteran-owned small business, once again recognized the college as a Military Friendly School and Military Spouse Friendly School.

Each year, VIQORY highlights colleges and universities from across the country with these impressive designations by using public data sources and responses from a proprietary survey. For 2026, Citrus College was placed in the Gold category.



Every year, Citrus College and Azusa Pacific University co-host Saluting Our Veterans, a ceremony recognizing local servicemembers.

Led by Maria Buffo, the Citrus College Veterans Success Center serves student-veterans and their families daily. Under her leadership, a team of staff members, counselors and interns connect students with resources, academic counseling and more.

"The success of our student-veterans remains the top priority of the Veterans Success Center," Buffo said. "We sincerely appreciate the unwavering support from student services leadership, our campus colleagues and the surrounding community in helping our students thrive."

Monrovia students achieve dual enrollment first

Dual enrollment students from Monrovia High School will make history this spring when they complete associate degrees for transfer (ADTs) in administration of justice from Citrus College while simultaneously earning their high school diplomas.

Made possible through the College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) program, a partnership between Monrovia High School and Citrus College has enabled 11 students to earn college credit while still in high school. Upon completing their final classes this spring, they will receive their ADTs and may participate in college's 2026 commencement ceremony.

For nearly a decade, Citrus College has maintained a CCAP agreement with the Monrovia Unified School District and offered a range of transferable college courses to high school students. Over time, the partnership evolved toward intentional pathway development, with the administration of justice option serving as a prime example.



The students began taking college classes in 2022, starting with COUN 160 Strategies for College Success.

"Many of our students are first-generation college students," said Marivel Ortiz-Sanchez, director of dual enrollment at Citrus College. "By earning transferable college credits early, they alleviate a substantial portion of the financial burden often associated with higher education. Beyond that, they are reshaping their family narratives, creating access and establishing a new generational trajectory grounded in educational attainment and economic mobility."

The administration of justice ADT prepares students for careers in law enforcement, correction, and the courts, while also providing a clear pathway to four-year universities. High school students who complete the degree can enter college with junior-level standing, and those in the dual enrollment program incur no tuition, fees or textbook costs.

As Citrus College continues to expand dual enrollment pathways, more high school students will have the chance to follow suit. In fact, cohorts from both Monrovia and Azusa high schools will graduate with ADTs in sociology next year.



Men's basketball finishes among state's best

For the second time in as many years, the men's basketball team reached the semifinals stage of the 3C2A State Championship tournament.

Held on March 14 at College of the Sequoias in Visalia, the semifinal game saw Citrus College take on the reigning champions, City College of San Francisco. Despite an impressive team performance, the Fighting Owls fell to the Rams by a score of 73-71.

Though the season didn't end as they had hoped, the team still had a remarkable season.

One of the most impressive feats was that the squad averaged more than 100 points per game, the highest among all California community colleges. Moreover, they posted a 25-game winning streak prior to their loss in the semifinals.

In finishing the season with 30 wins and just two losses, the Fighting Owls posted their best record since they won the state championship in 2008. Earlier in the year, the team also set a program record for most points (147) in a game on Jan. 17.

"The entire campus community could not be more proud of our men's basketball team," Superintendent/President Schulz said. "Throughout the entire season, this team showed us what it means to have grit, determination and perseverance. Whether they will be returning next year or transferring, these outstanding scholar-athletes will undoubtedly find success in their future academic and athletic pursuits."



Campus community works together to build garden



Superintendent/President Schulz (far right) joins the grounds team and faculty members Bobby Goodman (far left) and Peter Cross (second from left) at the community garden near the Owl Café.

Over the past few months, a group of dedicated Citrus College students, faculty and staff teamed up to build a new community garden near the Owl Café and Physical Science Building.

Made possible by a Citrus College Foundation grant, the garden features contributions from students and faculty members Peter Cross and Bobby Goodman, as well as Grounds Supervisor Jorge Cortez and the grounds team.

In its current state, the garden is home to native coastal sage and other chaparral plants, which are adapted to the region's Mediterranean climate of hot, dry summers and cool, mild winters. The garden also contains several papaya plants.

Cross, a biology instructor, said the garden will be of great benefit to his students, who will use the plants in the classroom and their National Science Foundation research project.

Goodman, a wildland resources and forestry instructor, said he was inspired to plant papayas after seeing them while leading study abroad experiences in Costa Rica. The whole idea of planting the fruit, he said, is to share it with students and faculty.

Study abroad program earns national recognition

Citrus College has been named a "Top Producing Institution" by the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, according to an official mid-March announcement from the U.S. Department of State.

This recognition is part of the Gilman Program's 25th Anniversary Top Producing Institution campaign, which honors U.S. colleges and universities that have supported the highest number of Gilman Scholars between 2001 and 2025.

"It is always rewarding when Citrus College can help facilitate opportunities for students to engage with the world beyond the classroom," said Superintendent/President Schulz. "It's inspiring to see our students broaden their

perspectives through international experiences, and we're proud that Gilman scholarships continue to make those transformative opportunities accessible."

Launched in 2001, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program is designed to make international education more accessible and inclusive for American students. It provides scholarship funds to outstanding undergraduates who might not otherwise participate in study abroad opportunities because of their financial constraints.

Since 2012, more than 90 students from Citrus College have applied for scholarships from the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program. Twenty-four have been selected as recipients.



Citrus College students visited Costa Rica as part of a study abroad experience in winter 2024.

Citrus College 2024-2025 Annual Report now available



The 2024-2025 Citrus College Annual Report is now online, offering a comprehensive look at the accomplishments, milestones and moments that defined an extraordinary year for the campus community.

From record-setting commencement participation and historic Scholar Ballers recognition to a once-in-a-lifetime performance by the Citrus Singers at the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence, Italy, the report captures the breadth of student achievement that made this academic year so memorable. It also highlights key institutional advancements, including the installation of three governing board members, new transfer partnerships with Arizona State University and Azusa Pacific University, the launch of the college's branding project, and the 110th anniversary of Citrus College.

Readers are encouraged to explore the report and discover the remarkable stories of the students, faculty, staff and supporters who make Citrus College the outstanding institution it is.

[Click here to read the 2024-2025 Citrus College Annual Report \(PDF\).](#)

PTK students receive national, regional honors



Representatives from Beta Nu Eta attended the Nevada/California Regional Convention in Los Angeles in March.

Beta Nu Eta, the Citrus College chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) honor society, is celebrating another national honor!

Beta Nu Eta received a certificate of recognition for its Honors Case Study Challenge submission in March at Catalyst, the annual PTK convention. This marks the third consecutive time the chapter has earned one of the only four honorable mentions awarded annually.

Their project, titled "Election Perspectives – State Redistricting: A House Divided Once More," addresses the timely issue of gerrymandering, or manipulating voting district boundaries to favor a political party. The submission included a case study summary, an essay on future implications and academic resources for additional study.

"We are incredibly proud of this achievement," said Areej Qasqas, adjunct faculty member and PTK advisor.

"While the entire chapter contributed to the initial topic discussions, I'd like to recognize Alexander Algan, Beta Nu Eta president; Ben Parker, vice president; and Theo Gonzalez, secretary, for their leadership in writing and editing the final submission."

Earlier in March, the chapter's impact was further recognized through awards at the Nevada/California Regional Convention in Los Angeles. These included a First Place Chapter Leadership Award for the fourth consecutive year, Third Place Distinguished Theme Award and Third Place Distinguished College Project.

Additional honors included the Faculty Recognition Award for instructor Zavala Rodriguez, multiple distinguished officer and literary awards, and a variety of regional certificates recognizing excellence in leadership, service, environmental outreach, cultural programming and student success initiatives.

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