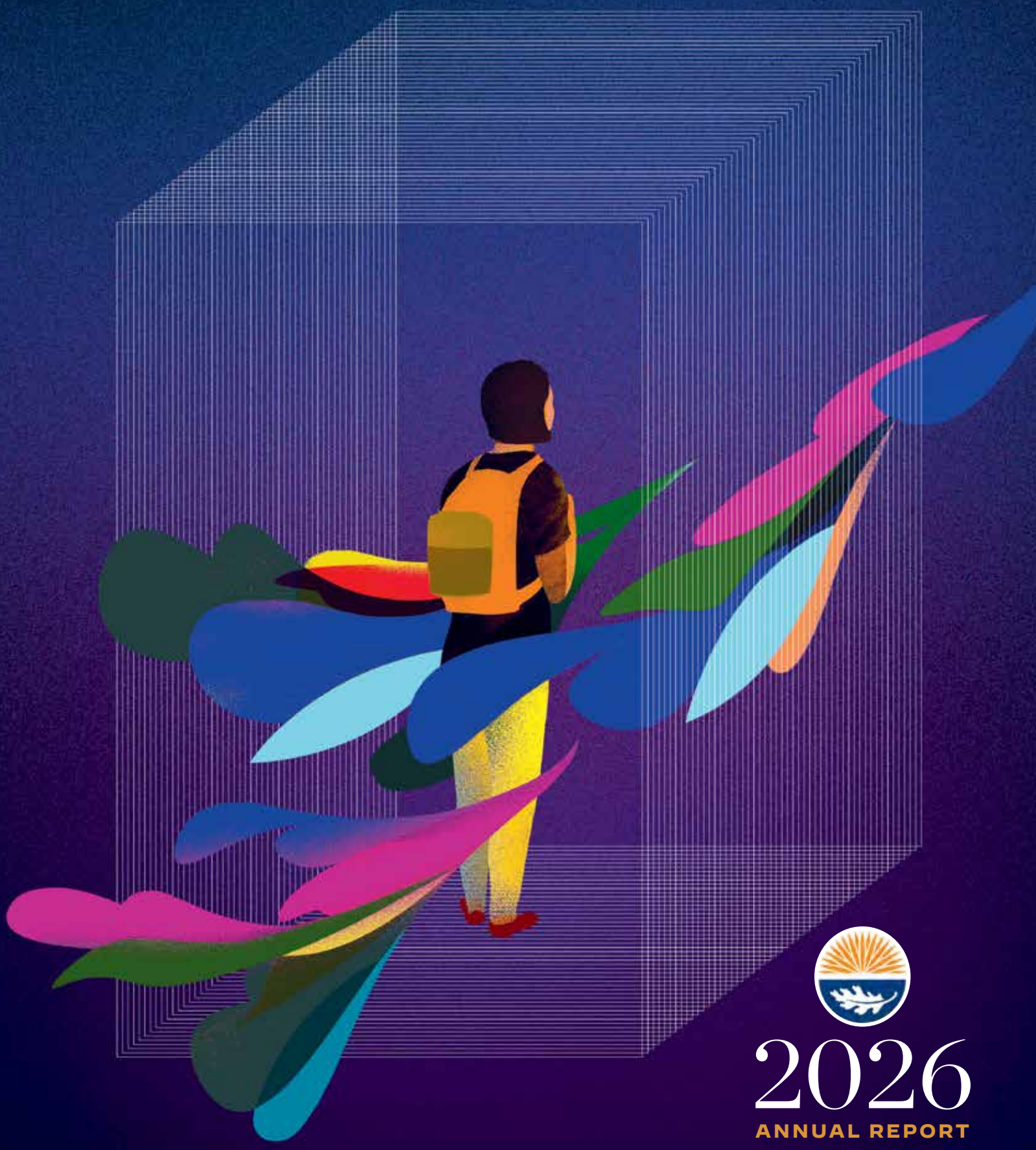


WEST VALLEY-MISSION  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT



2026  
ANNUAL REPORT

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West Valley-Mission Community College District provides educational programs and supportive services that turn our students' aspirations into achievements.

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## Ready for the Future

At West Valley-Mission Community College District, we start with a simple question — **What do you need to be better tomorrow?** — and build everything around the answer. For our students, growth isn't only found in classrooms and textbooks. It comes from the connections, support, and experiences that equip them to face life's challenges with confidence and skills.

Our approach to learning is holistic at West Valley and Mission Colleges. Academic success is intertwined with having basic needs met, access to supportive mentors and peers, and opportunities to apply knowledge in real-world settings. We help students navigate their unique journeys and overcome the barriers that can stand in the way of progress.

Whether our students are transferring to a four-year university, exploring a new career, or pursuing personal goals, our District meets them where they are. We provide the foundation for students to thrive — from dynamic classrooms and applied learning to wellness programs, nutritious meals, award-winning athletics teams, and financial support.

At West Valley-Mission Community College District, education is more than a degree. It's the start of a path toward resilience, community, and lifelong growth — equipping every student to step confidently into the future.



“We believe education changes lives, and when our students succeed, our communities thrive.”



— DR. BRADLEY DAVIS  
Chancellor of  
West Valley-Mission  
Community College District



# Our Mission

We power opportunity and bright futures across Silicon Valley.

The West Valley-Mission Community College District unites our colleges in a shared vision of educational excellence where students representing diverse experiences and identities feel connected and supported in pursuit of their goals and aspirations.



“West Valley-Mission removes obstacles between financially strapped students and their aspirations. With free meals, housing partnerships, and accelerated workforce pathways, these educators deliver powerful outcomes. I’m proud to partner with Chancellor Davis on federal workforce legislation that strengthens the talent pipeline.”

— CONGRESSMAN SAM LICCARDO  
Representing California’s 16th Congressional District

## A SECOND CHANCE, SHARED

“Supporting students beyond the classroom ensures every learner has a chance to succeed.”

Adrienne Grey was a high school dropout with a GED and a full-time job when she found a “lifeline” at community college — a place to explore, rebuild, and rediscover her potential. “I would have failed without community college



to buoy me up. It got me back on track and equipped me for a rewarding career,” she says.

That second chance shaped everything that followed: a 35-year career in biotech and high-tech manufacturing that grew from accounting clerk to management, a bachelor’s degree from Golden Gate University, and ultimately, 18 years of service on the Board of Trustees of the West Valley-Mission Community College District, where she now serves as chair for the fifth time.

Adrienne first ran for the board in 2008, motivated in part by a desire to honor her late mother, an Italian immigrant who believed deeply in education and public service. What began as a leap of faith has become what she calls “the most important, fulfilling thing I’ve ever done.”

Her focus is clear: remove barriers so students can succeed. Under her leadership, the District has leveraged its financial strength to create sustainable, student-centered supports, including free tuition for in-district students, free textbooks and parking, expanded childcare, meal programs, health services, and robust counseling. These investments reflect Adrienne’s conviction that success doesn’t happen in the classroom alone — students need stability and support beyond it.

At the same time, she is quick to praise the faculty and classified professionals who make that success possible. She has consistently supported competitive pay, strong benefits, and professional development, and she speaks with admiration about the educators who “work so hard to make the lives of our students better.” She has also been a strong advocate for embedding diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility into decision-making at every level — not as a stand-alone initiative, but as an ethos.

For Adrienne, the work is deeply personal. “I’m honored to be part of it, it’s a calling,” she says. “Every day, I see how this District changes lives. There’s no end to what can be done.”

## ADVOCACY TO PROTECT OPPORTUNITY

This year, the West Valley-Mission Community College District took a leadership role in Sacramento to protect programs that help students succeed. As federal funding for services that support low-income and first-generation college students comes under threat, the District sponsored Assembly Bill 2121, authored by Marc Berman (D-Menlo Park).

These programs provide tutoring, mentoring, counseling, and guidance that help students stay on track and transfer to four-year universities. As federal funding disappears, AB 2121 would allow community colleges to temporarily use existing district budgets to keep those services running without jeopardizing compliance with California’s longstanding rules for instructional spending, often called the Fifty Percent Law. If passed, the bill will ensure colleges can continue supporting students without cutting classes or faculty resources.

By championing this legislation, West Valley-Mission is standing up for the students community colleges are designed to serve — making sure critical support systems remain in place so more students can stay enrolled, finish their degrees and certificates, and build better futures.

“This bill ensures California law does not stand in the way of California values,” says Chancellor Dr. Bradley Davis. “When programs that support vulnerable students are threatened, we have a responsibility to step up and make sure those students are not left behind.”



Assemblymember  
Marc Berman (D-Menlo  
Park) authored  
Assembly Bill 2121

## THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE:

Alviso, Campbell, Los Gatos,  
Monte Sereno, San Jose, Santa Clara,  
Saratoga, and Sunnyvale

West Valley College has the  
**highest 3-year  
transfer rate**

in the Bay Area,  
the third highest in California

**28%**

of District  
students are the  
**FIRST IN  
THEIR FAMILY**  
to attend college

**17,000+**

students currently enrolled

**77%**

student  
course  
success  
rate

**\$1.3 million**

granted this year  
in scholarships  
and grants  
through the West  
Valley-Mission  
Foundation

**Senior Guided  
Pathways**

program helps

**students**

**over age**

**50**

upskill and reskill

Students  
receiving  
**FINANCIAL  
AND BASIC  
NEEDS  
SUPPORT:**

Mission:  
**85%**

West Valley:  
**92%**

**63%**

of students are  
**AGE 24**  
or younger

**119**  
**DEGREE  
PROGRAMS**  
offered

**124**  
**CERTIFICATE  
PROGRAMS**  
offered

**\$10.8**

million invested  
in 2025-26 to reduce students’  
cost of attendance



**SUPPORTING STUDENTS**

In the fall 2025 semester,

**95%**  
of eligible students  
took advantage of  
**free meals**  
at least once

**70%**  
of eligible students used  
the meal plan  
**every week**  
of the semester

The universal free meal plan is the latest initiative to support the whole student. Students can also access:



# Nourishing Futures

Universal free meals remove a critical barrier so every student can focus on learning.

This fall, West Valley-Mission Community College District made history as the first community college district in the nation to offer universal free meals to students. The need is urgent: more than one-third of our students report experiencing food insecurity, and they are forced to juggle coursework with the stress of not knowing where their next meal will come from. While free meals are guaranteed from K-12, that support disappears in college — just as financial pressures intensify.

The District is closing that gap with a bold, \$2.5 million annual commitment to provide every in-person student taking at least six credits at West Valley College or Mission College with at least one free, nutritious meal each school day, with expanded options for those who need more. In partnership with Thomas Cuisine, the District is delivering fresh, high-quality meals that fuel focus, energy, and achievement.

It's the latest step in a larger promise: remove the cost barriers that force students to choose between their education and their basic needs.

**FUELING SUCCESS**

“The District’s free meal program has transformed campus life, providing students with reliable, nutritious meals while making study and social spaces more vibrant. There is a clear link between hunger and lack of focus, and by addressing food insecurity, we help students focus, stay engaged, and succeed academically.”



— **DR. OMAR MURILLO**  
Vice President of Student Services at Mission College

## RESOURCES MAKE BALANCING SCHOOL AND LIFE POSSIBLE

Irania Barajas Cornejo '28 juggles a lot — she's a single mother to two-year-old Penelope and a full-time student in West Valley College's Child Development program. The District's holistic approach to student support takes the pressure off meals and childcare, giving her space to focus on college.

"Being a mom and going to school is hard, but West Valley makes it possible for me to balance school and motherhood," she says.

The college's free on-campus childcare has been a game changer. "At first, it was tough to leave Penelope there. But the staff listened and supported us, and she loves it," Irania says. "The teachers are knowledgeable, engaged, and kind. They've created a space where she can grow and have fun." Preparing for a career in child development, Irania also works at the

center through work-study, putting her front and center in helping all the children learn and play, especially outside.

Equally transformative is West Valley's free meal plan, which she and Penelope used for breakfast and lunch most days this fall. "Before, I spent a lot of time worrying about meals and stretching my limited budget," Irania says. "Now, I have healthy, ready-to-eat meals on campus, which frees up my time to study and focus. It also means I have more money for Penelope's needs."

These programs help Irania stay on track academically while planning a brighter future for her daughter. "These supports help both of us feel nourished, and they let me focus on learning while keeping Penelope cared for," she says.



### A FOUR-LEGGED FIRST RESPONDER

This spring, Beatrice joined the District's Public Safety team as our first therapy dog. The Bernedoodle is completing her training, alongside handler Captain Jorge Gutierrez, to bring comfort and calm to campus. "B" will support wellness events, visit students during high-stress times like finals, and offer a reassuring presence alongside Public Safety and Health Services staff, especially during mental health emergencies.

"Therapy dogs bring a sense of ease and joy that people instantly connect with. We're excited that 'B' can offer that support to our campus community when it's needed most."

— JORGE GUTIERREZ

District Police Captain and Beatrice's handler

"West Valley's free meals and childcare let me focus on my education and plan for a better future for me and my daughter. I feel supported every step of the way."

— IRANIA BARAJAS CORNEJO '28





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# Education in Action

Our academics prepare students for the workforce of today and tomorrow.

## RUNWAY TO SUCCESS

What begins as a sketch ends in applause at West Valley College's Cilker EXPO Fashion Showcase, where graduating fashion students put their creativity on full display.

Over the past five years, the event has grown into a free, professional-quality show drawing nearly 1,000 attendees. This year's spring show will be the largest yet, featuring 20 graduates presenting innovative designs that highlight the program's commitment to sustainability, social justice, and inclusivity.

The Fashion Design Program equips students with the technical skills and industry knowledge needed to succeed in the ever-changing fashion world. Students work with industry-standard equipment in the Alyce Parsons Production Lab and explore advanced technologies such as 3D pattern making using CLO3D, CNC routers, and 3D printers. Guided by faculty who are active fashion professionals, graduates are prepared for careers as designers, pattern makers, production managers, and merchandisers – or to transfer to four-year institutions. The EXPO Fashion Showcase provides a public platform to showcase their work, celebrate achievements, and connect with the broader creative community.

"There's nothing else quite like our fashion showcase at other community colleges. It truly prepares them for careers in fashion. They learn first-hand the demands of the industry and gain confidence in their skills," says Anthony Murray, chair of West Valley's Design and Architecture department and a fashion design instructor.

Our academic programs keep pace with the changing industries and workforce needs shaping our Silicon Valley communities – from technology and healthcare to advanced manufacturing and emergency response. Students build in-demand skills through a combination of coursework that prepares them to transfer to four-year institutions and hands-on, career-ready training. Faculty bring industry experience into the classroom, ensuring learning reflects real-world expectations. At West Valley-Mission, academics are closely tied to opportunity, preparing students to succeed in a dynamic and rapidly shifting economy.

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## OPENING DOORS TO THE FUTURE

*"West Valley College offers distinctive, high-quality academic programs that prepare students for meaningful careers and seamless transfer to four-year universities. From innovative STEM pathways and cutting-edge healthcare training to our renowned fashion program, all are designed to combine rigorous scholarship with real-world experience, giving students the knowledge and skills to thrive in today's rapidly evolving world."*



**— DR. JENNIFER TAYLOR-MENDOZA**  
President of West Valley College



### PAID PATHWAYS INTO HEALTHCARE

West Valley College's Community Wellness Partner Program is creating new pathways for healthcare students to gain paid, real-world experience while completing their training. The innovative "reverse apprenticeship" model allows community partners — from retirement communities to healthcare providers — to participate through a streamlined partnership with the college, reducing the administrative burden of hosting short-term student interns.

Most importantly, the program allows students to earn industry wages while completing the hands-on hours required for certificates in medical assisting, orthopedic technician, and medical insurance billing — so they no longer have to choose between gaining the experience they need and working to support themselves.

"The response has been overwhelmingly positive. Students and faculty are excited that students can now be paid for their hands-on training, and our community partners are eager to connect their residents with West Valley," says Erika Vargas, dean of health and human development at West Valley College.

### POWERING THE FUTURE OF SEMICONDUCTOR CAREERS

With a \$3.9 million federal grant, West Valley is preparing students for the future with a new semiconductor certificate program designed to fast-track them into Silicon Valley's high-tech workforce.

The certificate program will feature a cutting-edge semiconductor fabrication lab, giving students the opportunity to gain technical skills needed for cleanroom and fabrication jobs. Designed to certify at least 120 workers per year, it equips students for immediate entry into high-skill, in-demand careers.

West Valley College is the only community college in the state — and one of only 18 nationwide — to receive an award from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) in this highly competitive national funding cycle. Our selection will enable long-term, measurable impact for our students and the broader community.

### NEW BACHELOR'S DEGREE PREPARING SILICON VALLEY'S PUBLIC SAFETY LEADERS

When every second counts, strong leadership makes all the difference. Mission College's new Bachelor of Science in Emergency Services Administration prepares students to step up from frontline responder roles into strategic positions that protect our Silicon Valley communities. Students may qualify for free tuition through several financial aid programs.

Built around the "Prepare California" initiative, the curriculum emphasizes the skills that matter most in today's emergency services field, including incident command systems, disaster response coordination, and public service administration. Beginning next spring, students will train to lead in high-stakes situations and help fill a critical shortage of public safety professionals in Santa Clara County, a region ranked in the 99.84th national percentile for disaster risk.

### 50 YEARS OF BELONGING AND IMPACT

"Education is the most powerful way to lift people out of poverty and break cycles of systemic inequity. Celebrating our 50th anniversary in 2025 reminded us that Mission College was created as a place of belonging — and that commitment continues today. Honoring the alumni, retirees, and team members who have shaped Mission College was a powerful celebration of our enduring legacy."



— DR. SEHER AWAN  
President of Mission College





## Game On for Student Success

Expanded athletics programs empower students to succeed on and off campus.

For many of our students, athletics provide a powerful pathway to their future. Student-athletes come to West Valley and Mission Colleges to pursue their goals – whether that means transferring to a four-year university or earning an athletic scholarship to continue their education.

Our athletics programs give students the opportunity to develop their skills while strengthening their academic profile and maturing both physically and emotionally. The discipline, teamwork, and perseverance required for sports often translate directly to accomplishments in the classroom and beyond. For some students, athletics are also the motivation that keeps them engaged in their education.

Athletics also enrich our broader campus communities. Games and competitions bring students together, build school pride, and create a sense of connection that extends beyond the playing field. West Valley College has a long tradition of athletic excellence, and now Mission College is forming new teams – creating even more opportunities for students to compete, represent their college, and pursue their ambitions.

“Being part of the basketball team gave me an instant community and kept me motivated to stay on top of my academics. I’ve made friends for life and it’s helping prepare me for success far beyond Mission.”

— GABRIELLE GERRODETTE '26

With guidance from supportive academic counselors, Gabrielle is completing her nursing prerequisites at Mission College and will play basketball next year at a four-year college while she earns her bachelor's in nursing.

### BUILDING COMMUNITY AND OPPORTUNITY

“Athletics is the front porch of our colleges. It brings people together, builds school spirit, and creates a strong sense of community.

For many of our students, it's also the bridge that helps them stay in school, grow as individuals, and keep their dream of competing at the next level alive.”



— JOHN VLAHOS  
Associate Vice Chancellor,  
Intercollegiate Athletics



**WELCOME TO OUR  
NEW MASCOTS!**

At Mission, this spring our athletics teams became the Monarchs, ushering in a new name and logo that will represent us in competition for years to come.

When Viktoria joined the team in January, our beloved West Valley mascot Vik finally found his bestie and the Viking community got even stronger.



**NEW SPORTS ON  
THE HORIZON AT  
MISSION COLLEGE**

In addition to Mission's **women's basketball, tennis, and badminton**, we're adding:

**Flag Football**

Women's

**Wrestling**

Men's and Women's

**Volleyball**

Men's

**Football**

**Track and Field**

Men's and Women's

**Cross Country**

Men's and Women's



**RECENT  
WEST VALLEY  
WINS**

**MEN'S WATER POLO**

Northern California champions and fourth place at the state championships

**MEN'S BASKETBALL**

Advanced to the Elite 8 for the fifth straight year, the only team this decade to do so

**SOFTBALL**

Ranked third in the state, boasting their fourth straight 30-win season

# A New Community Hub

West Valley's new Learning Resource Commons unites learning, technology, and support services under one roof.

Step inside the new Wang & Qu Family Learning Resource Commons at West Valley College, and the buzz is undeniable: this is a hub for learning, creativity, and collaboration. Bathed in natural light, the Commons brings together the Library, the Success Center, the Digital Media Center, a café, and community spaces under one soaring roof. It's more than just a building — it's a destination for students, faculty, and the community.

Students are reserving study rooms from open to close, plugging into powered workstations, checking out textbooks and laptops for the semester, and collaborating in spaces designed for how learning actually happens today. The Digital Media Center features a professional recording studio, green screen, MIDI music lab, and video production spaces that mirror the tools used in creative industries. Faculty are developing dynamic lectures in the high-tech Learning Glass Studio.

The Success Center offers free tutoring across more than 120 courses, with embedded tutors supporting students directly in the classroom. And at the social heart of it all is the café where students can use the universal free meal plan — giving students a place to refuel, gather, and linger.

"Every corner of this space was designed with students in mind, from the modern design that integrates multiple services under one roof to the significant technology upgrades," says Joanna Messer, West Valley's director of library and learning support services. "We've opened a one-stop hub — a center of gravity for our students. It's a true 'third space' where they can belong."

## BUILDING SPACES THAT INSPIRE

Thanks to voter-approved facilities bonds — Measure C in 2018 and Measure W in 2012 — we're continually improving both campuses. These latest new buildings will provide modern spaces for learning, safety, and the arts:

- Theater at West Valley • Library at Mission
- District Public Safety & Community Services Building



Arthur Wang (left) and Christina Qu (right) with their daughter, Joyce Wang, and son, David Wang.

## CHAMPIONS FOR STUDENTS

Silicon Valley philanthropists Arthur Wang and Christina Qu are transforming student experiences and learning at West Valley College. In recognition of the family's generous donations totaling \$1.7 million, the District is naming West Valley's newly renovated facility the Wang & Qu Family Learning Resource Commons. The central building on campus will support innovative programs and services that enrich both students and the broader West Valley community.

"Our family is proud of our longtime affiliation with West Valley College," says Arthur. "It provides many opportunities for students, and we are happy to support that mission."

Their philanthropic journey began in 2013 with the David Wang Educational Endowment, funding mental health services and disability support programs. In 2017, they created the Science Garden, an innovative outdoor classroom for biology students. Their latest gift funds new programs and establishes a lasting endowment for the Learning Resource Commons, which offers cutting-edge spaces for collaboration, tutoring, media production, and more.

More than a building, the Commons is a gateway to student success. Arthur and Christina's generosity exemplifies how visionary giving can open doors, inspire learning, and leave a lasting legacy.

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# Powering Possibility

The WVM Foundation makes sure Silicon Valley's future leaders stay on the path to success.

West Valley and Mission students face real financial barriers, whether they're launching a career, changing paths, or working toward a four-year degree. That's where the WVM Foundation steps in, easing financial pressure so students can focus on their education and seize life-changing opportunities. Here, charitable giving goes further than at most four-year universities: what might be a drop in the bucket elsewhere can fund a class, cover essential needs, or keep a student on track. Whether supporting scholarships, addressing housing and food insecurity, or advancing mental health and wellness, Foundation donors make a lasting difference in students' lives.

## A TWO-PRONGED APPROACH

Doug and Linda Campbell know firsthand the need for skilled, compassionate nursing professionals. A close friend of theirs, a quadriplegic who was wheelchair-bound, was able to live a rewarding life thanks to the help of caring nursing assistants. As longtime educators at West Valley College, they also understand the dedication and resilience of community college students.

Last year, they combined these experiences and established an endowed merit scholarship for Mission College's Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) students. When they learned some students struggle to cover the out-of-pocket



costs for books, supplies, and uniforms, Doug and Linda worked closely with Foundation staff to create cash mini-grants, ensuring financial barriers won't stand in the way of students' success. The results of this combined approach speak for themselves: CNA students are earning credentials that launch healthcare careers, gaining confidence in the classroom, and taking steps toward advanced clinical degrees.

**“Mission’s CNA program is a real stepping stone to a career in nursing, and it opens doors for students who might not have other opportunities. Helping them gain the skills, confidence, and career pathways they need feels meaningful. It’s about changing lives, one student at a time, and that will help our whole community.”**

**—DOUG AND LINDA CAMPBELL**

Donors and longtime educators with West Valley-Mission Community College District





District donor Amy Fox (left) with her mother, Marchelle (center), and sister, Carey (right).

**ONGOING SUPPORT,  
ENDLESS OPPORTUNITY**

“Giving monthly creates a steady way to build the scholarship fund over time, and the recurring donation process makes it easy. It’s also a personal reminder to stay connected to my mother’s values — showing up, consistently, to support others and invest in their futures.”

— AMY FOX

Her monthly contributions support a scholarship endowment created in memory of her late mother, a lifelong educator dedicated to expanding opportunity through community colleges. Amy’s ongoing donations continue that commitment by helping students take the next step toward their academic and career goals.

“With the high cost of living in the Bay Area, many students face real barriers to completing college and launching their careers. We are proud to support scholarships and work-based learning opportunities that help students gain real-world experience, start a business, or build a bridge from campus to their dream job.”

— HOWARD GORE AND  
KIMBERLY HAWKINS-GORE  
WVM Foundation donors



**A LASTING LEGACY FOR STUDENTS**

For Silicon Valley leaders Howard Gore and Kimberly Hawkins-Gore, expanding opportunity and creating pathways to meaningful careers is a priority. Their recent \$2.5 million philanthropic gift to West Valley College is a powerful expression of that commitment.

The Gore family’s donation provides immediate funding for student scholarships, internships, and entrepreneurship programs. Their gift will also establish a long-term endowment to sustain work-based learning opportunities for future generations. This will provide an annual source of funding to expand initiatives that provide greater access to internships, apprenticeships, industry networks, and career readiness programming — connecting students more directly to opportunities ahead.

In recognition of the Gores’ transformational gift, the college’s Student Services Building will be renamed the Howard and Kimberly Gore Student Services Center. Since 2023, the Gores have partnered with the West Valley-Mission Foundation to invest in students throughout the District. They have also actively connected students to mentors, industry leaders, and professional networks throughout Silicon Valley.

**\$1.3**  
million  
IN  
**SCHOLARSHIPS  
AND GRANTS  
AWARDED**  
through the **WVM  
FOUNDATION**,  
surpassing  
\$1 million for  
the second year  
in a row

# Stepping Stones to Success

Our alumni's experiences at West Valley and Mission Colleges laid the foundation for their professional and personal achievements.



**JAMES MANRIQUEZ '13**

“West Valley College was the unsung hero in setting me up for success in life and my career. It provided a clear two-year road map that led me to transfer to UC Berkeley. West Valley is an invaluable transfer pipeline for so many students from community college to four-year colleges in the University of California system.”

James Manriquez '13 is an investor at Connect Ventures, a Los Angeles-based venture capital firm, where he focuses on early-stage investments across consumer, sports, media, and entertainment. Earlier in his career, he worked with the Oakland Athletics and Fanatics before becoming an investment banking associate in Barclays' Consumer Retail Group. After graduating from West Valley, he earned a BA from UC Berkeley and MA and MBA degrees from the University of Michigan.



**NICHOLAS HSIEH '22**

“West Valley College gave me a second chance and a community that truly supported my goals. My most memorable experiences ignited my self-confidence and diversified my perspectives. Through student government and collaborative projects, I gained leadership experience, built skills, and fostered friendships that still shape me today.”

Nicholas Hsieh '22 graduated magna cum laude from UCLA, where he was in the honors college. He's starting at Columbia Law School in the fall.



**NAYELI CARMONA PEREZ '19**

“Before I began at Mission College as a first-generation college student, I had big dreams for my future, although the cost of higher education felt like a barrier. At Mission, I received excellent teaching, personalized support, and a welcoming community that gave me the confidence and foundation to pursue my dreams. It truly changed the trajectory of my life, and I stay connected in hopes of inspiring other students navigating a similar journey.”

Nayeli Carmona Perez '19 is a program manager at the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education at her alma mater, Santa Clara University, and a graduate student at Palo Alto University pursuing a career as a clinical forensic psychologist.



**DAVID ZHAO AKELEY '17**

“After I dropped out of high school in 11th grade, things looked pretty bleak, but West Valley College gave me a clear path forward. The personal attention from instructors and counselors helped a 17-year-old version of me realize that a four-year university and a future in technology were actually within reach. I don't know where I would have ended up without it.”

David Zhao Akeley '17 earned his bachelor's from UCLA and then joined Nvidia, where he worked on ray-tracing, vector graphics, and computational geometry technology. Now a PhD student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he misses his evening walks through the natural beauty interwoven throughout the West Valley campus.

**DR. CAPELLA KERST '11**

“I knew when I was 10 that I wanted to get a PhD one day, but financial limitations kept me from going straight to a four-year college right out of high school. Attending West Valley was a tremendous blessing. I found mentors among my professors and discovered a sense of belonging that fueled my confidence. And when I got into UC Berkeley, receiving the Cooper-Garrod Family Scholarship from the West Valley-Mission Foundation helped me take a leap when I wasn't sure I could afford to.”

After finishing her bachelor's degree at UC Berkeley, Dr. Capella Kerst '11 went on to earn her master's at UCLA and a PhD in mechanical engineering at Stanford University. Today, she's the founder and CEO of geCKo Materials, a startup developing an innovative super-strong dry adhesive that's been used on space missions in the past year and is currently in service on the International Space Station.



**STEVE NEESE '06**

“Mission College gave me the support and confidence I needed to succeed in college. The professors, small classes, and help I received through the Disability Resource Center made a huge difference, and it showed me that I could achieve my goal of earning a degree. Looking back, starting at Mission opened the door for me to continue my education and build a career focused on supporting students and connecting schools with the community.”

Steve Neese '06 earned his bachelor's from San Jose State University, and now focuses on bringing more opportunities, volunteers, and resources to students. He works both as the community and business partnerships manager at the Santa Clara Unified School District and the executive director of the Santa Clara Schools Foundation.

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## Ready to Rise

Students arrive at West Valley-Mission Community College District with different goals, experiences, and challenges — but they all share one thing: the desire to grow. By providing opportunities for real-world application, guidance from experienced faculty, and access to essential resources, the District empowers students to change their lives. Graduates leave with skills, connections, and confidence — ready to transfer to four-year universities, step into high-demand careers, or chart entirely new paths.

With the District's holistic approach, students who once faced barriers now thrive in an environment built to nurture growth and possibility. Their successes ripple outward, strengthening families, communities, and the region's workforce.

At West Valley-Mission Community College District, we don't just provide students what they need to succeed today — we equip them with what they need for a better tomorrow.



**West Valley-Mission  
Community College District**  
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Saratoga, CA 95070

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT**

Bradley Davis, *Chancellor*

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Anne Kepner

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Diane Lamkin

Karl Watanabe

Jonah Pirnejad, *Mission College Student Trustee*  
Yifan Sun, *West Valley College Student Trustee*

Emmanuel Fatoye '27 performs at the Jazz Under the Stars event last fall in West Valley's newly renovated Kvamme Planetarium.

Photography by Haley Tabor. Cover illustration by Brian Stauffer. Page 12 photo by International Sports Images, Inc. Pages 22-23 illustrations by Agata Nowicka.