

# Citrus VIEW

—LATEST NEWS FROM CITRUS COLLEGE—

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## Citrus College invited to compete for Aspen Prize once again



Students celebrate during the 107th Citrus College commencement ceremony in June 2023.



Citrus College has been recognized as one of the top 150 community colleges in the United States by the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. As a result, the college has received its sixth consecutive invitation to compete for the prestigious \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence.

The prize, awarded very two years, is the nation's signature recognition of high achievement and performance among community colleges. Its purpose is to recognize institutions that have

experienced exceptional student outcomes in four areas: student learning, certificate and degree completion, employment and earning, and high levels of access and success for minority and low-income students.

"It is an honor for Citrus College to once again be considered eligible to compete for the Aspen Prize for Excellence," said Dr. Greg Schulz, superintendent/president of Citrus College. "I am extremely proud of the efforts of our faculty and staff, which have led to this distinction. I am also grateful for the strong student-centered leadership and support of our board of trustees."

Citrus College was selected from a national pool of more than 1,000 public two-year colleges based on data showing strong and improving student outcomes in key areas, such as retention, completion, transfer and equity. Of the top 150 institutions included on the list, only 18 are from California and only two are from Los Angeles County.

After all of the eligible community colleges submit their applications, a committee of higher education experts will select 25 semifinalists. From these 25 semifinalists, 10 finalists will be selected and one winner will be crowned in spring 2025.



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-Dr. Greg Schulz

# ICYMI: Recent fall semester highlights

It's hard to believe we are approaching the end of another semester – and what a productive and rewarding semester it has been! With so many great things happening on campus, a few activities and accomplishments might have gone unnoticed. Here are some recent highlights:



The Citrus College Student Life and Leadership Development program hosted an ofrenda, or altar, in the Ross L. Handy Campus Center in observation of Día De Los Muertos. A Mexican holiday, Día De Los Muertos celebrates the lives of the deceased with their favorite foods, festivities and activities. Campus community members were invited to place a photo of their loved one(s) and something they enjoyed in life on the ofrenda, which was on display from Oct. 25 through Nov. 2. In addition, the Citrus College Pride Center hosted a Día De Los Muertos ofrenda-building activity to honor the memory of LGBTQIA+ lives lost.



Citrus College observed Undocumented Student Action Week from Oct. 16 through Oct. 20. This year's theme was "Creating Belonging for Undocumented Students." To commemorate the occasion, the college's Dream Resource Center hosted a series of events to increase awareness. From Ally training and a movie screening to legal and career workshops, the events were designed to provide support and resources for undocumented students and peers.



As of this fall, Citrus College now has 10 free filtered water-filling stations on campus. They are located on the first and second floors of the Educational Development Center and the first and second floors of the Student Services Building, as well as in the Campus Center, Field House, Hayden Memorial Library, Owl Café, Physical Education Weight Room, Technology Engineering Building and Visual Arts Building. From a sustainability standpoint, these water-filling stations average over 3,000 fills per month. In fact, 96,543 plastic bottles were saved during the month of September alone!



Congratulations to Jennifer D'Amato, nursing faculty member in the college's natural, physical and health sciences division. She recently earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice from Grand Canyon University. Dr. D'Amato joined the Citrus College community in 2014 and received tenure in 2018. In addition to being a nursing instructor and advisor to the college's Vocational Nursing Club, Dr. D'Amato also has a Master of Science in Nursing degree, a Public Health Nurse certification and she is a registered nurse. Way to go, Dr. D'Amato!

## Unity Fair showcases diverse cultures and interests

Citrus College held its second annual Unity Fair on Nov. 7, where students, faculty and staff learned about campus services, as well as the history, arts and customs of other cultures.

Organized by adjunct instructors Areej Qasqas and Peter Rodriguez, the event was held in the Campus Mall and attracted dozens of attendees. Many campus organizations set up informational booths, including the Black Scholars program, Dream Resource Center, Learning Center, study abroad and the Pride Center, among others. Several other booths focused on unique regions of the world, including Guatemala and Palestine.

"Students had a blast connecting with each other and being a part of an event that took them out of the classroom and into a real-life experience," Qasqas



said. "This event helped them develop their interpersonal skills and understanding of community college culture, and to celebrate our differences together."

Azusa High School students enrolled in Citrus College's Early College program also participated in the event, setting up booths and educating guests about Chicano culture.

"I hope attendees enjoyed taking a moment to take in and learn a little something from each booth, being able to take with them a newfound appreciation for the identities that make up Citrus College's student body and staff,"

Rodriguez said. "It was great seeing the number of students supporting one another's work and sharing moments when they came together, whether through dancing or a slice of pizza."



# Competing since childhood, Citrus College student wins two golf tournaments



Isabelle recently became the first Owl to win the 3C2A Individual Women's Golf State Championship.

Citrus College women's golf team and excelling on the links. Most recently, Isabelle won the California Community College Athletic Association (3C2A) Individual Women's Golf State Championship and the Individual Western State Conference Championship.

"It felt nice to have my teammates there to cheer me on, and that is something I won't ever forget," Isabelle said of her Western State Conference Championship victory. "I kept to myself prior to being at Citrus College and sharing that moment with the whole team was something I haven't felt before. I have never experienced that type of love and accomplishment from anyone except my family."

When considering which college to attend, Isabelle said one of main reasons she chose Citrus College was because of its golf team and driving range. Since making the team, she said she has enjoyed the experience of making lifelong friends.

For as long as she can remember, Isabelle Olivas-Lowell has been a golfer.

After learning how to play at 2 years old, Isabelle started golfing consistently at 5 years old. Two years later, she began playing in competitive tournaments.

"My grandpa had played for most of his life, she said. "He taught my dad and, when I was born, they taught me. Since I've played for so long, it's always been a part of my life."

Fast forward a decade and Isabelle is playing on the

"I'm part of a great group of girls who have fun and are always trying to improve," Isabelle said. "Even compared to the teams in our conference, our bond and the fun we have with each other have been noticed by other coaches. We know how to joke around while still being able to focus on getting better."

On the green, Isabelle said her play has improved and that she is looking forward to the offseason where she can develop even more. To prepare for the Western State Conference Championship, which was held at Rio Bravo Country Club in Bakersfield, Isabelle practiced every day leading up to the tournament.

"I am thankful for that win and I am going to continue to improve myself and achieve more of my goal," she said.

Soon after, she competed in the 3C2A State Championship at Hunter Ranch Golf Course in Paso Robles and won, marking the first time an Owl has taken home the top prize.

Looking ahead, Isabelle's dream is to attend a Division I college or university where she can study business administration with a focus in business management and pursue a professional golf career.

"There are a lot of scholarship opportunities that are out there at different schools," she said. "No matter how golf goes, I want to have a degree that will always stay with me for anything that might come in my future."



## Students explore 'land of extremes' during class trip



Citrus College students recently spent a weekend studying Death Valley and its surrounding region.

Although Death Valley is known for its intense temperatures, the weather was perfect when a group from Citrus College recently spent a weekend exploring its unique ecosystem.

Twenty-four students and two faculty members traveled to the below-sea-level basin on Nov. 3 as part of the college's NAT 180A Natural History Series – Death Valley course. They spent the next three days learning and experiencing the topography, climate, geology, ecology, life zones, wildlife, plant life and human history of the region.

"In addition to in-person lectures on campus, our three-day trip provides field experience to foster an appreciation for our natural resources and to help students make informed decisions regarding land and natural resources use

in this type of environment," explained Bobby Goodman, natural, physical and health sciences faculty member. Goodman is also the primary instructor of the wildland resources and forestry program.

During the trip, the group visited key areas and landmarks in the region. These included Badwater Basin, Devils Golf Course, Artist Palette, Zabriskie Point, Dante's View, Devils Cornfield, Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes, Mosaic Canyon, Fossil Falls and Trona Pinnacles.

At the end of the first two days, Goodman and Mercedes Belica, earth sciences faculty member, stayed with the students at Stovepipe Wells Campground.

"Every semester, the students who participate in these natural history excursions have varied degrees of camping experience. In fact, some have never camped before," Goodman said. "Another reason these field trips are important is because they give students who have never had the opportunity to camp in the wild the chance to learn more about hiking, camping and campground etiquette."

According to Goodman, the field trip was a success and the students handled it very well.

"Unfortunately, fewer and fewer colleges are offering classes with these types of opportunities," Goodman said. "The natural history classes would not be what they are today without the support from our administration, transportation, facilities, fellow faculty members and campus safety."

# Citrus College, APU thank veterans for their service



During the ceremony, Citrus College honored Steve Jimenez (R), assistant coach for the women's soccer team, while APU honored Ariel Williams (L), who helps veterans as APU's military and veteran education benefits manager.

The Citrus College and Azusa Pacific University communities came together on Nov. 9 to honor local heroes during the 18th annual Saluting Our Veterans ceremony.

The event opened with a welcome from Superintendent/President Schulz and the presentation of colors from the APU's Army ROTC. Citrus College's Blue Note Swing Orchestra performed the national anthem and Rio Martinez, an APU veteran coach and member of the U.S. Navy Reserve, delivered the invocation.

During the ceremony, each organization paid tribute to a veteran from their campus. Citrus College honored Steve Jimenez, assistant coach for the women's soccer team, while APU honored Ariel Williams, who helps veterans as APU's military and veteran education benefits manager.

Prior to joining the Citrus College community, Jimenez served in the U.S. Army on active and reserve duty, reaching the rank of master sergeant. He also played on the Army soccer team, served four tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan, and received a Purple Heart.

"Not only did he complete his time in service honorably, Steve took his knowledge, work ethic and perseverance and applied it to his civilian life," said Maria Buffo, director of the Veterans Success Center (VSC).

After Jimenez and Williams were honored, Citrus College alumnus and Air Force Reserve Staff Sergeant Oscar Hernandez delivered the event's keynote address.

"Oscar took on the responsibility of being a work-study student while we were remote in 2021 and braved the transition back to campus to help reopen the VSC," Buffo said.

During his time on campus, Hernandez also helped launch and record videos for the VSC's TikTok account. He is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree in civil engineering at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

To learn more about the services available to Citrus College veterans, visit [www.citruscollege.edu/vsc](http://www.citruscollege.edu/vsc).



# Citrus College earns multiple 'Champion' designations



A student receives his diploma during the 107th Citrus College commencement ceremony in June 2023.

The Campaign for College Opportunity, an organization dedicated to expanding college access and improving college completion rates, recently acknowledged Citrus College's efforts to increase transfer degree completion and to advance racial equity for Black and Latinx students.

Every year, the California-based research and advocacy nonprofit honors those community colleges and California State University campuses that are leading the state in conferring associate degrees for transfer and intentionally working to support Black and Latinx students on their path to a degree.

During a virtual celebration on Nov. 14, Citrus College was recognized as a "Top Performer" in three categories:

Champion of Higher Education – Associate Degree for Transfer as a Percentage of all Associate Degrees Awarded; Equity Champion for Black students; and Equity Champion for Latinx Students.

"Citrus College is committed to providing our diverse student body with educational experiences that lead to degree completion, and this recognition from the Campaign for College Opportunity affirms the progress we have made," said Superintendent/President Schulz. "I am grateful to the entire campus community for the work they have done to increase inclusivity and equity at the college, as well as for their efforts to promote transfer degree attainment. My hope is that being named a 'Champion of Higher Education' serves as an inspiration as we continue this important work in the months ahead."

## Student publications continue streak of excellence with recent honors



Citrus College students (pictured L-R) Abiodun Collins, Mizuki Smith and Lauren Duffy recently attended a student journalism conference.

The Journalism Association of Community Colleges recently awarded Citrus College student publications with seven honors at the annual SoCal Regional Conference at California State University, Northridge.

The accolades included one on-the-spot award and five awards from publication contests, which are based on work published by the Clarion student newspaper and Logos student magazine during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Individual honorees included Abiodun Collins, the Clarion's editor-in-chief, who won first place for an informational graphic, fourth place in a copy-editing competition and an honorable mention for a profile feature story; and Mizuki Smith, editor-in-chief for Logos, who earned second place for magazine cover design and third place for magazine design/layout. Student Mark Snow also received an honorable mention for an online photo story essay.

Both Abiodun and Mizuki attended the conference along with freelance journalism student Lauren Duffy.

Additionally, the Clarion's print edition, which released its final hard-copy issue in June 2023, won "General Excellence" recognition, the highest honor awarded at the competition.

"The awards were validation for the students' hard work and effort over the past year," said Patrick Schmiedt, journalism faculty member and staff advisor to the Clarion. "With such a small staff, our students have been putting in lots of extra time to make sure we're fully telling the stories of our campus and communities. It was nice to see that work rewarded at the regional conference, and it was great to have the students there to receive their awards in person."

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