

Citrus VIEW

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Alumna publishes debut children's book



Abundis' personal experiences served as inspiration for her first book, "Into the Mighty Sea."

Imagine a world where emotions come alive in vibrant hues. In her debut picture book recently published by HarperCollins, Citrus College alumna Arlene Abundis does just this.

The story of a young Cuban American girl whose social anxiety sets her adrift on a sea of color, "Into the Mighty Sea" was inspired by Abundis' personal mental health journey. It follows main character Mariel, who draws and paints to calm her big feelings, as she sails through deep emotional waters after her brother rips up her art.

"As a child who was severely bullied in school, books were at times my only friends and a vehicle to escape my reality," Abundis explains. "I longed to see a protagonist who symbolized my unique cultural experience."

Although Abundis has always loved books, she said becoming an author wasn't part of her original plan. Instead, she got married right after graduating from Sierra Vista High School in 2003. She then worked as a bank teller for several years before enrolling at Citrus College in 2006.

After earning her Early Childhood Development Certificate, Abundis became a preschool teacher. However, she soon put her career on hold to become a full-time caregiver for her children. She joyfully served in this role for the next 10 years before returning to Citrus College in 2017.

"I initially went back to school to finish up my child development degree so that I could return to teaching," she said. "But while taking a children's literature class, I started a blog that connected motherhood and children's books. Something so powerful ignited within me and a dream was born: penning my own stories with a desire to not only see my culture and childhood experiences represented in traditional publishing, but to also heal my wounds of never quiet belonging."

Abundis shared her dream with members of the Citrus College community.

"I took a children's literature class with [the late] Eun Kang, and she became the first professional to read my manuscripts, encouraging me in the greatest of ways," she remembers. "I also had the joy of taking Becky Rudd's argumentative writing class, and she nominated me for an English literature recognition award, which I was honored to receive."

Even with the guidance of her Citrus College instructors, Abundis' journey to publication was not without its challenges.

"Writing is hard, but the road to traditional publishing is even more difficult," she said. "Determination, tenacity, persistence and patience are only a few requirements in this profession. You also need to learn to see rejection as a source of fuel to propel your creativity rather than stifling it. Persevering through the process while not getting discouraged is key."

Abundis' hard work paid off. "Into the Mighty Sea" was published in June 2024. When she celebrated its official launch, another member of the Citrus College was there to support her.

"Shelley Hahn came to my book launch and I cried tears of absolute joy," she said. "She has been a light in my life."

Since its publication, "Into the Mighty Sea" has received rave reviews. Now, Abundis is thinking of future books.

"My work as a children's author honors resilience through mental and emotional health," she said. "I write for kids who long to belong. I want my books to be mirrors that can help make sense of broken pieces, while also finding the beauty in them – like a kaleidoscope."

Student trustee seeks to improve the lives of others



Johnson is serving as student trustee for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Jonathan Johnson didn't initially set out to become a student trustee. When former student trustee Sabrina Soriano introduced the idea to him back in early 2024, he was unsure.

"When someone I grew up with became a victim of the same type of violence that has affected many in my community, I took time to reflect on this and the encouragement from Sabrina," Johnson said. "This led me to take action and pursue something that could potentially make a significant difference."

Now, as student trustee on the Citrus Community College District Board of Trustees, Johnson is seeking to make a difference in the lives of his fellow students.

"I am eager to contribute to the growth of the Citrus College community and am committed to ensuring that all students feel welcomed and heard," he said. "My goal is to support an inclusive environment where every student can thrive."

Johnson's Citrus College journey began in 2023. After graduating from high school, he said he doubted his ability to succeed in college and decided to enter the workforce instead. However, without a degree, his ability to advance within companies proved difficult.

"When I finally secured a well-paying job, the company lost its biggest contract, leading to a sharp decline in work," Johnson said. "After taking several positions with significantly lower pay, I realized it was time to return to school."

Johnson is currently studying architecture with the goal of earning his degree and gaining experience at a firm before starting his own practice. He hopes to create more affordable housing and contribute to local communities. Additionally, he wants to help others achieve their higher education goals.

In the meantime, he is focusing on his role as student trustee.

"It has been an enjoyable experience meeting individuals from various backgrounds," he said. "I truly love the opportunity to connect with and learn from so many different perspectives."

New faculty members bring passion, experience to campus

In August, Citrus College welcomed two new full-time faculty members to campus: José López and Anh Phuong Nguyen. Each brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to their roles teaching ethnic studies and nursing, respectively.



José López

López joined the campus community after serving as an adjunct instructor at Long Beach City College, Los Angeles Harbor College and Pasadena City College.

Throughout his 20-year teaching career, López also worked at Cal Poly Pomona, Mt. San Jacinto College and CSU San Bernardino.

Prior to teaching, López served in the U.S. Navy and was also a first-generation college student.

He holds an associate degree from Southwestern College, a bachelor's degree from the UC Riverside and a master's degree from UC Riverside.

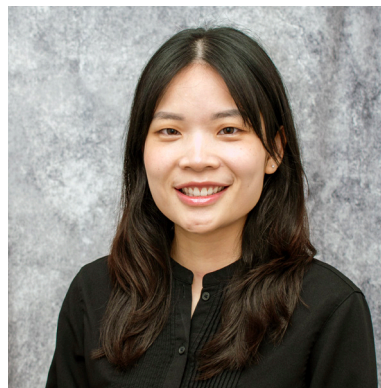
"I have always felt like I belonged at the community college because I learned so much and feel like it is the best place for me to help others the way I was also supported," he said.

So far, López has enjoyed teaching his first two courses – ETHN 101 Introduction to Ethnic Studies and ETHN 116 Introduction to Chicano/Latino Studies.

"I'm finding that students are eager to learn about the subject and are actively engaging and asking questions in class," he said.

López credits many employees for being kind and informing him about the college's numerous resources, including Sarah Bosler, public services librarian; Gayle Allen, administrative secretary II; and Dr. Jack Beckham, dean of social and behavioral sciences and online education.

"What I have enjoyed the most about the semester is meeting the Citrus College community," López said. "It's not an exaggeration to say that people have been welcoming, and I feel the genuine warmth at Citrus College. It makes for a wonderful learning and working environment."



Anh Phuong Nguyen

Before accepting her current position, Nguyen served for two years as a full-time faculty member and student success coordinator for Golden West College.

While there, she created a senior care technician program, collaborated with faculty to implement virtual reality into the curriculum and created workshops for registered nursing students.

Nguyen has also spent two years as a licensed vocational nursing instructor for California

Career Institute. Additionally, she has been a registered nurse for Westway Staffing Services and for Garden Grove Hospital Medical Center.

An alumna of Citrus College, she holds an Associate Degree in Nursing, an Associate Degree in Pre-Allied Health, and an Associate Degree in Biology, Physical Science and Mathematics. She also holds a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from CSU Long Beach, a Master's Degree in Nursing from United States University in San Diego and multiple certifications.

Inspirational Class of 2024 finishes on high note



Citrus College graduates earned 1,667 associate degrees and 1,915 certificates.

On June 14, 2024, Citrus College held its 108th annual commencement ceremony at the Citrus Stadium. In front of hundreds of family members, friends and supporters, the college honored a dedicated and high-achieving group of scholars.

In total, 1,667 degrees were awarded to the Class of 2024. Top programs included business administration, psychology, pre-allied health, sociology and administration of justice.

The college also awarded 1,915 total certificates. Top programs included cosmetology and barbering, real estate, automotive technology, administration of justice, and vocational nursing.

The youngest graduate was 18, while the oldest graduate was 70 years old. Thirty-two veterans received degrees, and 559 students graduated with honors.

Congratulations, Class of 2024!



College joins virtual exchange of online classes

Community college students from across the state can now enroll in online classes at Citrus College as part of the California Virtual Campus - Online Education Initiative (CVC-OEI). In turn, Citrus College students have access to thousands of additional online classes offered through the California Community Colleges System.

Designed to ensure more students successfully complete their educational goals by increasing access to valuable online classes, the CVC-OEI is a collaborative project among California community colleges. It works by allowing students who are currently enrolled in one of the state's community colleges to instantly register for online classes offered at other eligible colleges without filling out a separate application.

"Citrus College has been interested in the California Virtual Campus Exchange for quite some time, and we recently began working in earnest to join this important effort," said Dr. Greg Schulz, superintendent/president of Citrus College. "This is an exciting and unique opportunity to promote our programs and courses, while also providing students with the flexibility, opportunity and choices they need to complete their academic goals."



The CVC-OEI removes barriers to completion for students throughout the state.

The CVC-OEI provides students with two resources that may not be available at their home colleges, especially small or remote colleges with limited course offerings. First, CVC Course Finder can be used to search and register for classes based on degree and transfer requirements. Next, CVC Exchange Cross-Enrollment allows students to search for and enroll in online classes at any participating Teaching College without having to complete a separate college application.

According to Dr. Jack Beckham, dean of social and behavioral sciences and online education at Citrus College, these resources make the CVC Exchange - which can be found online at www.cvc.edu - a valuable education tool.

"The CVC-OEI removes barriers to completion for students statewide by helping them complete their pre-requisites and impacted GE requirements," said Dr. Beckham. "Our counselors can use the CVC-OEI to provide guidance to our own students, helping to increase completion rates on our campus, while counselors at other Home Colleges can guide students to Citrus College to help them complete as well. It's a win-win for all students."

Back to school



Citrus College welcomed more than 10,000 new and returning students to the fall 2024 semester.

From hosting Welcome Day and staffing information booths to issuing parking permits and distributing student ID cards, the start of a new fall semester is always busy, and this year was no exception.

In late August, approximately 550 students and their family members visited the campus for Welcome Day 2024. Organized by school relations and outreach in conjunction with other departments on campus, the event is designed to help new students navigate available support services.

After being welcomed by Superintendent/President Schulz and Dr. Richard Rams, vice president of student services, students took part in a variety of workshops and information sessions. They also stopped by a college resource fair in the Campus Mall and were treated to lunch.

"I look forward to making new friends and having a new experience in my college

years," Cassandra Mendez, a graduate of Monrovia High School who attended the event, said. "I'm also excited to finally get a job."

The following week, Citrus College welcomed thousands of students for the first week of the fall 2024 semester. As of Sept. 30, the college's projected full-time equivalent students, or FTES, is up 5.7% for credit courses and 19.9% for noncredit courses, compared to this same time last year. Unduplicated headcount enrollment has grown to 11,005 students this semester.

As the college community works together to ensure that the fall semester is successful, Citrus College students will continue to make progress toward their goals.

"This semester will be my last," said Rhian Nicole Swanson, a kinesiology major. "I'm hoping that I will be able to transfer by the end of the semester."



New book club promotes literary engagement, cultural awareness



The anthology, "Dark Matter: Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora," is the first book being read and discussed.

Campus community members looking to enhance their knowledge of Black literature and create a community with other readers recently met on campus for the first meeting of the Onyx Readers Book Club.

Composed of students, faculty and staff, the club is designed to inspire meaningful discussions that delve deep into the literary styles of Black authors, examine the contexts of different writing periods and explore diverse interpretations.

The club was conceptualized by Dr. Elaine Jefferson, adjunct business instructor, and Dr. La Quirshia Fennell, Black Scholars counselor/coordinator. Although they will be guiding the group, the duo has invited several participants to co-lead discussions.

"We plan to read 'Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora,' and we will be having monthly discussions," Dr. Fennell said.

"Our main goal is exposure to Black literature. With this in mind, Dr. Jefferson and I thoughtfully created learning objectives."

According to Dr. Fennell, these objectives include developing the ability to critically analyze literature by Black authors, cultivating empathy and a greater ability to understand and appreciate the experiences and challenges faced by Black communities, gaining a broader appreciation for diverse cultural expression, and building a supportive community among peers.

"This is a wonderful platform for each of these stakeholders to share community with those who they may not collaborate or work with in their traditional roles at Citrus College," Dr. Fennell said.

Future meetings of the Onyx Readers Book Club are scheduled for Oct. 23 and Nov. 20, both in person and on Zoom.

Citrus College partners with APU for nursing pathway



Nursing program participants can earn a BSN degree in six semesters.

Through an exciting new partnership, Citrus College and Azusa Pacific University (APU) are making it easier for students to earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree.

Beginning this fall, students may concurrently enroll at both Citrus College and APU, allowing them to earn credits and clinical experience. In only six semesters, Citrus College Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) students will have the ability to graduate from APU with their BSN.

"At Citrus College, we couldn't be more excited to partner with APU and give our nursing students a great opportunity to accelerate their professional career," said Dr. Salima Allahbachayo, director of health sciences at Citrus College. "As a community college, we place a great deal of importance on access and affordability. Not only will our students be able to save time and money through this partnership, they will also enter the nursing workforce as BSN-prepared nurses with a

deeper level of knowledge and experience. Put simply, this is a game changer."

Students taking part in the Citrus College/APU program will have completed the prerequisite courses necessary for admission to the Citrus College Nursing program. After being accepted to the Citrus College/APU program, students will concurrently enroll in classes and receive complete student status at both institutions.

"On behalf of the entire campus community, I thank our neighbors at APU for making this extraordinary opportunity possible," said Superintendent/President Schulz. "Nursing is an incredibly rewarding profession that plays a vital role in our society. Through this partnership, we will be able to ensure that even more students are prepared to enter the field of health care."

To learn more about the nursing program, visit www.citruscollege.edu/academics/programs/adn.

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