

VOLUME XXIII FALL 2017

MiraCosta

Transforming Lives



**Helping Students Succeed,
One Promise at a Time**

FRIENDS OF MIRACOSTA COLLEGE:



As we start a new academic year, MiraCosta College continues to provide affordable opportunities, innovation, and best practices that help our students succeed and our community thrive.

This fall, MiraCosta welcomed our inaugural class of students earning a bachelor's degree in biomanufacturing and celebrated the opening of the Nordson STEM Learning Center. Located in the library on the Oceanside Campus, the center is a dedicated space where students can benefit from tutoring, peer mentoring, group study, and access instruction.

This edition of *Transforming Lives* is about MiraCosta College keeping a promise to our students to provide the resources they need to succeed and a promise to the community to deliver well-prepared individuals to our workforce.

Learn about our district's largest fundraising endeavor, the MiraCosta Promise, which helps cover tuition, fees and the cost of textbooks, and read about how the MiraCosta Promise made college a reality for three of our many students this fall.

You can also find out how MiraCosta is making college affordable for our student community. We feature a story about Open Educational Resources (OER), providing free access to high-quality textbooks, videos, software, and course materials. OER provides an affordable option for students by sourcing books in the public domain and through intellectual property licenses paid by grants and donations from foundations.

Please enjoy learning about MiraCosta's dedicated team and their passion for serving students and the community. You will be inspired by the story of Denise Stephenson, who works with students daily in the Writing Lab, and by Diane Danielewicz, who devoted her career at MiraCosta College to opening doors for students through scholarships and grant opportunities.

As you will see in this edition of *Transforming Lives*, MiraCosta College continues to keep its promise to serve our students, our workforce, and our community.

Sunny

Dr. Sunny Cooke
Superintendent/President
MiraCosta College

A Message from Stephen "Hap" L'Heureux

This is a very exciting and productive time for MiraCosta College. After passing Measure MM, rolling out the MiraCosta Promise, and initiating the biomanufacturing degree program, we're on an upward trajectory. All of these developments represent our effort to be responsive to the needs of our community.

I'm particularly excited about the Nordson STEM Learning Center. Everyone has a different way of learning, and the center allows us to accommodate that. It's going to demystify some of these subjects for students, and provide a bridge for many students who might otherwise drop out.

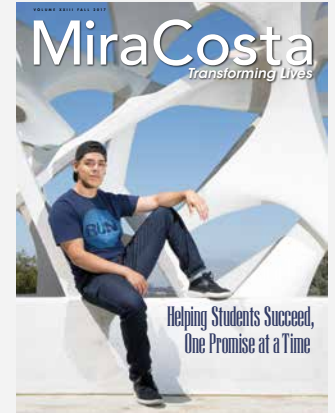
The Nordson STEM Learning Center arose out of a partnership between the

business community, the college, and the Foundation, which is a really wonderful thing. We're making a true effort to not only understand the needs of the business community, but to also involve them in developing our programs, to better serve the needs of the marketplace.

This is a model for us going forward.



The award-winning *MiraCosta, Transforming Lives* is published by the MiraCosta College Office of Institutional Advancement. We greatly appreciate the participation of those who allowed us to share their stories.



On the Cover

Oceanside High School graduate Manuel Hernandez is a recipient of a MiraCosta Promise scholarship and currently enrolled as a sociology major.

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STEM



Learning
Center

**NOW
OPEN**



STUDENTS SUCCEED THROUGH NETWORKING

The Nordson STEM Learning Center, a nexus of academic support services for MiraCosta College students, officially opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 29, 2017, on the ground floor of the Oceanside Campus library.

The Center provides access to drop-in tutoring for chemistry, physics, biology, biotechnology, computer science, and upper-division math, with the potential of more subjects in the future. The Center also features workshops, independent and group study spaces, reference materials, and scientific equipment.

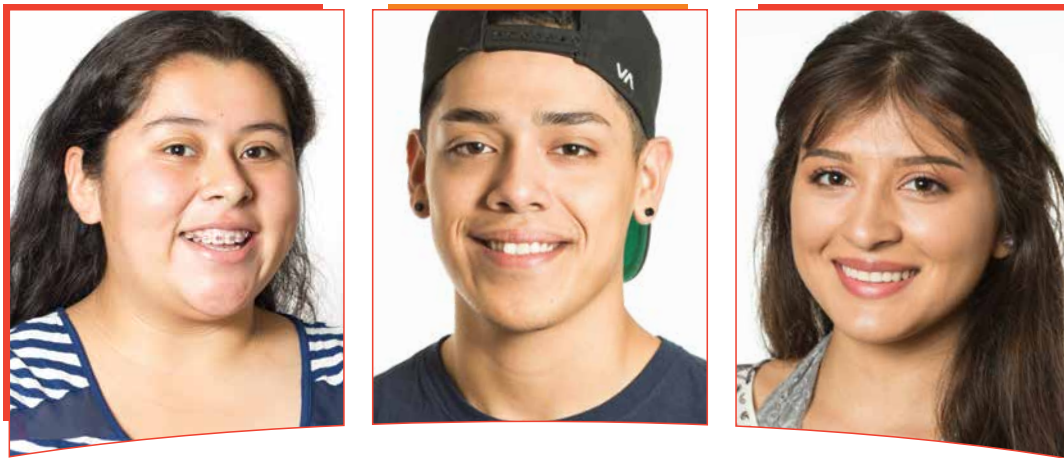
“It’s all about connections! In the new Nordson STEM Learning Center, MiraCosta STEM students benefit from a positive and nurturing learning environment surrounded by their peers, science faculty, content specialists, tutors, and academic counselors. The Center is already proving itself a success!” stated Dr. Theresa Bolaños, Chemistry Department chair and STEM coordinator.

Completing a college STEM program can be a challenging endeavor for many students, especially underserved populations or those who received inadequate preparation during high school. Providing all MiraCosta College students with easily-accessible resources tailored to their individual needs will help address the lack of diversity in STEM fields and reduce dropout rates.

MiraCosta College’s research indicates that drop-in tutoring and group study opportunities have a positive impact on student success in STEM classes, and the Center was constructed with this in mind.

By empowering students to excel academically, MiraCosta College can meet the booming demand for well-trained STEM graduates in San Diego County. The Nordson STEM Learning Center was made possible by generous donations from both private individuals and the Business Roundtable. ■

A PROMISE LIKE NO OTHER



Susy Morales always had big plans. She would be the first in her family to go to college. She would become a high school counselor. She would help kids overcome challenges and build better lives. Just one problem: paying for it.

Now, thanks to the MiraCosta Promise, Susy Morales can make those plans a reality. Launched this year, the MiraCosta Promise offers tuition-free education for a student's first year of college, covers mandatory fees, and helps with the rising cost of textbooks.

For Morales, the MiraCosta Promise is opening doors to a better future. "The Promise is an amazing program," said Morales, the daughter of a single mom who works as a housekeeper.

"It shows MiraCosta's commitment to a belief that anyone can go to college. It isn't just for the rich but also for the poor, as we all deserve access to a quality education. And it also shows that you're really wanted at the college," said Morales, who graduated in June from El Camino High School with a GPA of 3.75 and dreams of working with teens from underrepresented communities as a high school counselor.

Nearly three out of four students at MiraCosta College are working to support themselves—nearly half subsist on an income of less than \$18,000. Approximately 46 percent rely on financial aid, such as the Board of Governors (BOG) Fee Waiver, to help

see **PROMISE** page 8



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*Susy Morales, current MiraCosta
Promise recipient, graduated from
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An Open Book

Classes, work, parking, traffic—today's students have enough things on their minds. Covering the skyrocketing cost of textbooks shouldn't be one of them.

At the forefront of a nationwide movement to reduce the heavy financial burden of escalating prices, MiraCosta College is taking action to support students.

A recent study by Student PIRGs concluded textbook costs have increased by 73 percent in the past decade, and students nationally are spending an estimated \$2 billion annually on textbooks they will end up using just one semester. While textbook prices vary, students typically spend several hundred dollars each semester on books required for their courses.

To better serve students at MiraCosta College, a new task force began meeting this fall to investigate and implement an array of initiatives related to Open Educational Resources (OER) and Zero Textbook Cost programs. The college has already secured three related grants totaling nearly \$150,000 dedicated to the effort, one of which is enabling MiraCosta to introduce OER in 50 core mathematics, oceanography, sociology, international languages, and child development classes by 2018.

OER provides free access to textbooks, videos, software, and course materials by sourcing books in the public domain or through intellectual property licenses paid for by grants and foundations and is already saving students money. During the 2016-17 academic year, students enrolled in 49 course sections saved a total of more than \$240,000 through these initiatives. And more savings are on the way.



“
If we could reduce the rising cost of textbooks for our students, we’ll be removing a significant barrier in getting an education.”

A second grant is helping the Child Development Department implement a Zero Textbook Cost certificate program by next year, and a third grant will enable the Sociology Department to plan for a Zero Textbook Cost degree. Both efforts would allow students to complete their program of study online and through other free resources.

“Tuition and fees at a community college are relatively inexpensive, especially when compared to a four-year college or university. Tuition is also alleviated by financial aid programs such as the MiraCosta Promise or the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver program. So textbook costs often represent the majority of what a student is spending to get an education,” said Jim Julius, who chairs the new OER Task Force. “If we could as a college reduce the rising cost of textbooks for our students, we’ll be removing a significant barrier in getting an education.”

Some studies, in fact, show that students using OER earn higher grades than their counterparts. But backers note that instructors must do their homework to ensure the resources they decide to use are high quality and effective.

Julius emphasized the use of OER should not be a top-down proposition. “A lot of our faculty members are comfortable with current textbooks, and no one is going to tell them they have to switch. But education is key. The more people see that the quality of OER can be as good as any textbook, and that Open Educational Resources are a pathway toward opening educational opportunities, the more popular this route is going to become.” ■

finance their education, but that doesn't cover books and other ancillary costs.

The MiraCosta Promise is an agreement between students, the college and its donors that requires participants to regularly meet with a counselor, take part in an orientation, and confer with academic advisors to help ensure their success. Promise students must also enroll in a minimum of 12 units each semester and maintain a GPA of 2.0. As part of the program, Morales and other Promise recipients are setting up an educational plan that will help them transfer to a university for a bachelor's or master's degree.

The MiraCosta Promise is open to any senior who graduates from any accredited high school within the MiraCosta Community College District boundaries. Recipients must be a California resident and file required financial aid forms.

The MiraCosta College Foundation, which provides the financial support for the Promise program, is creating an \$8 million endowment in order to fund the program in perpetuity. The goal is to eventually expand the program and cover a full two years for participants.

The Promise program is also helping Oceanside High School graduate Francisco Javier Manuel Hernandez reach his goals. Hernandez heard about the MiraCosta Promise through the grant-funded Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program, or GEAR UP. GEAR UP is designed to increase the number of low-income students who succeed in their education beyond high school.

As part of Hernandez' academic journey toward earning a master's degree in sociology, he attended a Center for Community College Partnerships boot camp at UCLA this past summer. The Center for Community College Partnerships prepares community college students, particularly first-generation or low-income students, in transferring to a college or university.

Hernandez, 18, grew up in a portion of Oceanside plagued by violence and gangs. School kept him out of trouble and away from that violence. Through his hard work, he graduated from Oceanside High with a GPA of 3.3.

"The MiraCosta Promise brings me a lot of joy," Hernandez explains. "By providing for a free year of college, I won't have to work full-time to go to school. That will allow me

to concentrate on my studies, which will only encourage me to do even better academically and make it easier to go to a university like UCLA."

The Promise isn't just helping Morales and Hernandez. Valeria Estrada graduated from El Camino High School in June 2017 with a GPA of 3.75, but was left with few options to pursue her education. "I really wanted to go to San Jose State, but it's just too much money, especially when you're staying at a dorm," she said. "That would put too much of a strain on my parents."

When Estrada heard about the MiraCosta Promise, it was like a dream come true. She met with counselors, developed an educational plan, and is aiming to transfer to a four-year university for a bachelor's degree caring for others as a nurse.

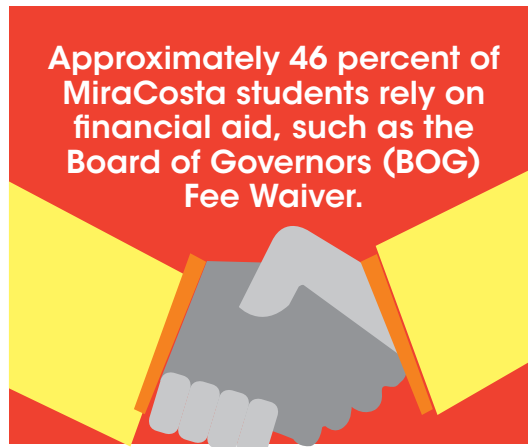
Supporters of the MiraCosta Promise see the program as an investment in the future. Approximately 90 percent of MiraCosta College graduates remain in the region after entering the workforce, filling a need in the local economy. More than 70 percent of the fastest-growing occupations will require a postsecondary education over the next decade. A recent economic study reported that a student who earns an associate degree from MiraCosta College will see an increase in earnings of more than \$450,000 over his or her working lifetime. Most of that increase will be reinvested back into the local community.

The MiraCosta Promise has a positive social impact as well. By providing a pathway to success for its students, MiraCosta College reduces the cost of law enforcement, welfare, and social programs in the region by an estimated \$39.8 million.

"Through the MiraCosta Promise, we can make education attainable and affordable for every eligible student and make a significant and lasting impact in our community," said MiraCosta College Foundation President Stephen "Hap" L'Heureux. "The college will maximize dollars invested in the MiraCosta Promise to support education leading to higher graduation rates, awarding more degrees, and ultimately benefiting our community as a whole."

For Estrada, the MiraCosta Promise is opening eyes to a better future.

"A lot of my peers, a lot of students I know from high school, weren't even thinking about going to college until they heard about the MiraCosta Promise," said Estrada. "Now, everything has changed. It's a wonderful opportunity." ■



Valeria Estrada, current MiraCosta Promise recipient, graduated from El Camino High School with a 3.75 GPA.

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Life Changer

Diane Danielewicz

**set to retire after long
MiraCosta College career.**



Her job is financial aid and scholarship specialist, but Diane Danielewicz has spent a career transforming lives.

During her time at MiraCosta College, she found new paths for laid-off workers, transformed the future of former foster youth, inspired displaced homemakers, and opened new chapters in the lives of former military personnel. For more than a decade, Diane has helped thousands of students find scholarships, grants, and financial aid all while assisting them in achieving their dream for a better life.

Now Diane will open a new chapter of her life as she retires.

“I’ve really enjoyed getting to know and work with so many students who have gone on to do great things in this world,” Danielewicz said. “I’ve had the privilege to work with some of the most amazing people of all ages—veterans, refugees, transitioning high school students, the formerly incarcerated. It’s been a true blessing. But it’s time for me to move on.”

As the financial aid and scholarship specialist, she has done everything from letting students know about financial options, advising how to write personal essays, and securing letters of recommendation.

Diane has worked with countless donors over the years in establishing scholarships, creating scholarship criteria, and reviewing scholarship applications and transcripts. “My basic job is to get the information about scholarships and financial aid out there to students and help them secure the resources that are available,” she said.

In her first year as a financial aid and scholarship specialist, 484 students applied for awards and 193 secured scholarships totaling \$100,410. Ten years later, those numbers have swelled. In 2016–17, 1,038 students applied for awards with 512 securing scholarships totaling \$416,000. Most scholarships are funded through the MiraCosta College Foundation, which has grown from a fledgling nonprofit more than a half-century ago into an indispensable source of funding for students and college operations.

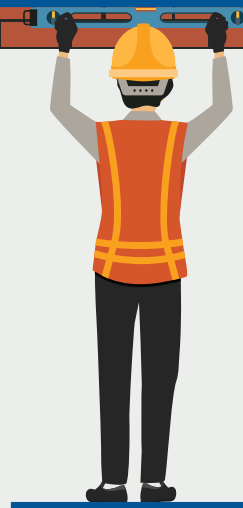
“What really makes working at MiraCosta so wonderful is you’re working with a team. It’s a cooperative effort. No single person is responsible for what is happening at this college,” said Danielewicz. “We’re all here working together on behalf of our students, and it has been an honor to be a part of that.” ■

What's In A Name?

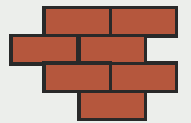


Thanks to the voters of the MiraCosta Community College District and all the tireless supporters, Measure MM successfully passed with more than 62 percent of the vote in November 2016. With new buildings, come many available opportunities for individuals, families, and businesses who may be interested in leaving a legacy by way of naming opportunities.

“MiraCosta College is grateful to the community for supporting this bond measure,” said MiraCosta College Superintendent/President Dr. Sunny Cooke. “The bond will allow us to make essential campus improvements and technological upgrades needed to provide a first-class education to our students and better prepare them for high-demand, high-skill jobs in our regional economy.”



The district has started to sell the \$455 million in general obligation bonds, secured Kitchell as the project manager, established an Independent Citizens’ Bond Oversight Committee (ICBOC) to oversee the funds, and began the environmental impact report (EIR) for modernizing aging facilities and upgrading instructional technology. In 18 to 24 months, the college will start seeing the fruits of the bond money by way of career-training facilities for science, nursing, health care, engineering, and skilled trades; improve job training, counseling, and support services for veterans; modernized instructional technology in math, science and technology; repaired or replaced leaky roofs, worn-out floors, outdated restrooms, faulty electrical systems, and deteriorating plumbing lines; and lastly, improved access for students with disabilities.



These new projects represent the delivery of MiraCosta College’s promise to the community; strengthening the economy by providing stellar educational opportunities, and producing skilled graduates that fulfill the needs of local industries, like biotechnology and health care.

NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

Soon, more than 26,000 students will be traversing MiraCosta College’s new or newly-modernized facilities. Naming these prominent, high-traffic spaces represents a phenomenal opportunity to honor your organization, company, loved ones, or your own personal legacy.

A named building constitutes a unique, mutually-beneficial partnership between MiraCosta College and a donor—a partnership that can create lasting memories, tell a meaningful story, and showcase our shared belief in the promise of education.

In regards to naming opportunities, the MiraCosta College Foundation is seeking philanthropists that share the college’s vision and have a meaningful reason for giving.

If you have an interest in naming an academic space, student activity or program, please contact the Foundation office at 760.795.6645.





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Over the course of her 13 years here at MiraCosta College, Dr. Denise Stephenson has taught MiraCostans the power of writing, the power of teaching, and the power of giving.

“It seems to me that those who receive a lot, need to give a lot. Feeling very gifted myself, I believe in giving back. Some of us are capable of monetary gifts, but all of us are capable of giving. Sometimes that means showing up. Sometimes that means political action. We all need to give to causes we’re passionate about,” Stephenson stated.

After earning her Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of New Mexico, Dr. Stephenson led three different writing centers before

arriving at MiraCosta College to teach. She launched MiraCosta College’s Writing Center in 2004 and has served as its faculty director ever since. In addition to her role at the writing center, Dr. Stephenson also teaches workshops and serves as a mentor to faculty.

“One of the times that people are generous is when they feel connected to things,” said Dr. Stephenson. “MiraCosta is unique in that we really do have a community. When we can clearly see an aspect of student success we haven’t been reaching, we pull together to work for that. If there’s someone in our community who gets sick, we pull together to try to do things for them. We demonstrate we

care about each other. In a community like this, I know that if I need help, someone will give it. So there’s a culture of reciprocity.”

Believing that MiraCosta College is a uniquely transformative place, Dr. Stephenson explains, “MiraCosta is not your average community college, by any stretch. I wouldn’t have stayed, if it were. Many places don’t have the spirit we have.”

Dr. Denise Stephenson embodies the mission of MiraCosta College and the passion of the Foundation. Through service to students and commitment to her community, she is a driving force behind the spirit of the college. ■