

VOLUME XIX SPRING 2016

# MiraCosta

*Transforming Lives*

Building  
a Better  
Future

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One of the many things I love when visiting with community members is hearing memories of MiraCosta College through the years. I especially have appreciated learning about former MiraCosta president John MacDonald and his vision for the college when it moved to its current hilltop location in the early 1960s and was built with a facilities improvement bond. I wonder, what would Dr. MacDonald, who not only led our college for 20 years but graduated from it in 1941, think of the MiraCosta College of today?

Over the years, much has remained consistent. Like our dedication to student success. Or our practice of hiring the most talented faculty to educate our students. But much also has changed. This semester, MiraCosta opened its doors to more than 15,000 credit students—a new record. We have a new location in Carlsbad, the Technology Career Institute, which is providing specialized career training to local residents. We are gearing up to offer a bachelor's degree in biomanufacturing starting in 2017. And, in a historic agreement, MiraCosta College has taken over adult education for the San Dieguito Union High School District.

Like John MacDonald, I too have a vision for MiraCosta College. I envision a college that, through its talented faculty and staff and its state-of-the-art facilities, prepares our students for the most promising of futures. I envision a college that offers our students learning opportunities using the latest technology. I envision a college that is safe, secure and modern.

In this edition of *MiraCosta, Transforming Lives*, you'll get to read about part of that vision, as it relates to college planning and facilities. You'll also learn about the ways the college is positioning itself as a leader in workforce development. Speaking of leaders, faculty member Rita Soza has published a book about community college leader, Dr. Helen Miller Bailey. And, the iconic Dr. Dick Robertson, who has served as the college's vice president of Student Services since 1987, is retiring at the end of this academic year.

I wish I could have met Dr. MacDonald to hear first-hand his MiraCosta College experience. I am confident that he too would be setting in motion a vision for the college's next 50 years—one that will provide 21st century educational opportunities, preparing our students to compete and succeed in tomorrow's economy.



Dr. Sunny Cooke  
Superintendent/President  
MiraCosta College

## Benefits of Giving

Knox Williams, "Rayne Man Emeritus," is a champion for MiraCosta College students. Believing in the transformative power of an education, he has endowed not one but two scholarships. Knox and his late wife, June, funded the Drue Knox Williams Scholarship in memory of their deceased son. Later, after June passed away, Knox created a second endowed scholarship in his wife's memory.

A member of the President's Circle, Knox provides discretionary support in the form of a gift of \$1,000 or more each year, which supports the college president as she meets the college's most pressing needs.

Knox also became a member the Heritage Society when he established a charitable gift annuity that provides a guaranteed income for life, and significant one-time tax savings, with the remainder benefitting the college.

President's Circle and Heritage Society donors enjoy invitations to unique campus events and selected faculty lectures, hosted receptions with the college president, and public recognition of their philanthropy.

For more information on how you can support education and transform student lives, contact Linda Fogerson at 760.795.6775 or lfogerson@miracosta.edu.



\*Knox is the former owner of Rayne Water Systems and the person who posts words of wisdom on the Highway 78 Rayne sign!

The award-winning *MiraCosta, Transforming Lives* is published by the MiraCosta College Office of Development and Foundation and the Public Information Office. We greatly appreciate the participation of those who allowed us to tell their stories.

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### On the Cover

Veteran Deverson Lochard celebrates during the 2015 MiraCosta College commencement ceremony.

# Anna Najor: Among MiraCosta College's Best & Brightest

Photography by Brittany Murphy of UC Berkeley

**A**нна Najor represents the best of MiraCosta College.

Najor enrolled at the Oceanside Campus when she was just 16; transferred to UC Berkeley with a pair of associate degrees; and has engaged in humanitarian work in Uganda, Tanzania and Mexico during summer breaks the past several years.

Now Najor is heading to the Mayo Medical School in Minnesota—a research institution many consider the most selective in the country—as she pursues a career as a surgeon.

"I'm really excited to be given this opportunity," Najor said about her recent acceptance into one of the most prestigious medical schools in the country. "It's everything I've been looking for and MiraCosta College was an integral part in preparing me for this journey."

Najor is among the countless MiraCosta College alumni who have gone on to make an impact in the world, from Greg Nelson of Carlsbad who founded, managed and sold multiple million-dollar corporations and remains active in the MiraCosta College athletic program, to Andy Powers, a Taylor Guitars master luthier who is among the most celebrated guitar and ukulele makers the world over and has a following that includes the likes of Elvis Costello, Taylor Swift and Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page.

Najor, now 25, grew up in San Diego County, was homeschooled most of her life, and enrolled at MiraCosta to complete her high school requirements while simultaneously earning credits for college. While at MiraCosta, she volunteered in the emergency room at Tri-City Medical Center Trauma Center and spent time working at the Bread of Life homeless shelter. After leaving MiraCosta College with associate degrees in biochemistry and mathematics, Najor took a couple years off while waitressing up to 14 shifts per week at





# Building a Better Future

**Jerry Borja's eight years in the Marine Corps** included tours of Iraq and Afghanistan during which he protected, treated and transported wounded military personnel. Back at home, like the 1,500 or so other veterans and active-duty members now enrolled at MiraCosta College, Borja, as with Deverson Lochar (featured on the cover), found the support he needs at the Veterans Information Center, a center equipped with computers, counselors, couches and conference rooms.

"The services MiraCosta College provides to veterans are outstanding—a lot better than what I hear from veterans at other campuses," said Borja. "MiraCosta really is looking out for us; the professors, staff and counselors are very open and willing to have that one-on-one conversation with you and make sure you are getting what you need to be successful. And the Veterans Center is where it all comes together."

Which is why MiraCosta College is looking to expand and improve the Veterans Information Center to include more job training, placement and counseling and other support services to accommodate the growing number of veterans and active-duty military and their families attending the Oceanside Campus.

Those plans are part of a much larger strategic vision that would allow MiraCosta College to remain a vital resource for veterans, the local economy and the community.

Record enrollment and growing student demands have put a strain not only on the highly utilized Veterans Information Center, but also on the burgeoning Allied Health Program; career training programs in science, health care, technology and skilled trades; and on dozens of outdated classrooms at both the Oceanside and San Elijo campuses.

Even though 1 in 3 local high school graduates will enroll at MiraCosta College, it remains the only community college district in San Diego County that has not seen a bond measure approved in more than a half century, forcing administrators to postpone myriad improvements.

"We're doing the best we can with what we have to deliver the facilities and programs to meet the educational needs of the community," said Charlie Ng, MiraCosta College's vice president of Business and Administrative Services.

Due to limited funding, MiraCosta is able to work on only small portions of its facilities plan. Using this strategy, it would take MiraCosta 50 years to complete all the needed

*Chemistry students Raham Khodadadeh (l) and Sulleyka Arnaut (r) collaborate in chemistry lab.*

modernizations, renovations and improvements that are needed in the next five years. Besides an expanded veterans center, those improvements include:

- Upgrading career technical facilities for science, health care, technology and skilled trades.
- Updating instructional technology for improved student learning in core subjects such as math, science and technology.
- Improving access for students with disabilities.
- Repairing or replacing leaky roofs, worn-out floors and restrooms, deteriorating plumbing and faulty electrical systems.
- Updating science centers and labs to allow for state-of-the-art courses in biology, chemistry and other physical sciences.

Needed campus improvements aside, MiraCosta College continues to position itself as a local leader in workforce development. Last spring, the college celebrated the opening of its new Technology Career Institute in a city-owned building in Carlsbad where displaced workers are trained in areas ranging from high-tech manufacturing to maritime technology.

MiraCosta College also boasts one of the highest transfer rates to the University of California. Nearly half “of all MiraCosta College transfer applications to the UC system in the fall of 2016 were for STEM majors,” said Lise Flocken, a counselor at and faculty director of the MiraCosta College Transfer Center. “This is a smart move for students, considering that San Diego County is one of the top three life-science clusters in the country, and we know that after they graduate about 85 percent of our students will return to this region to build their careers and raise their families.”

Last year, MiraCosta College secured the green light from the California Community Colleges’ Board of

**85% → SD**

**“...85 percent of our students will return to this region to build their careers and raise their families.”**



Governors to host a baccalaureate pilot program in the growing field of biomanufacturing. The program is aimed at preparing students to work in the thriving manufacturing sector of the biotechnology industry, including technical and quality assurance/control-related positions. Several area biotechnology companies supported the MiraCosta College effort, and the college will begin accepting student applications in fall 2016, with the first cohort of 30 juniors enrolling in fall 2017.

“There’s no better statement of our commitment to being a conscientious community partner than pursuing this degree on behalf of our local industry to provide an unmatched educational experience that speaks directly to their workforce needs in biotech manufacturing,” said Mike Fino, MiraCosta College interim dean of math and sciences, who noted the total tuition cost for the four-year bachelor of science degree will be about \$10,000. “The net effect is that students are able to grow careers that are in demand and well paying and they can do so without having incurred a debilitating amount of debt.”

The baccalaureate pilot program is the latest in the MiraCosta College Biotechnology Department’s effort to attract a wide spectrum of students looking to work in the growing biotech industry. About a quarter of all students in the program already have a bachelor’s degree and a job but are learning new skills to boost their careers.

“There is a great diversity in our classrooms, from the people who are just starting out, to the people with a bachelor’s degree to the people already in the industry who want to expand their tool kit,” Fino said.

One of those students is Tayah Bolt, 18, who is studying chemistry and biotechnology and plans to transfer to UC San Diego.

“I enrolled at MiraCosta to be a part of their two-year transfer program,” said Bolt, whose MiraCosta coursework led to her acceptance in the Genomics Scholars Program at the J. Craig Venter Institute, a paid, undergraduate research opportunity with professional development. “This is so much more affordable than going straight into a four-year college system. Along with this, the class sizes are amazing compared to a lecture hall at a university with over 100 students in it.” ■

## An Economy



**on the Move**

**MiraCosta College has emerged as one of the premier job preparedness centers in the region.**

According to a 2014 San Diego Workforce Partnership report, the San Diego region will experience a 20 percent increase in average annual job openings between 2014 and 2018 in the biomanufacturing sector, which equates to 332 openings per year.

To help meet the demand, MiraCosta College in 2017 will become the first in the state to offer a bachelor of science

degree in biomanufacturing. This will help ensure MiraCosta College can continue to provide a trained and educated local workforce for jobs throughout North County.

Continued growth also is expected in the areas of health care, clean technology, tourism, information and communication technology, building and design, and sports and active lifestyle—all sectors that MiraCosta College prepares students to work for through degree and certificate programs.

**“You cannot overstate the importance that MiraCosta College is playing in the local economy.”**

David Nydegger  
Oceanside Chamber of Commerce  
President & CEO



MiraCosta  
is known for its  
**BEAUTIFUL**  
campuses,

***HOWEVER...***





...**61%**  
**OF OUR**  
**FACILITIES**  
**ARE IN**  
**POOR**  
**CONDITION.\***



Nearly 60 years ago, the vision to provide a high-quality, comprehensive college education close to home was realized when our college and community leaders broke ground on what is today the Oceanside Campus.

### 1934

Beginning in 1934, Oceanside-Carlsbad Junior College served the community well, preparing thousands of students for careers and transfer opportunities. But local residents knew the college needed to keep up with student demand and the pace of growth in North San Diego County

### 1961

In 1961, under the leadership of Dr. John MacDonald, the community passed a \$3.5 million facilities bond, enough to purchase property and construct classrooms. In 1964, the college was renamed MiraCosta College.

### 2016

**Fifty-five years have passed** since the community banded together and voted to build a new MiraCosta. Since then, the college has constructed the San Elijo Campus in Cardiff, the Community Learning Center in Oceanside, and the Technology Career Institute in Carlsbad. We've made great progress, but some of our older buildings have yet to catch up.

The state of some of our facilities is something we don't like to show the community. After all, our students and visitors marvel at the scenic beauty of the campus. But there is no denying that the time has come to modernize and retrofit many of our most tired classrooms so that we can continue to serve the coastal North San Diego County community for many more decades to come.

*\*Oceanside Campus, as determined by an independent audit reported in the college's Facilities Master Plan.*

*Photos taken in 2015 at various MiraCosta College locations.*

# Rita Soza:

## Bringing Real World Business Experience to the Classroom

Rita Soza is a business administration instructor who has enjoyed a wealth of success from separate careers in private industry—including two decades with a Fortune 100 company—and the results are profound when she walks into a classroom.

“I have students tell me that what they learned in my class was pivotal in handling a successful job interview or landing a promotion,” Soza said. “It’s rewarding to see that kind of impact.”

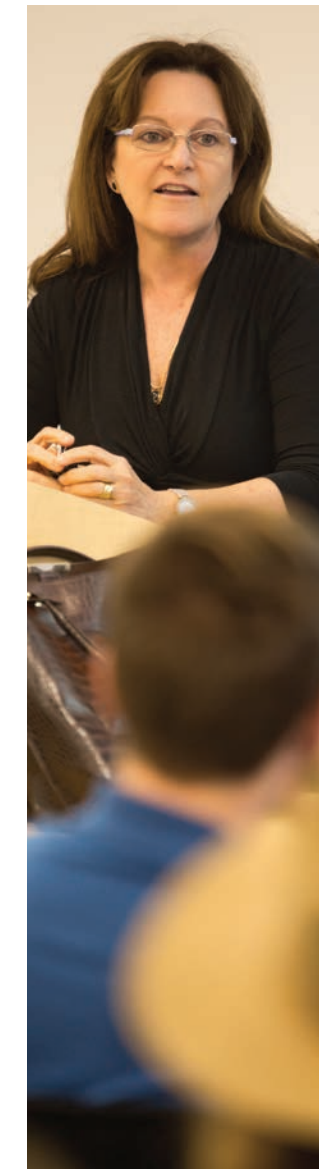
Soza didn’t set out to become a business instructor. A native of the Los Angeles working-class suburb of Montebello, Soza attended East Los Angeles College and later found work in the personnel department at Union Oil in downtown L.A. Within a few months, she was a secretary for the advertising

manager with whom she gained invaluable experience running advertising campaign and making media buys for the firm.

That led to a job with a Chicago-based public relations firm where Soza’s responsibilities included credentialing press for the Academy Awards show. Five years later, Soza was recruited by a public relations firm specializing in the motion picture industry. Some years later, and after a brief move to Colorado to be with her high school sweetheart and now-husband of 33 years, the couple moved back to California and settled in Leucadia.

That’s when Soza launched a second career in human resources management with Emerson Electric Co., a Fortune 100, multinational corporation with an office and large factory in Oceanside that once was the city’s largest employer. At Emerson, Soza worked her way up from being secretary to being the vice president of human resources for Europe and the Americas. Some 20 years and endless business trips later, Soza had an epiphany.

“I was in some hotel room in some country trying to fall asleep and I started to recount all the different divisions we closed and all the different layoffs I had been involved in, and I stopped counting when I got to 2,500,” she said. “I decided I needed to work on the other end



and teach students how not to be on those layoff lists and how to add value to a company and make themselves indispensable.”

“I realized,” Soza said, “that teaching was really what I loved to do.”

MiraCosta College students have been the beneficiaries.

“Rita’s experience in private industry HR is invaluable for her students,” said Business Administration instructor Tom Severance. “She brings her calm demeanor and tone and her well-thought-out experiences to illustrate practical, real-world applications in her intro to business and human relations in business classes. Each semester, several students comment on her classes being some of the most interesting and useful in their educational career.”

Soza, who had earned her bachelor’s degree in business management from the University of Phoenix, earned her master of business administration from UC Irvine in 2006, the same year she became a full-time professor at MiraCosta College.

“MiraCosta is just a wonderful place to be,” Soza said. “The expectation is that you will be a great teacher, and the college offers all the tools and the support that you need to make that happen.” ■

## Remembering a Leader

Trailblazer. Renaissance woman. The original flower child. All are terms that have been used to describe Dr. Helen Miller Bailey, an influential East Los Angeles College professor who impacted the lives of thousands of students from underserved communities.

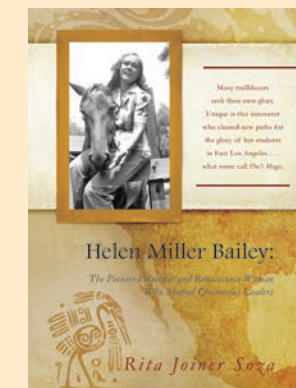
It was Dr. Bailey’s impact on MiraCosta College instructor Rita Soza that prompted Soza to research and write a biography about the East Los Angeles education icon.

“In so many ways, Dr. Bailey inspired my success,” Soza said. “I wrote this book so that others will be inspired by her life and values.”

Soza spent nearly a decade researching the life of the community college pioneer, with her work culminating in the book, *Helen Miller Bailey: The Pioneer Educator and Renaissance Woman Who Shaped Chicano(a) Leaders*, which was published in 2015.

Dr. Bailey chaired the East Los Angeles College Social Science Department from 1946 to 1974, and the campus library was dedicated in her name. She was the kind of professor who opened her home and fed scores of students, even welcoming a couple dozen students to live with her and her husband and their three adopted sons.

“The life of Helen Miller Bailey, teacher, artist, author, community activist, social reformer, wife, and mother is as inspirational as it was ardently lived,” writes Soza. “She was a visionary who was dedicated to education and who touched so many people,” Soza said. “I hope that her life continues to touch people through this book.”



*Helen Miller Bailey: The Pioneer Educator and Renaissance Woman Who Shaped Chicano(a) Leaders* can be purchased on Amazon.com or at [helenmillerbaileybio.com](http://helenmillerbaileybio.com).

# Saying Goodbye...

## MiraCosta College is losing a legend and a pillar of our community.

Dr. Richard Robertson, who has served as vice president of Student Services since Ronald Reagan was in the White House and whose commitment to students has earned praise from throughout the community, is retiring June 30.

"He is a very compassionate leader who listens more than he speaks, and everything he does is in the best interests of the students," said Naweed Tahmas, the 2015-16 student trustee for the MiraCosta Community College District. "His door has always been open for me."

"Dr. Robertson's focus has always been on students and their success," Dr. Sunita Cooke, MiraCosta College superintendent/president, said when Dr. Robertson was honored at MiraCosta College's 2015 Annual Spring Celebration of Excellence as the college's Philanthropist of the Year.

Dr. Robertson and his wife, Pat, have donated more than \$55,000 to just about every fundraising campaign launched during his tenure, including the campus food pantry, Latino graduation, Umoja, the Theatre Arts Program and much, much more. In addition, the couple established the Sloan/Robertson Endowed Scholarship in honor of their parents and have included the college in their estate plans.

His commitment to philanthropy was sparked during Dr. Robertson's final

year of his undergraduate studies when he needed money to help pay for books and living expenses. The scholarship he received made it possible for him to quit a dishwashing job and concentrate on his senior project.

Dr. Robertson earned his bachelor of arts degree in political science from The College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio, in 1965; his master's degree in college student personnel at Michigan State University in 1967; and his Ph.D. in administration and higher education at Michigan State University in 1981.

He came to MiraCosta College in 1987.

"I have enjoyed my years at MiraCosta, working with exceptional faculty and staff colleagues and interacting with amazing students," said Dr. Robertson. "MiraCosta provides excellent educational and personal growth opportunities for thousands of students every year, and instructional and student support programs dedicated to student success get better every year."

"Dick is a leader in his profession and in giving. He has dedicated himself to the betterment of thousands upon thousands of students," Cooke said. "On behalf of the college, I would like to add our sincere thanks for a job well done." ■

Najor continued from page 3.

restaurants in Del Mar, La Jolla and Rancho Bernardo to save money for the second half of her college experience at the University of California, Berkeley.

Her journey has been chock-full of challenges, not the least of which was spending much of her childhood as the primary caregiver for her father, a Chaldean immigrant from Iraq who lives with Type II diabetes and has suffered eleven strokes.

"His declining health meant years of witnessing his physical and psychological struggles, including experimentation with numerous medications for months at a time and hundreds of hours with physical therapists," she wrote in a college essay. "It agonized my father. It burdened my family. It almost broke me."

Spending two weeks volunteering at medical and dental clinics in a war-torn region of Uganda with the Children's Heritage Foundation helped put many of her challenges into perspective.

"It was a really powerful experience," Najor said of her 2008 endeavor. "It changed my life to see that kind of poverty. I mean, I had volunteered at the food bank before, but over here you're just not exposed to the same kind of hardship."

She later volunteered as a reconstructive surgery assistant in 2012 and 2013 with Smiles for Tecate, Mexico, which does reconstructive surgery on children with cleft and craniofacial deformities. She spent last summer in the East African country of Tanzania assisting in a research study testing new ways to combat the transfer of HIV from mothers to infants. She also immersed herself in her own research investigating what motivates community health workers in the African nation to do what they do.

Najor was honored in 2013 with the United States Congressional Award Gold Medal, which then-Speaker of the House John Boehner noted is the highest achievement for America's youth.

"Many students grow up these days focused on themselves, and it's impressive to see a student so willing to be of service to her family and others," said John H. Turbeville Jr., a MiraCosta College instructor of geology and oceanography, who taught Najor in an honors course and continues to keep in touch with the academic standout he calls one of the best students he's ever come across in the Honors Scholar Program.

What's more, Najor is a talented artist who has drawn attention for her portraits and paintings.

"Anna was not only sharp scientifically, she applied an equal

amount of rigor to her aesthetic research," said MiraCosta College art instructor Yoshimi Hayashi. "She has a very well-rounded breadth of knowledge."

Najor speaks just as highly about MiraCosta College.

"At UC Berkeley, I'm in classes with 200 people," she said. "Professors here just don't have the same level of connection with the students that they have at MiraCosta, and the quality of the education you're getting at MiraCosta College is definitely on par with what you get at Berkeley." ■

**"...the quality of the education you're getting at MiraCosta College is definitely on par with what you get at Berkeley."**







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# A Rise to the Top

MiraCosta College associate psychology instructor Anjeanette Oberg—a former high school dropout and teen mom who became the first in her family to go to college—has been named a recipient of the 2016 Hayward Award, an annual recognition honoring four of the most well-rounded community college instructors in California.

“I am so proud to work within the California community college system,” Oberg said. “As a community college graduate myself, I greatly appreciate the diversity of our student population. Many of our students are fighting against the odds. Their strength, resiliency, and determination is admirable, and I am honored to play a small role in helping them achieve their goals.”



Named for former California Community College Chancellor Gerald C. Hayward, the Hayward Award honors outstanding community college faculty who have a track record of excellence both in teaching and in professional activities and have demonstrated commitment to their students, profession, and college.

“In the world of California community colleges, this is the award that celebrates the fullness of the faculty contribution to students’ lives and educations,” said Susan C. Herrmann, a professor in the English Department who also serves as president of the MiraCosta College Academic Senate.

## More Notable Awards



MiraCosta College Interim Service Learning Coordinator **Beatriz Palmer** has earned a 2016 Community Champions Award, a recognition that celebrates unsung heroes by Long Beach-based managed health care company Molina Healthcare.

The NAACP honored MiraCosta College Superintendent/President **Dr. Sunita 'Sunny' Cooke** and Counseling & Student Development Dean **Dr. Wendy Stewart** during a March 12 Salute to Women of Color Awards.

The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) has given MiraCosta College the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, which is the highest award in governmental budgeting.