PALOMAR COLLEGE
Learning for Success

Annual Report



PALOMAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

2024
2025

Superintendents/ President's Message

With our continued commitment to ensure every student is welcome, engaged, and successful in completing their educational goals, we had yet another incredible year of growth and achievement for Palomar College.

Under the leadership of our talented faculty, staff, and administrators, we accomplished important milestones throughout the academic year. Achieving center status of our Rancho Bernardo Education Center and the approval of our Bachelor of Science in Building Performance and Environmental Design have been our most rewarding achievements and will have a long-lasting impact on future generations of students.

We also made significant progress in building our first permanent building at our Fallbrook Education Center and the final phase of our athletics complex is well underway. Both are scheduled for completion in 2027.

Our persistence in maintaining the fiscal health of the district also added to our success this year. We continued to operate with a balanced budget, healthy reserves, consistent clean audits, stable credit ratings, and stronger fiscal controls in place.

The 2025 commencement ceremony held for the first time in the Palomar College football stadium was the pinnacle of our year where we celebrated the conferral of 4,500 degrees and certificates. It was a powerful demonstration of what we can achieve together. It is clear that our commitment to student success is genuine and impacts thousands of students and their families each year.

Our valued partnerships have proven to be integral to our success in growing our apprenticeship, internship and service learning programs while also providing career opportunities for the next generation who will rightfully impact our region in important ways.

With these achievements as a foundation, we are excited to build on our commitment to student success in the coming year.

Go Comets!



Superintendent/ President,
Dr. Star Rivera-Lacey

Vision

Transforming lives for a better future

Mission

Palomar College respects each of our students' experiences and supports them to achieve academic success. As a community college, we encourage our students to embrace the best vision of themselves and prepare them to engage with our local and global communities.

Values

In creating the learning and cultural experience that fulfills our mission, we are committed to serving our community, including historically and currently marginalized and racially minoritized populations. In doing so, we are guided by the core values of:

Access
We make education possible for everyone.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
We recognize and respect diversity, seek to foster a culture of inclusion and belonging, and strive to address inequities.

Academic Excellence
We provide quality programs and robust course offerings to support students who are pursuing transfer-readiness, general education, career and technical training, aesthetic and cultural enrichment, and lifelong education.

Student-Focused
We offer a caring and supportive environment that addresses the holistic and distinct needs of our students.

Community
We are an integral part of our region and strive to foster meaningful relationships within our college and local communities.

Transformation
We inspire learning, improvement, and growth for all.



PALOMAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD

Jacqueline Kaiser
President

Holly Hamilton-Bleakley, Ph.D.
Vice President

Yvette Marie Acosta
Secretary

Judy Patacsil, Psy.D.
Trustee

Roberto Rodriguez
Trustee

Ariel Fridman
Student Trustee

Star Rivera-Lacey, Ph.D.
Superintendent/President

EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION

Tina Recalde, DPT
Assistant Superintendent/Vice President,
Instructional Services

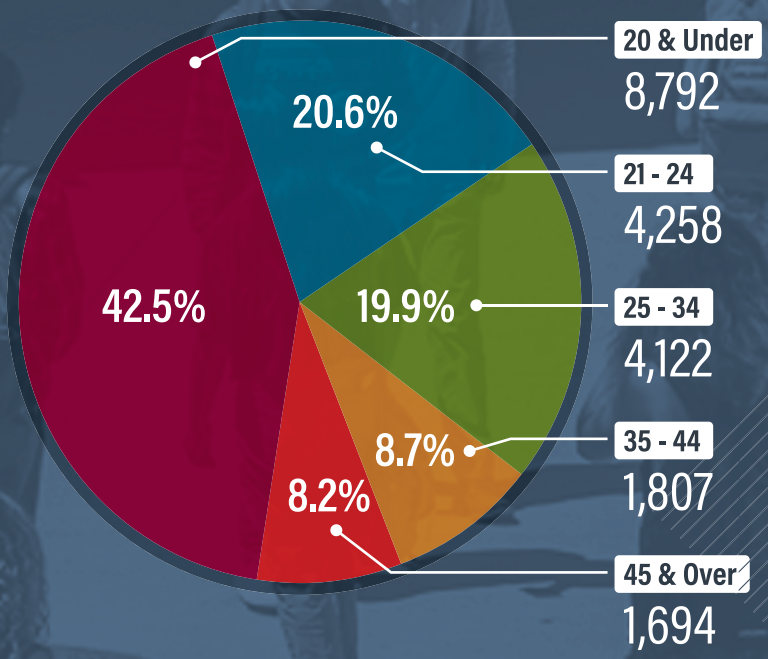
Nicholas Mata
Assistant Superintendent/Vice President,
Student Services

Christopher Yatooma
Interim Assistant Superintendent/Vice President,
Finance and Administrative Services

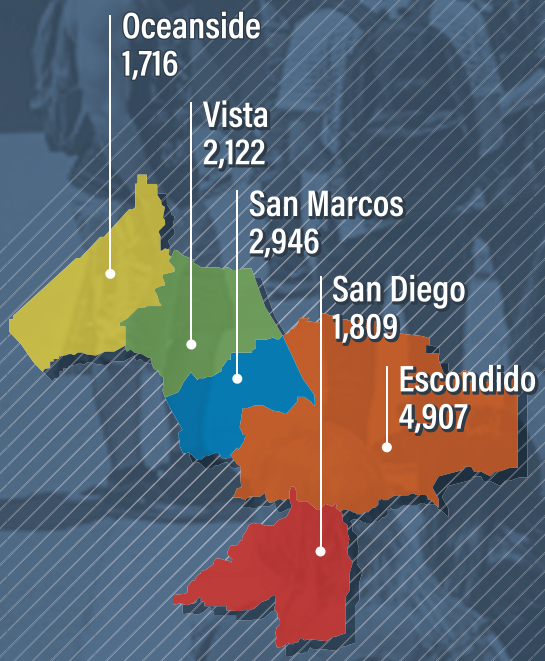
Anna Pedroza
Assistant Superintendent/Vice President,
Human Resource Services

Palomar College Facts

STUDENTS BY AGE GROUP



TOP 5 CITIES IN ENROLLMENT



STUDENTS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

HISPANIC	51.7%
WHITE NON-HISPANIC	30.4%
MULTI-ETHNIC	6.0%
ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER	4.9%
BLACK NON-HISPANIC	2.8%
FILIPINO	2.3%
NOT DISCLOSED	1.4%
NATIVE AMERICAN	.5%

TOP 5 MAJORS

TRANSFER STUDIES	1,127
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	1,098
BIOLOGY, GENERAL	1,053
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	976
BIOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES	940

TOP 5 AWARDS

TRANSFER STUDIES	619
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	569
GENERAL STUDIES	426
BIOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES	290
SOCIAL STUDIES, GENERAL	240

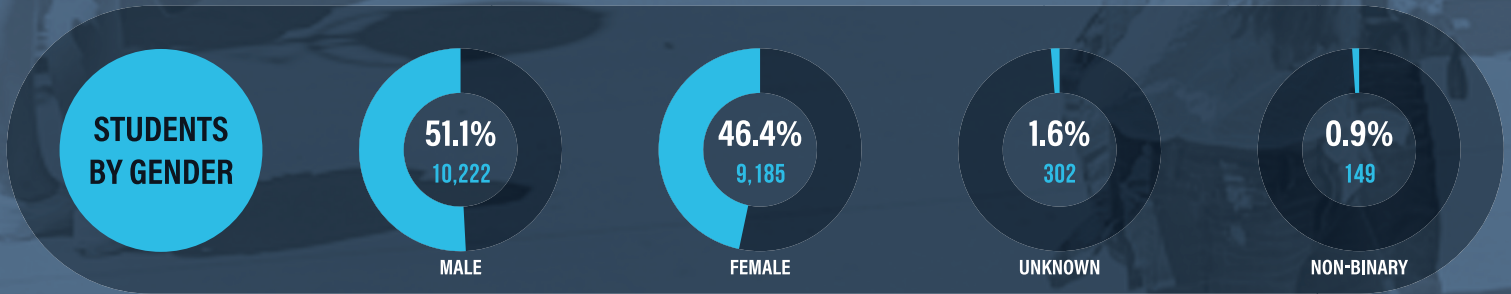
FULL-TIME STUDENTS

13,977 - 67.6%

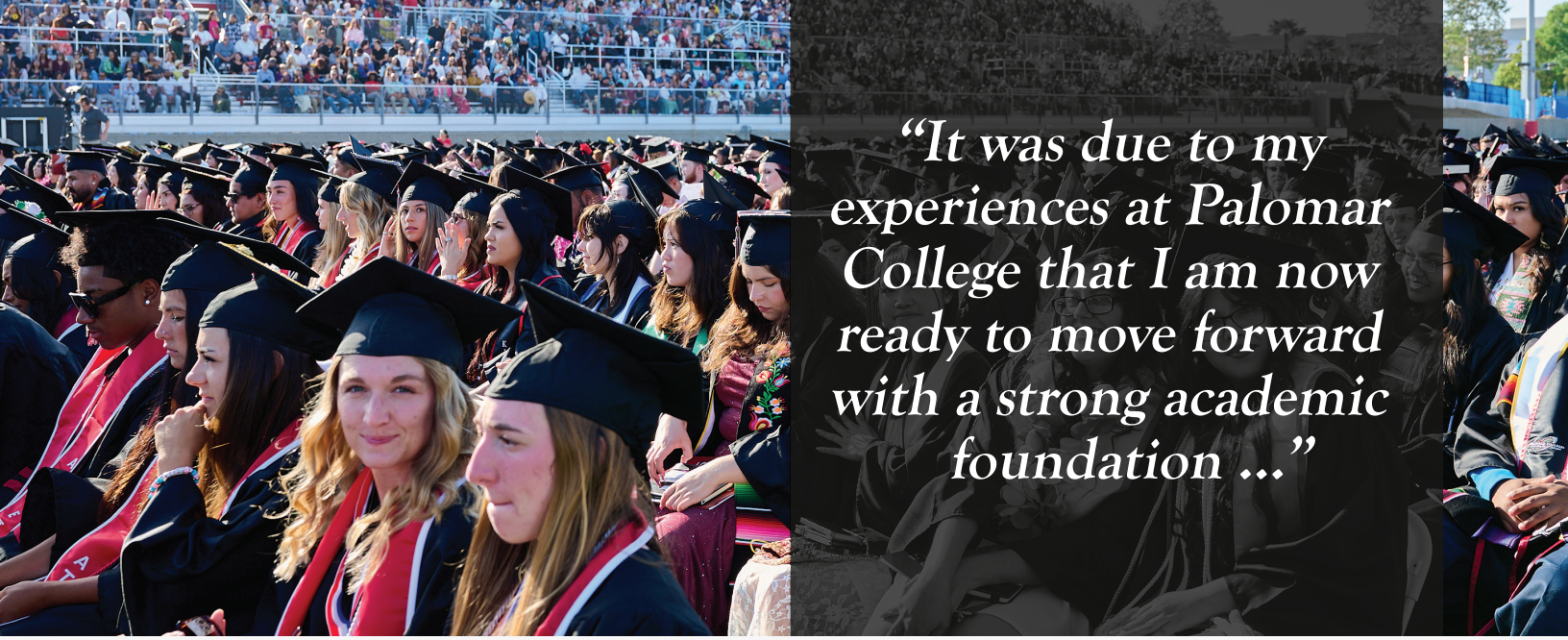
PART-TIME STUDENTS

6,697 - 32.4%

STUDENTS BY GENDER



THE DATA SOURCE IS THE COLLEGE MIS SUBMISSIONS TO THE CCCCO.



2025 Commencement Ceremony

Celebrating Success

The Palomar College 2025 commencement ceremony, the first to be held in the new football stadium, honored graduates who received degrees and certificates that exemplified the determination and perseverance of their educational journey.

A total of 2,913 graduates were awarded 4,516 degrees and certificates, with many students receiving multiple awards.

Superintendent/President Dr. Star Rivera-Lacey presided over the ceremony as 728 students walked across the stage. Dr. Rivera-Lacey spoke about the importance of celebrating personal achievements.

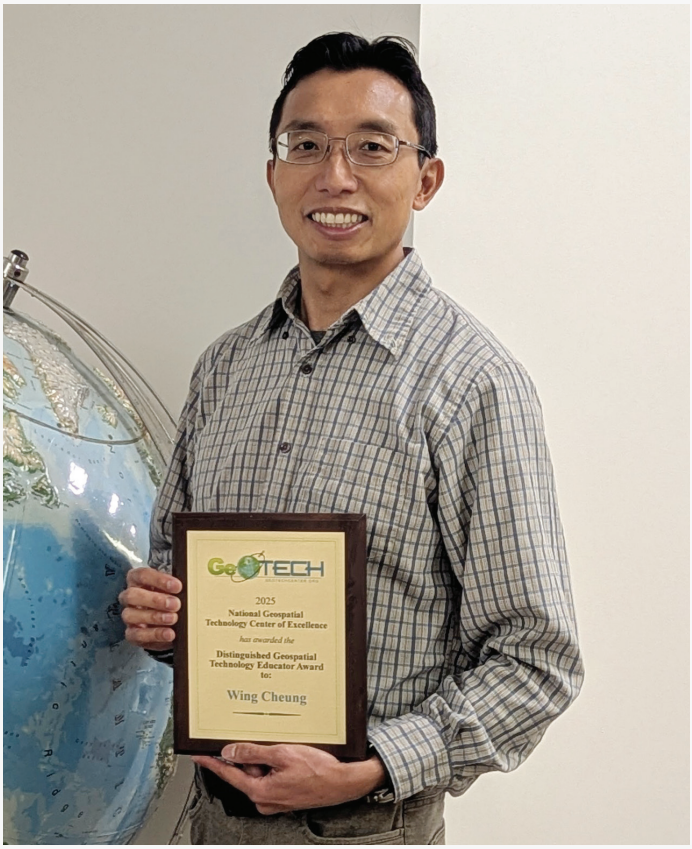
“Today we are at the intersection of endings and new beginnings, where we pay tribute to the journey completed, while simultaneously anticipating the exciting future ahead,” she said. “I am confident that your pending contributions will make our region better for generations to come.”

Keynote speaker William Carrasco, Ph.D., a French and Spanish instructor and the 2023-24 Distinguished Faculty Award Winner, included a song he wrote at the end of his comments. Student speaker and 2024-25 Associated Student Government President Safiya Swearingen reminded graduates of the importance of using their voice to facilitate change.

The class of 2025 graduates included valedictorian Lea Bronson, who earned a 4.0 grade point average. She worked at Elizabeth Hospice while at Palomar College and developed a project known as Last Wish Transports, in which hospice patients choose a location to get together with their loved ones.

“It was due to my experiences at Palomar College that I am now ready to move forward with a strong academic foundation, a resilient mindset, and a genuine desire to make an impact where it matters most,” Bronson said.

Among those honored at the ceremony were 21 Bonsall High School students who earned degrees and certificates while attending the Early College program at the Palomar College Education Center in Fallbrook. The graduates also included 29 students in the Rising Scholar program, which offers academic and support services to formerly incarcerated individuals dedicated to reaching success through education.



Professor Wing Cheung

Award-Winning Faculty

Wing Cheung, a geography and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Professor at Palomar College, was honored by his peers for his work seeking official government designations for careers in the geospatial field. The Distinguished Geospatial Educator Award from the National Geospatial Technology Center of Excellence is funded by the National Science Foundation.

Cheung has been working since 2024 to seek the official designation known as standard occupation classification (SOC) codes from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for occupations in the geospatial field, such as GIS technician, GIS analyst, or GIS technologist. The government data is important because education programs need to show that jobs exist in their fields. Employers also use the data for creating job postings and determining salary levels.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics only updates the SOC codes every 10 years, with the next update in 2028. Cheung began working in the summer of 2024 with leaders of numerous geospatial professional organizations in a workgroup to ensure agreement on the new proposed job codes.

Cheung wrote and submitted the workgroup's comments during a 60-day period, part of the 37,507 public comments the bureau received. The bureau's reply is expected in 2026, with final implementation two years later. "It's a very involved process," Cheung said.

Cheung also produced course curriculum that he has been sharing with the technology center that gave him the award. He is a proponent of service learning, combining community service with what students learn in his classes.

Students in Cheung's introductory GIS course are given the option of completing a project in which they partner with community organizations such as the Escondido Creek Conservancy or San Diego Food Bank. "The students are performing a community service, and they're applying what they learned in the classroom to solve real-world problems," Cheung said.

In his 18 years teaching at Palomar College, Cheung was instrumental in launching a drone technology program. He is now focusing his efforts on revising the noncredit program to emphasize drone use in geospatial applications.

He is also leading efforts in Palomar College's share of a $1 million three-year NSF grant with Southwestern College to increase the number of land surveyors prepared to enter the workforce, with many current surveyors reaching retirement age. "There is a desperate need for students to join the land surveying profession in San Diego County and the entire country," he said.



Angela Kong, Palomar College Woman of the Year

Palomar College Woman of the Year

Angela Kong was named the Palomar College 2025 Woman of the Year by the Empowered Women Affinity Group, who noted Kong's unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and antiracism.

"She is a tireless advocate for student success, a powerful mentor, and a leader who builds spaces of belonging for students and colleagues alike," the Women of the Year Selection Committee said. "She brings lived experience as an Asian American woman of color to her work with deep empathy, purpose, and integrity."

Kong, whose family emigrated to the United States from Hong Kong when she was an infant, earned her bachelor's degree from San Jose State University and went on to earn master's degrees in counseling and ethnic studies from UC San Diego.

Kong started at Palomar College in 2019, serving as a Service Learning Coordinator and currently serves as the Interim Project Director of Student Support Programs, for Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian students. She is leading a review to determine the needs of those students.

"We want to understand who our students are and to assess what the needs are for them and to look at the best practices of what they need to be successful," she said.



Nellie Martinez, Fellowship Recipient

Exclusive National Fellowship

Nellie Martinez was selected as one of 25 fellows in a yearlong program by the National Community College Hispanic Council to advance the number of Hispanics in leadership positions in community colleges.

Martinez has served as a Project Director for three federally-funded TRIO program grants at Palomar College and is currently serving as the Interim Manager of the Office of Student Recruitment.

Martinez knows the obstacles to obtaining a college degree. When she was five months old, her family migrated from Mexico to Rainbow, where her father was an agricultural worker. She obtained scholarships to attend Cal State University San Marcos, to earn her bachelor's degree, then went on to earn a master's degree in higher education administration from National University.

As part of the fellowship, Martinez is attending seminars and symposiums, and is working with a mentor to develop a career plan.

"I want to find my voice in spaces where important conversations are being had regarding student services and equitable initiatives to increase student success," she said.

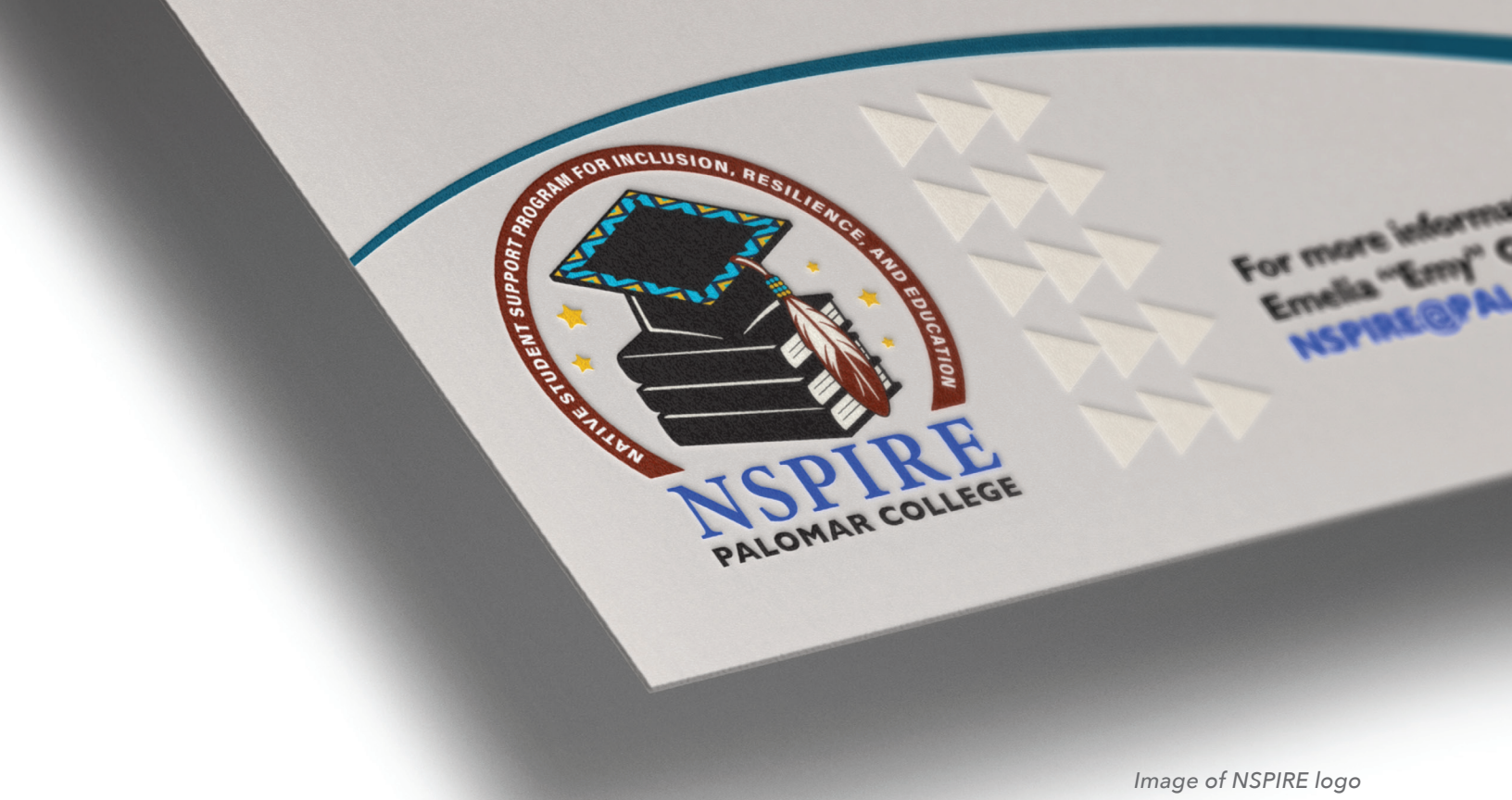


Image of NSPIRE logo

Five-year Grant Serves Native American Students

Palomar College was one of 20 California community colleges that received a Native American Student Support and Success Program Grant from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

The $1.5 million five-year grant will fund a pilot program to strengthen K-12 pathways to and through the community college system. The program is designed to ensure educational success, develop leaders, and increase the number of mentors to empower American Indian and Alaskan Native students.

Through the grant, Palomar College developed a Native Student Support Program for Inclusion, Resilience and Education (NSPIRE). The mission of NSPIRE centers around supporting Native American (American Indian/Alaska Native) by providing a supportive space that honors their lived experiences resulting in fostering an environment where tribal traditions, values, practices, and sovereignty are respected and integrated, while also ensuring success within mainstream educational pathways.

NSPIRE students receive support and mentorship from a Native Program Coordinator, Native Counselor, Native Peer Mentors, Native Elders in Residence and through collaboration with the American Indian Studies Department. Housed at the Native American Resource Center, students are provided access to study spaces, technology resources, tutors, academic counseling and advising services, workshops, and referrals to community resources for students and their families. Palomar College is also partnering with universities to provide a smoother transfer process for Native students.



Rancho Bernardo Education Center

Education Centers are Vital to Student Success

The Palomar College education centers provide convenient access to students throughout our district as they pursue the completion of their educational and training goals.

The first Palomar College education center opened in Escondido in 1989 and was renovated in 2013. The center has continued to grow and focuses on general education and core transfer coursework, English as a Second Language (ESL), and noncredit instruction. In addition, programs in emergency medical education, fire technology, and air conditioning and refrigeration are housed at the center and offer students the opportunity to train in customized labs that emulate real world scenarios. The center also has an Early Childhood Education Lab School (ECELS) on the site to serve students with children and the local community.

The second and third education centers, in Fallbrook and Rancho Bernardo opened for classes in fall 2018. In 2025, the California Community College System Board of Governors granted center status to the Rancho Bernardo Education Center and



Fallbrook Education Center



Escondido Education Center

later approved a Bachelor of Science in Building Performance and Environmental Design, which will begin accepting applications in winter 2025. The core programs offered at the center are interior design, architecture, and fashion merchandising design programs, which provide students with a distinct pathway to the Bachelor of Science degree. General education courses required for transfer to a 4-year institution and achieving an associate's degree or certificate are also offered at the center.

The 2024-25 academic year was also an exciting year for the Fallbrook Education Center as the construction of the first permanent instructional and student services building got underway, with plans to open in fall 2027. Students attending the Fallbrook center can complete general education courses in preparation for transfer to a 4-year institution and complete their educational path and training in a variety of fields including psychology, sociology, fire technology administration of justice, education, and emergency medical basic training.

Our Commitment to Student Success



Palomar College Valedictorian Lea Bronson

Valedictorian Lea Bronson

Growing up in Germany, Lea Bronson never dreamed of the path that her life would take: a full life with her husband in San Diego County, and a thriving academic journey at Palomar College, culminating with her selection as the 2025 valedictorian.

Bronson maintained a perfect grade point average, and was selected for Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the community college honor society. She also was chosen to receive a $1,000 Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise scholarship.

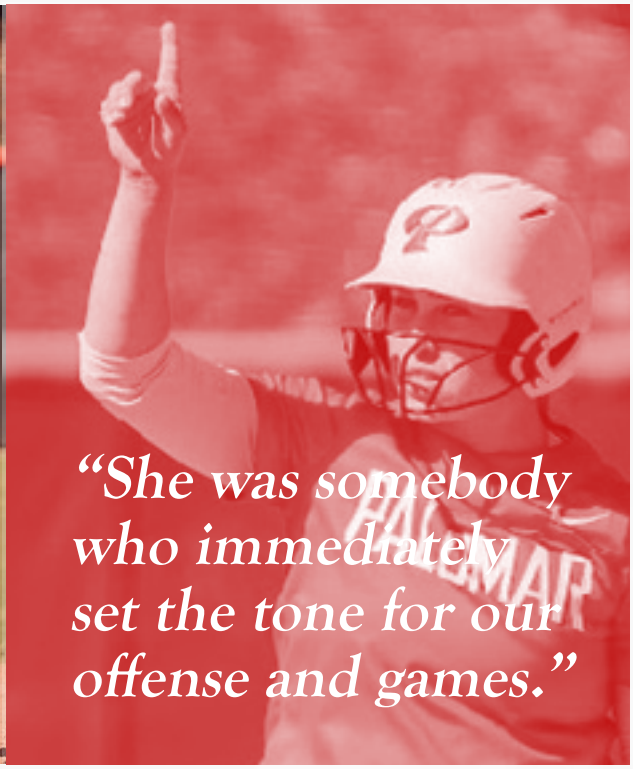
"My time at Palomar shaped me into a confident, capable learner who is ready for the next challenge," Bronson said. Bronson grew up in Bavaria, where she was working and attending a trade school when she met her future husband, Craig Bronson, a manager at General Atomics, who was visiting Germany. Two years later, she moved to San Diego at the age of 20 and they married on March 3, 2020 – just days before the COVID pandemic shut down the world.

> ***"My time at Palomar shaped me into a confident, capable learner who is ready for the next challenge."***

Feeling isolated, Bronson resumed her education at Palomar College, working 60 hours a week as an EMT while attending classes. While at Palomar, Bronson was active in PTK and volunteered to introduce careers in emergency medical services to middle schoolers. She also volunteered with Elizabeth Hospice and developed a project in which hospice patients choose a location where they can get together with their loved ones.

Bronson will study nursing at the University of Kansas with the goal of becoming a registered nurse. She hopes to specialize in emergency medicine and work in rural communities that are medically underserved.





Award-Winning Student Athlete Breanna Lutz

Student Athlete Breanna Lutz

The accolades continued in 2025 for Palomar College softball player Breanna Lutz, who has been described as one of the greatest softball players in the history of California community college sports.

Lutz was named State Athlete of the Year by the California College Sports Information Association, just the second time that a softball player has been selected.

In her two seasons at Palomar College, Lutz was also named National Fastpitch Coaches Association Player of the Year, Southern California Player of the Year, MVP of the Pacific Coast Athletic Conference, and was state batting champion with a .560 batting average.

She struck out only twice in 184 plate appearances, and led the state in runs, hits and on-base percentage. The Palomar College Comets softball team, playing their first season on their new field, had a 44-5 record and made the state championship final, where they lost to San Mateo College.

Lutz said her teammates are the reason for her success. “I love my teammates so much,” she said. “It’s all about the teamwork and the competition. It’s so much fun. I love to compete.”

Palomar College Softball Coach Lacey Craft described Lutz as a fiery and competitive player who was well-liked by teammates and fans.

“She was somebody who immediately set the tone for our offense and games,” Craft said. “She immediately demoralized our opponents. She is a fun player to watch.”

Lutz graduated from Palomar College with an associate degree in criminal justice and transferred to Portland State University. She plans to pursue a career in law enforcement, but she said she would seize an opportunity to have a career playing ball.

“That’s the dream – to play professional softball,” she said.

Clearing the Path to Success



Palomar College Student Mahak Tiwari

Mahak Tiwari

Mahak Tiwari once struggled with her academics, but she was able to turn herself around at Palomar College to become an active member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and the recipient of a $1,500 scholarship.

Tiwari received the Oberndorf Lifeline to Completion Scholarship, named for Rosemary and Lou Oberndorf. Lou Oberndorf co-founded METI, a world leader in medical education technology.

Tiwari, who is majoring in biochemistry, plans to graduate from Palomar College in spring 2026 and transfer to Washington State University.

Tiwari was diagnosed at birth with cerebral palsy, which required her to undergo multiple surgeries. She had to relearn to walk several times while enduring physical therapy, and she now uses crutches to help her walk.

"I faced many challenges, but these experiences instilled in me resilience, courage, and adaptability," she said. "Over time, I learned to embrace my strength, push through difficulties, and redefine what I was capable of achieving."

She has excelled academically at Palomar College after struggling at another community college. She has a 4.0 grade point average and served as vice president of fellowship and membership for the Phi Theta Kappa honor society.

Chapter Advisor Dana O'Callaghan said Tiwari has come up with innovative ideas for the organization, such as organizing a virtual movie night for members. "She has been enthusiastic, passionate and forward-thinking about Phi Theta Kappa," O'Callaghan said

Tiwari said she plans to pursue a career in brain and spinal cord cancer as a physician-scientist, based on her own health challenges and her parents' battles with cancer, now in remission.

"These experiences have fueled my commitment to advancing cancer treatment and making a meaningful impact in the field," she said.



Palomar College Alumni Juliette Bailey

Juliette Bailey

Growing up in the foster care system, Juliette Bailey faced countless challenges. At Palomar College, Bailey was a high-achieving student on her path to transferring to a university.

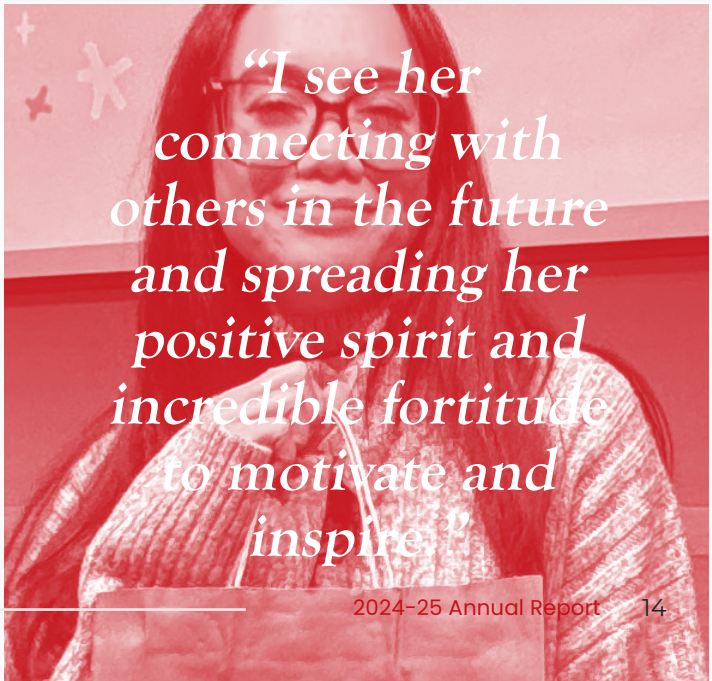
Bailey attributed her success at Palomar College to Leslie Aguilar, a Counselor with Palomar's Next Up program, which supports current and former foster youth.

"I really had no direction in what I wanted to do or go in the right path," Bailey said. "Once Leslie gave me a clear view on how to get to my goals, that's when I started to prioritize school." Bailey has come a long way from her difficult childhood. Her mother struggled with substance abuse, so Bailey lived with a family friend until she was seven years old. She returned to live with her mother, but when she was 11 years old, she reported her mother to child protective authorities.

Bailey entered the foster care system and was placed with a family until she aged out of foster care at 18.

She began attending CSU San Marcos, but she said she wasn't mentally prepared for college and dropped out when she was placed on academic probation. Bailey began attending Palomar College and connected with Aguilar, who helped her realize she wanted to help others. She transferred to San Francisco State University, where she is planning to major in social work.

Aguilar said she was moved by Bailey's emotional strength. "I have been awestruck by Juliette's tenacity, grit, determination and commitment to school," Aguilar said. "I'm beyond proud of her accomplishments, but what I am most proud of is her kind, gentle, positive spirit. I see her connecting with others in the future and spreading her positive spirit and incredible fortitude to motivate and inspire."



Ensuring Digital Access For All

Accessible Palomar is Palomar College's effort to make all its digital content – from websites to forms and online course curriculums – accessible to all. The wide-ranging initiative began in Fall 2024 to ensure compliance with federal laws but is driven by the goal of upholding the right of every person, regardless of their ability, to access the college's online resources with equal dignity and independence.

With the guidance of the Academic Technology Resource Center (ATRC), which manages the Palomar.edu website, a new platform that analyzes the accessibility and usability of the website was launched in Fall 2024. The Public Affairs Office then initiated a workplan to review specific parts of the Palomar.edu website, which led to a larger project to train website administrators on the platform and best practices to improve accessibility and usability scores. The ATRC is leading the latter portion of the website accessibility initiative.

In spring 2025, Palomar College participated in a program sponsored by the California Community Colleges Accessibility Center to measure the college's progress toward achieving accessibility in numerous areas, including educational materials, websites, digital content, training and professional development, and the college's culture. A workplan to document processes and make improvements in these specific areas is underway and is regularly monitored by an accessibility work group.

A key part of Accessible Palomar is training faculty, administrators and staff to make small changes in their habits to build all digital materials with accessibility in mind. The training offered by the ATRC and Instructional Designers covers a range of topics, from accessible emails and flyers to maximizing canvas course accessibility. The college sends out a biweekly newsletter to employees, and a repository of accessibility tips and strategies was made available on an internal employee website.

Compliance with federal accessibility laws is required by April 24, 2026. Dr. Nicole Belisle, Palomar College's Chief Diversity Officer, said it is important for the college to have accessible online resources.

"This is not just for our students, this is for everyone who engages with our digital spaces and learning materials," she said. "From our web pages to our course content, we are committed to ensuring that every person has equitable access to Palomar College information, resources, and services."

Accessible PALOMAR



Image of employee exploring accessibility resources



A Commitment to Success During Crisis

Removing Financial Barriers

Enrollment at Palomar College has consistently improved in recent years as a result of increased engagement within the communities served by the college, an integrated marketing and communications strategy, and strategic outreach efforts. In the 2024-25 academic year, Palomar College served over 29,000 students.

To effectively serve so many students, Palomar College faculty, staff, and administrators rely on their unwavering commitment to student success. While there are many examples of this commitment throughout the 2024-25 academic year, one that stands out is how Palomar College addressed the impacts of the unprecedented issues regarding financial aid processing at the U.S. Department of Education in Fall 2024. Palomar College was able to disburse its federal and state financial aid funds with just a week delay from the usual processing timeline for Pell Grants and distributed over $1 million in emergency grants of $250 each to students who completed a financial aid application and demonstrated financial need. The emergency grants were in addition to more than $290,000 in scholarships that were awarded, along with more than 2,600 students who received $250 bookstore vouchers.

Moreover, 6,700 students had their tuition at Palomar College waived through the California College Promise Grant, representing a total of almost $3.3 million in enrollment fees.

Superintendent/President Dr. Star Rivera-Lacey stated what all employees felt at the time. “I am extremely proud of the approach we have taken to address the nationwide financial aid issues and to make sure our students can start their coursework without delays,” she said. “Our commitment to student success is unparalleled”.



Palomar College Classroom at San Marcos Campus

"Our Commitment to student success is unparalleled."

Immediate Action Through Scholarships and Grants

More than $500,000 in scholarships were awarded to Palomar College students, including 23 new scholarships that have been added in the past two years. The scholarships provide financial support to students and offer a beacon of hope so that students can focus on their studies without the burden of financial stress.

In addition to scholarships, the Palomar College Foundation responded to immediate student needs by awarding emergency grants totaling more than $36,500. The grants are awarded to students facing an unexpected crisis that could imperil their education and allow them to get back on their path to completing their studies.

"Our generous donors believe, with unwavering conviction, that education holds the power to break barriers and transform lives – and because of their support, we're helping students unlock a future filled with possibility," said Stacy Rungaitis, Executive Director of the Palomar College Foundation.



Palomar College student receiving computer

One student who received a scholarship, nursing student Christina Roble, said that receiving the Jerry and Sharon Stein Scholarship allowed her to pay her tuition and stay on the path to becoming an emergency room nurse.

"I am committed to making the most of this opportunity and using it to make a positive difference in the world as a current EMT, ED Tech, and as a future ER nurse," she wrote.

Milestones Achieved



Palomar College Football and Softball Stadiums

First-Ever Football Stadium Opens

Palomar College's football stadium – the first time the college has had a stadium in its 76-year history – opened in September 2024.

The stadium seats more than 3,600 people and provides student athletes with a premier venue to display their talents and aspire to new heights in their sport.

"This stadium is phenomenal, and we now have a tremendous opportunity to better serve our student athletes and our surrounding communities," said Dr. Star Rivera-Lacey, Palomar College Superintendent/ President. "This football stadium has been a labor of love and pride for so many, and it is a moment in history that we will always value."

The stadium was designed and developed in collaboration with HMC Architects, Erickson-Hall Construction Company, and the Barrie Company, along with numerous other business partners.

Palomar College Athletics Director Daniel Lynds said the completion of the stadium is a dream come true for employees in his department, some who have worked for the college for more than 30 years.

"To see the smiles on the faces of former Comet football players, current and former staff and coaches that now know it was their hard work and achievements that contributed to this moment is really special," Lynds said .

The stadium took nearly two years to build. The timeline was delayed by record-breaking rainfall in 2023 and early 2024, along with Tropical Storm Hilary in summer 2023.



A Softball Stadium for Champions

Outfield signage of Softball Stadium

The new softball stadium at Palomar College opened in January 2025, providing an improved home to one of the highest-achieving athletic teams in the college's history.

The Palomar College softball team has earned five state championships, 39 conference championships, statewide team academic awards, and has had 57 All-American athletes and a countless number of students who have transferred to four-year universities.

The softball stadium holds four times the number of fans than previous accommodations, with a press box four stories above field level.

The football and softball stadium construction was funded by Proposition M, a bond measure approved by voters in 2006 that has enabled extensive modernizations and improvements across the Palomar Community College District.

Living Our Mission

The Palomar College mission statement reflects our commitment to respect each of our students' experiences and support them to achieve academic success. To ensure their success, we meet our students where they are in life as they pursue their education and training goals.



Palomar College students studying together

Collaboration with Community Partners

To address the shortage of early education teachers in the region, Palomar College and MAAC, a social services leader in San Diego County, partnered to educate the future generation of teachers through the Next Level Early Care & Education Apprenticeship program. This program for early childhood educators is the first in Southern California and the second in California to be recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor and the California Division of Apprenticeship Standards. In March 2025, the first cohort of 20 teacher apprentices graduated from the program.



Apprenticeship completion ceremony in March 2025



Palomar College student in computer lab

Teaching College Designation

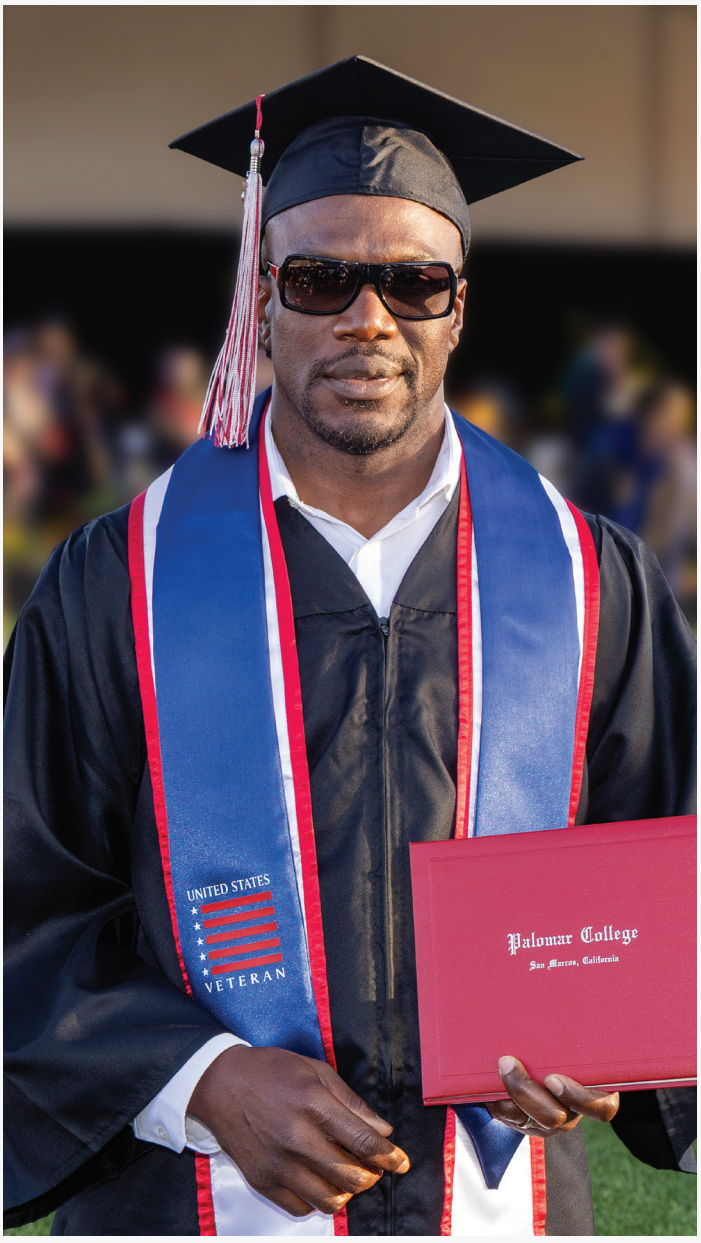
Palomar College became a Teaching College in 2024 to better serve students who need the flexibility of an online class. This designation makes the college's online courses more accessible to community college students through the California Virtual College Course Exchange. By the end of the 2024-25 academic year, nearly 600 course sections were made available in the exchange.



Palomar College student at San Marcos Campus

Previous Experience Equates to Course Credit

Students who have gained college-level skills and knowledge through military training, industry training, government training, apprenticeships, or volunteer activities can earn course credit through the Palomar College Credit for Prior Learning program. Students can do so by taking an exam, creating a portfolio, or having an industry or military transcript. The program started in 2019 and was the first community college in California to institutionalize the process of certifying credit.



Palomar College military affiliated student

Proposition M – Nearly 20 years later

Prop M, the $694 million facilities bond measure passed by taxpayers in 2006, has been integral to the substantial presence of Palomar College in the region. These investments have allowed for the dramatic and lasting improvement of teaching and learning environments, directly contributing to student success.

Of the 24 projects slated for design and development, there are only three that remain pending completion. However, construction for two of these is already well underway: the nearly 40,000-square-foot permanent building at the Fallbrook Education Center and the Athletics Fieldhouse at the San Marcos campus, both of which are tentatively scheduled for opening in 2027. The final project—a student-centered collaborative space to consolidate various student service programs—is pending design and development.

Sustainability and energy conservation are core design principles for all Prop M projects, resulting in reduced operational costs. The Fallbrook Education Center exemplifies this: in addition to a new irrigation well, its planned photovoltaic (PV) system will achieve net-zero energy use. Furthermore, the facility will incorporate the District's first battery storage system to cut costs by eliminating high peak-demand electricity rates. A similar PV system is also planned for the athletics fieldhouse.



Architectural rendering of the Palomar College Athletics Fieldhouse

Our Commitment to Supporting All Students

Palomar College has long supported its undocumented students, with numerous programs to help students overcome barriers due to their immigration status.

Palomar College is a Hispanic Serving Institution and joins with other community colleges in California in celebrating Undocumented Student Action Week each October and is committed to supporting the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which protects young men and women who were brought to the United States as children.

Palomar College established the Dreamer Success Program, designed to share knowledge, teach college skills and build social capital. The program expands services that connect students to academic counseling and advising services, community resources, and assistance with applications and forms. The Dreamer Success program offers a welcoming environment for all students in the Cariño Dream Village at the San Marcos campus.

"Community colleges play a pivotal role in providing students with the education and resources they need to thrive," said Nick Mata, Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Student Services at Palomar College. "The fact that we have permanent staff dedicated to supporting DACA students, and an established place on campus for them to receive the support and guidance they need, while connecting with their peers, clearly emphasizes our extensive commitment to student success here at Palomar College."



Two Palomar College Students walking on San Marcos Campus

Comet Kudos



Dean Nichol Roe and Dean Jenny Fererro

New Academic Leaders

The academic year started with the hiring of two new academic leaders: Jenny Fererro as Dean of Instruction, and Nichol Roe as Dean of the Career Technical and Extended Education division.



Image of the 2025 edition of Bravura

Bravura Receives National Recognition

Bravura, the Palomar College literary magazine, earned the best community college literary magazine in the Pacific region from the Community College Humanities Association. It placed third nationally among all entries in the literary magazine category. Four student writers were also recognized for their contributions to the magazine.



Palomar employees and Rising Scholars join County Supervisor Desmond and Superintendent Star Rivera-Lacey on Rising Scholars Day.

Palomar College Rising Scholars Day

County Supervisor Jim Desmond designated December 10, 2024, as Palomar College Rising Scholars Day, honoring previously incarcerated students who are pursuing their education. The program has served more than 900 students since 2018.



Palomar College employees and Governing Board Vice President Dr. Holly Hamilton-Bleakley on Earth Day

Earth Day Celebration

Palomar College celebrated Earth Day with two clean-up activities. Trees and shrubs were planted at the main campus and the education centers in Escondido and Rancho Bernardo. A trash and debris removal event was held at the Fallbrook Education Center and its surrounding neighborhood.



Professor David Hamilton

Professor Selected as Coach of U.S. Deaflympics Team

David Hamilton, an American Sign Language Assistant Professor, was selected as head coach of the 2025 U.S. Deaflympic basketball team. Hamilton, who is deaf, has been a member of the U.S. deaf basketball team for many years, both as a player and coach.



Dayna Schwab and CCFC Board Member Layne Arthur

Dayna Schwab: Facilities Leadership Graduate

Dayna Schwab, Palomar College's Manager for Facilities Operations, completed the inaugural Facilities Leadership Institute sponsored by the Community College Facility Coalition (CCFC).



Police Academy Cadet

Police Academy Teaches Lifetime Fitness

The Palomar College Police Academy was chosen by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) for a pilot program that gives greater emphasis to physical and mental fitness while training the state's future law enforcement officers.

Palomar College Foundation



Palomar College Foundation Chair Richard Marks, Superintendent/President Dr. Star Rivera-Lacey, Deborah and Zachary Rogers, and Foundation Executive Director Stacey Rungaitis.

Waves of Innovation at the Community Showcase

The 2025 Palomar College Foundation's Community Showcase, with the theme of Waves of Innovation, brought together more than 310 people to serve as a platform to highlight the critical role of education and philanthropy in shaping the region's future and advancing student success.

Superintendent/President Dr. Star Rivera-Lacey presented Palomar College's Report to the Community and noted that the college's enrollment has grown over the last six consecutive academic terms.

"At Palomar College, we have something for everyone. We are the place of a million chances, and we accept all who apply," she said.

The event spotlighted the Palomar College Water Technology program, which is training the leaders of tomorrow in the water industry.

The recipient of the 2025 Palomar College Comet Award, which recognizes people or organizations for changing lives and building communities, was given to Pete Rogers, a longtime Palomar College Foundation board member and chairman of the board for three years. Rogers had recently passed away, so the award was presented to his wife, Deborah, and son Zachary.

Roger's commitment to increasing the awareness of Palomar College and fundraising was unrelenting. During the time on the board, the net assets of the foundation grew fourfold.

"Pete's impact on the foundation and his dedication to the success of our students was profound," said Foundation Executive Director Stacy Rungaitis. "His legacy will carry on with the Peter Rogers Welding Scholarship at Palomar College, established in part by the Rotary Club of Carlsbad."



Palomar College Student Studying

Giving Tuesday

The 2024 annual Giving Tuesday campaign raised $81,973 in donations, providing significant support in the Palomar College Foundation's mission to remove financial barriers to student success.

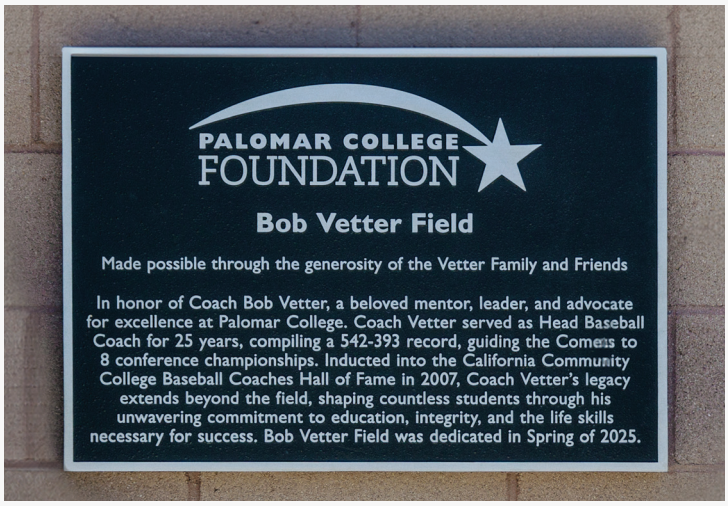
The results were driven in part by a donor who pledged to match $25,000 in donations dollar-for-dollar, as well as a campaign to highlight student stories in the weeks leading up to Giving Tuesday.

"We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of our community of donors," said Foundation Executive Director Stacy Rungaitis. "Thanks to our faithful supporters – and some new donors who have joined our mission – we will be able to say 'yes' to more students who need a little extra support to stay in school."

The foundation invited Palomar College employees to make a "Dough-nation" during a morning reception featuring donuts and camaraderie at the EDGE, an employee-focused center that had recently opened at the main campus in San Marcos.

"On behalf of our Governing Board, employees and especially our students, I want to thank every one of the generous supporters who gave on Giving Tuesday," said Superintendent/President Dr. Star Rivera-Lacey. "The foundation does such important work to help students overcome financial barriers while pursuing their educational path."

All funds raised on Giving Tuesday are used to support the foundation's core programs – scholarships, textbook assistance and emergency grants.



Naming Plaque of Bob Vetter field

Coach Bob Vetter Honored with Field Naming

The Palomar College baseball field was officially named the Bob Vetter Field in honor of Vetter, who served as Palomar College's Head Baseball Coach for 25 years.

During his years as coach, Vetter compiled a 542-393 record and guided the Palomar Comets to eight conference championships. He was inducted into the California Community College Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame in 2007. His legacy extends beyond the field, shaping countless students through his commitment to education, integrity, and the necessary life skills for success.

A campaign was launched to celebrate Coach Vetter's legacy with the support of his children, Robby and Emily Vetter, along with coaches, alumni and other family members. The campaign not only secured the naming of the field but also established the Bob Vetter Endowment to support the Palomar College baseball program in perpetuity.

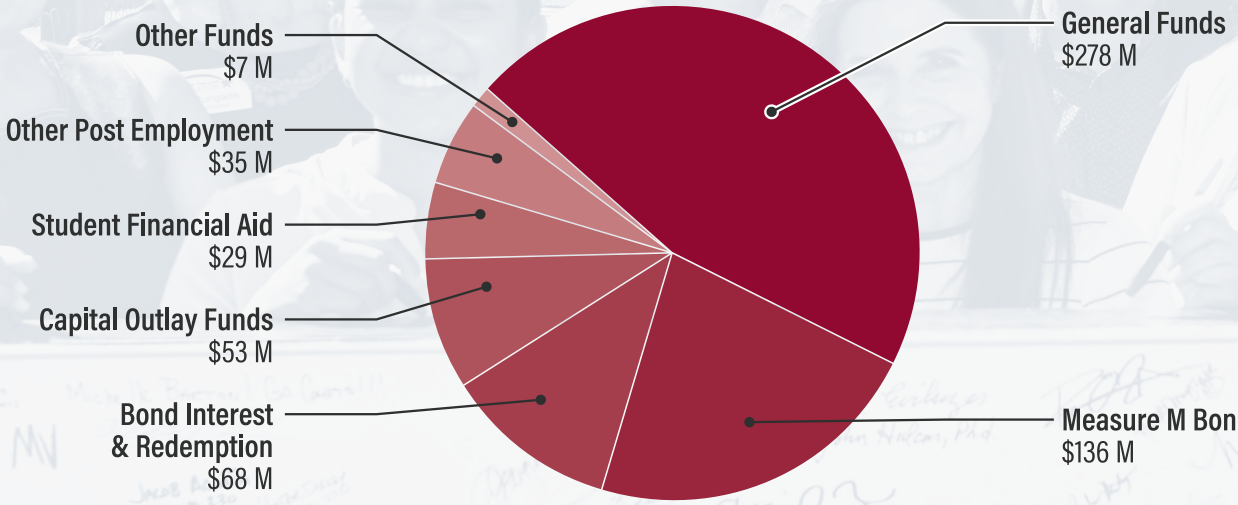
Vetter joined Palomar College in 1977 and retired in 2015. He died suddenly in January 2022.

"Coach Vetter made a profound impact on Palomar College that goes beyond just wins and losses," said Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Student Services Nick Mata. "Coach Vetter realized his purpose as a coach was a combination of providing strong leadership and being a positive mentor."

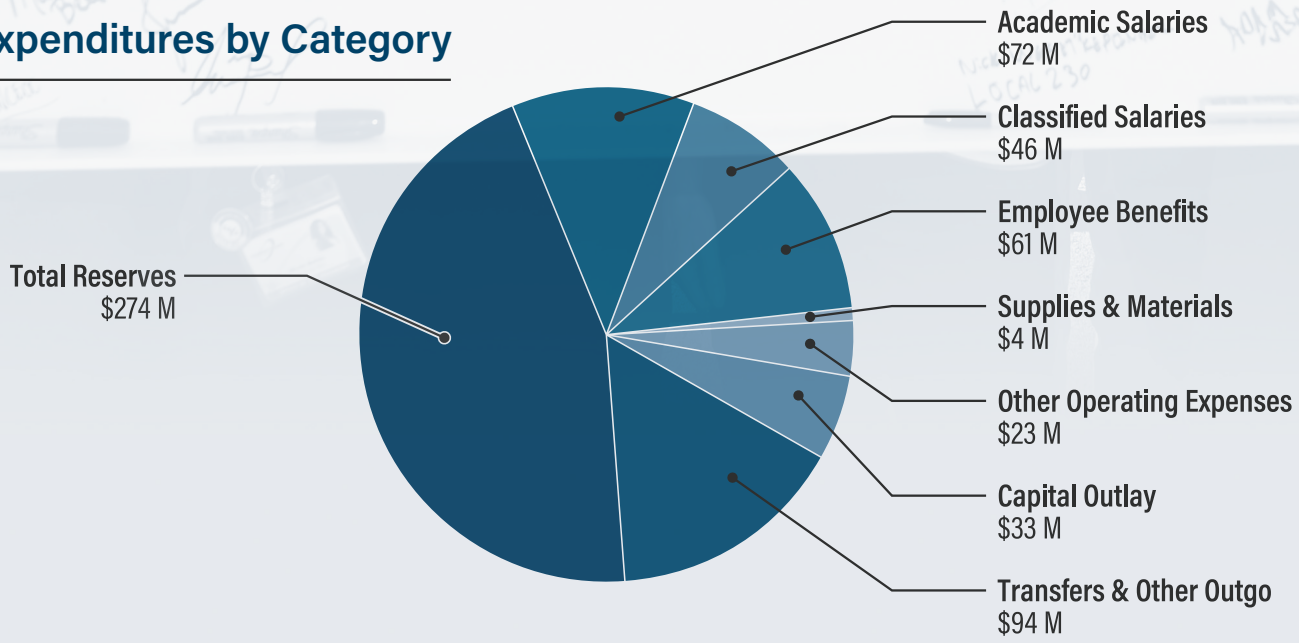
Fiscal Report

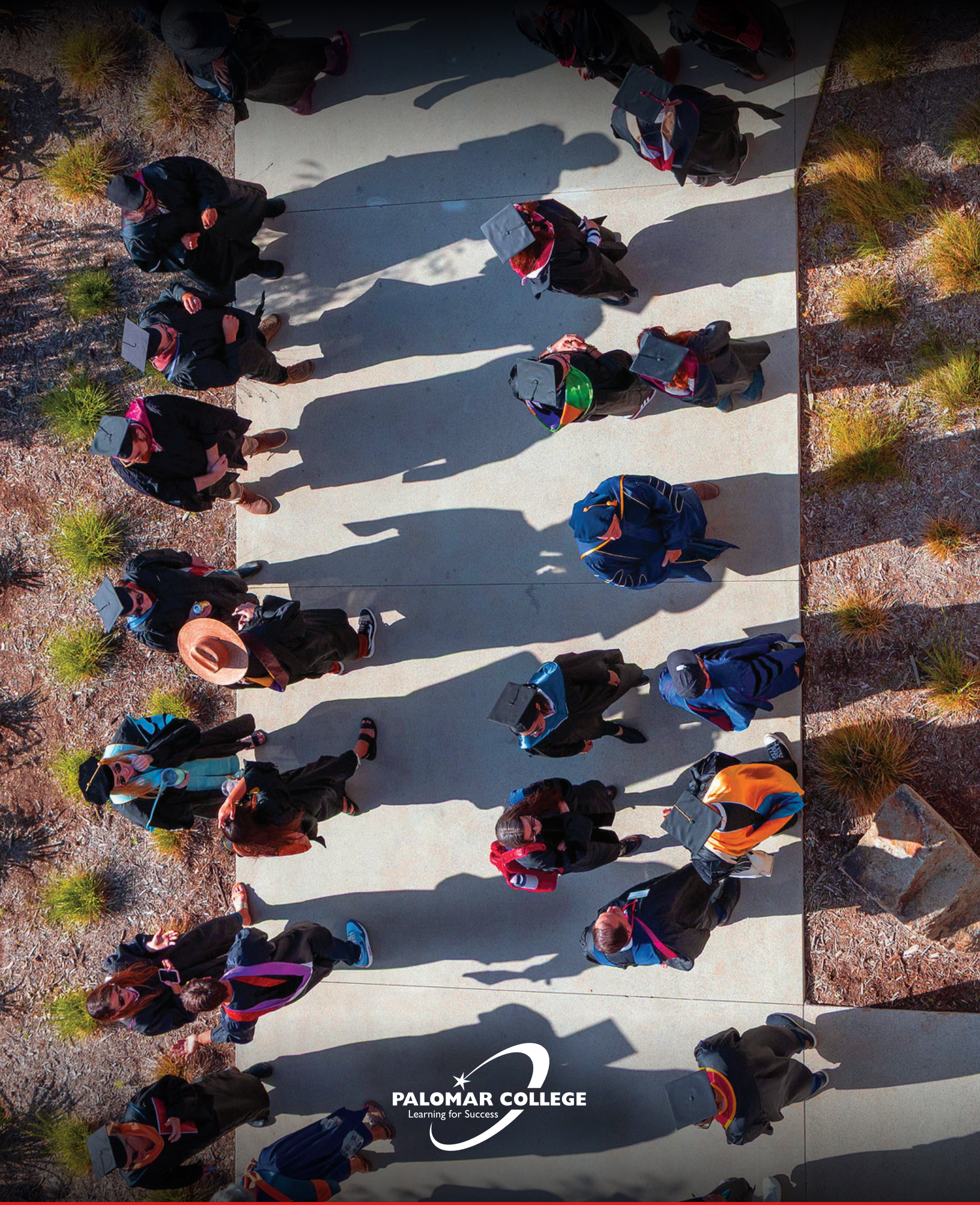
Palomar Community College District received an unmodified opinion on the 2023-24 fiscal year financial audit, indicating that the District's financial reporting is in order. For the $694 million Construction Bond Program (Measure M) approved by voters in 2006, the District also received an unmodified audit opinion on the 2023-24 financial audit and the performance audit noted no instances of noncompliance. In addition, Palomar earned an A on the San Diego County Taxpayers Education Foundation report card which rates the transparency and accountability of the College leveraging taxpayer dollars. The fiscal year 2024-25 budget for the District totals $609 million.

Revenues by Category



Expenditures by Category





www.palomar.edu | 760-744-1150 | 1140 West Mission Road, San Marcos, CA 92069

Palomar College is committed to providing a working and learning environment that is free from discrimination and harassment.