



## Calendar

### Save the Date!

- September 21- Community STEM Night, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., OCC Planetarium
- October 2 - Orange County Children's Book Festival, 9:30 a.m.– 4 p.m., OCC Campus

## OCC Partners with Kaiser Permanente, Abound Food Care to Combat Food Insecurity

Orange Coast College partnered with Kaiser Permanente and Abound Food Care for a volunteer event on Saturday, Aug. 27 aimed at addressing food insecurity in the community.

Kaiser Permanente staff and their families visited OCC's Recovery Kitchen to make and package ready-to-eat meals using recovered food. Volunteers were also given a tour of OCC's new state-of-the-art facilities as well as the College's Pirates' Cove food pantry, where many of the meals would be delivered in preparation for the start of the fall semester.

"Using excess edible food to create meals that address food insecurity is an important component in delivering the well-rounded [food and beverage services] program offered at OCC," says program coordinator and faculty member Alexandra Yates. "We were excited to provide an opportunity for our supporters at

Kaiser Permanente to get a hands-on look at our program."

Senior Vice President and area Manager at Kaiser Permanente also notes the ways in which food recovery ties into the work of the hospital care provider. "Addressing food insecurity is vital to improving health outcomes, he says" Abound Food Care's work in delivering Medically Tailored Meals is an important step in addressing the health needs of a particularly vulnerable population. Our staff was excited to contribute their time to learn more about, and produce, meals at OCC."

Mike Learakos, CEO at Abound Food Care, reiterates this sentiment. "While an estimated one in nine Americans are food insecure, 30 percent of edible food ends up in a landfill," he says. "As we work toward eliminating food waste and food insecurity, having partners like Kaiser Permanente and Orange Coast College is invaluable. Bringing them together provides an opportunity to grow the network of organizations committed to improving the health of our communities."

Volunteers were able to cook and package 648 meals and 200 cookies on Saturday, half of which was delivered to the Pirates' Cove.



## OCC Asst. Director Kris Toribio Kicks Off Tenure as IACAC President

OCC's Assistant Director for the Global Engagement Center, Kristoffer Toribio, kicked off his historic term as president of the International Association for College Admission Counseling at the IACAC annual conference in New Mexico on July 12-15. Toribio is the first community college representative to serve as president of IACAC, an affiliate of the National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC), which currently counts universities like Harvard and Stanford among its approximately 3,000 members representing more than 90 countries worldwide.

In his new role, Toribio is focused on expanding diversity, equity, inclusion and access within IACAC, starting with the creation of a newly-formed DEI committee. "The role of the president is to ensure that the structure is in place, and to support it, so that ideas can come into fruition; into actual policy," Toribio shared in an interview with Professionals in International Education (PIE).

In 2020, Toribio received a Distinguished Service Award from IACAC, the first community college representative, and the second person of color, to do so. That same year, he organized a panel at the organization's virtual conference titled "International ACAC: Unfiltered" where recruiting officials could share their experiences of racism on the road. "I've been mistaken for the driver while on recruiting trips, and I've been subjected to second searches at the airport on multiple occasions," he shares. "I've even been told that I'm the wrong ethnicity to represent the U.S. while on recruiting trips. It's important to combat those stereotypes in any way I can."

Toribio is a Pacific Islander and a first-generation college graduate.

This year's IACAC conference was held in person for the first time in three years. Of the more than 1,400 attendees, 21 represented community colleges, the highest number in the organization's history. "I'm incredibly proud to be representing community colleges," Toribio told PIE. "It's really important for me to not just represent community colleges, but also represent the students who choose to attend."

## OCC Set to Implement Student Debt Forgiveness, Removing Financial Barrier to Higher Education

Orange Coast College students will be eligible for outstanding debt forgiveness, according to an announcement by Coast Community College District Chancellor John Weispfenning on Aug. 3. More than \$1.8 million in federal COVID-19 Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) allocations have been identified to pay off and forgive outstanding debt that OCC students accumulated from Spring 2020 through Spring 2022.

"A number of our students have struggled to recover from the financial hardship caused by the COVID pandemic," says OCC President Angelica Suarez. "This debt relief will remove a financial barrier for students in an intentional way that benefits not just the student, but the entire campus community."

Resident fees for California community colleges are \$46 per unit. Orange Coast College has worked to maximize financial aid for students, including through Federal Student aid and OCC's Pirates' Promise program, which covers tuition and textbook costs for up to two years for first-time students. However, students who withdraw from classes after receiving financial aid may be required to pay that money back. These and other costs can accumulate and lock students out from registration.

"This is a critical time to support our community," says Vice President of Student Services Madjid Niroumand. "I am really excited that we were able to pay off our students' debt so that they can hopefully return and pursue their education."

Associated Students of Orange Coast College President Mason Espinoza echoes that sentiment. "The decision by the Coast District Board of Trustees to pay off student debt will have an immediate impact on OCC students who have faced financial struggles in the wake of the COVID pandemic," Espinoza says. "It's the hope of ASOCC that this debt forgiveness will pave the way for more students to return to campus and have fun, meet new people, and further their educational and career path by participating in one of the many excellent programs and clubs OCC has to offer."

The debt payoff and forgiveness will happen automatically for eligible current and former students. OCC will contact students to notify them that debts are cleared and financial holds on registration have been removed.





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STUDENTS RIDE FREE

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## OCC Announces Partnership with OCTA to Provide Free Bus Service for Students

Orange Coast College has partnered with the Orange County Transportation Authority to provide students with free unlimited bus transportation on OCTA's 53 fixed bus routes.

The new free bus program will allow all full-time, part-time and non-credit enrolled students at Coast to access OCTA's local fixed routes via the OC Bus app for mobile phones. Students who do not own a smartphone will be provided a physical bus pass through the OCC Cares program.

"This program is part of Orange Coast College's response to supporting the basic needs of our students," says Dean of Student Success and Support Programs Steve Tamanaha. "One barrier for many students is transportation not just to campus but also to work, grocery shopping, and entertainment."

Additional benefits of the free bus program include alleviating costs associated with driving to campus, including parking fees and gas costs, reducing traffic around campus, and reducing OCC's carbon footprint. "For the community and the college, one major benefit is the sustainable and environmental aspects of increasing bus ridership to campus," says Tamanaha. "OCC prides itself on being at the forefront of sustainable practices, and this is another part of that effort."

Funding for the partnership will come from a combination of grant funding through OCTA and OCC's support programs.