



A Message from President Kim Lopez

Dear Cañada Colleagues,

Congratulations Cañada College Class of 2026!

We look forward to celebrating our students tomorrow at our 58th annual Commencement! Here are some Fast Facts on the Cañada College Class of 2026:

Graduation Highlights

- 700 Graduates
- 689 Degrees and 296 Certificates Awarded
- 299 Graduates Achieved Honor Status
- 354 First-Generation Graduates
- Oldest Graduate: 71-years-old
- Youngest Graduate: 16-years-old

Cohorts and Other Groups

- 178 Promise Scholars Program Graduates
- 109 EOPS Graduates
- 43 International Student Graduates
- 42 Athlete Graduates
- 29 DACA/Dreamers/AB540 Graduates
- 26 TRIO Graduates
- 16 Veteran Graduates
- 9 Foster Youth Graduates
- 5 Project Change Graduates

Gender / Race / Ethnicity

- 463 Female Graduates
- 210 Male Graduates
- 27 Unreported Gender Graduates
- 375 Hispanic Graduates
- 139 White Non-Hispanic Graduates
- 71 Asian Graduates

- 31 Two or More Races Graduates
- 29 Unreported Race Graduates
- 25 Black Non-Hispanic Graduates
- 22 Filipino Graduates
- 6 Pacific Islander Graduates
- 2 American Indian/Alaskan Native Graduates

Alessandra Zanassi Thomas, Executive Assistant to the President

Following Board approval on Wednesday, May 20, Alessandra Zanassi Thomas has been selected as the permanent Executive Assistant to the President. She has served in this role on an interim basis since November 2025, providing consistent professionalism and high-level administrative support. Prior to her interim appointment, Alessandra served as Executive Assistant in the Office of Instruction beginning in December 2018. Earlier in her career, she was the Division Assistant for the Global Learning Programs and Services Division at Skyline College, a role she held starting in 2014.

Alessandra holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Santa Clara University, as well as a Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Northwestern University. She is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) and brings experience working with diverse populations, including leading group therapy and supporting individuals, couples and families in outpatient to residential treatment settings - demonstrating advanced strengths in communication, critical thinking and interpersonal effectiveness. Please join us in congratulating Alessandra in this new role!



Final Chance to Weigh In: How is Shared Governance and Decision-making Working at Cañada?

Please take a few minutes to respond to PBC's [annual survey about shared governance and college decision-making](#). Gift cards will be raffled off for those completing this 5-minute survey. Survey closes today, May 22, at 5 p.m. Thank you!

Community and Success Shine at the Puente Year-End Celebration

Puente hosted a lovely year-end celebration honoring graduating students and those taking the next steps in their academic journeys. Surrounded by faculty, family and community members, students were recognized for their achievements through certificates, reflections and shared moments of pride and connection. The event highlighted the strength, resilience and sense of community that define the Puente program. The Puente familia also recognized Puente Co-Coordinator Yolanda Valenzuela for her dedicated contributions over the past ten years.





Student Dance Show

Cañada College's student dance showcase brought the stage to life with an electrifying mix of movement, culture and creativity. Celebrating global dance and music styles ranging from Jazz and Latin to Modern Dance, Funk and Hip-Hop, students captivated the audience with dynamic performances that highlighted both individual expression and collective artistry. It was an unforgettable evening filled with rhythm, passion and community spirit





Migration Celebration Honors Student Journeys and Success

Recently, the Ninth Annual District Migration Celebration took place at Cañada College, featuring inspiring student speakers and a dynamic keynote address. The event was filled with family and community support – congratulations to the students for their accomplishments and continued success!



SparkPoint Hosts BMO and United Way Leadership

Last week, SparkPoint at Cañada College hosted leadership from BMO U.S. and United Way Bay Area to highlight the powerful real-world impact of their partnership. SparkPoint Director Adolfo Leiva and his team shared how SparkPoint provides a vital “no wrong door” approach by continuously adapting services to support San Mateo County students with resources ranging from financial literacy to housing and groceries.



2026 Student Recognition and Achievement Ceremony

Cañada College’s Recognition and Achievement Ceremony celebrated the incredible accomplishments of scholarship recipients, transfer students, honors students, tutors and peer mentors. The event honored the largest cohort in the ceremony’s history, with 333 students receiving a combined 341 awards and \$236,000 in scholarships and recognition. The heartfelt celebration concluded with a festive reception featuring food, music and photos that brought the community together to recognize students’ hard work and success.





Brothers Achieving Milestones (BAM) Closes Out the Year with a Warm Gathering

On Tuesday, Brothers Achieving Milestones (BAM) hosted an End of Year Celebration at the Cultural Center, bringing together students and staff for a relaxed afternoon of good food and community. The gathering provided a welcome opportunity to decompress and connect during a hectic finals week and the busy days leading up to graduation.



Project Change, NextUp, and FYSI Celebrate a Successful Academic Year

Cañada's Project Change, NextUp and FYSI communities celebrated a spectacular close to the academic year, highlighting months of dedication, extraordinary student achievements and historic milestones.

Through a variety of programs and events — including Know Your Rights workshops, university tours and film screenings — students participated in impactful experiences designed to support their academic and personal success. A standout moment of the celebration was recognizing 25 scholars who received scholarships, including the first-ever Project Change scholarship. For many of these justice-impacted and foster youth students, it was the first time their accomplishments were publicly celebrated. Congratulations to all on a successful and inspiring year!



Classified Employee Appreciation Luncheon

Yesterday we celebrated our Classified professionals with a luncheon to show our appreciation. Our Classified employees are the heart of Cañada College, making a lasting impact through their dedication and care. They help create a welcoming, supportive environment where students can succeed and feel at home. Though their work is often done quietly, its impact is deeply felt across campus and is essential to our daily operations and community spirit Thank you for everything you do!



Thank You to Our Student Photographers for Capturing Memorable Moments

A heartfelt thank you to the talented students from Cañada's Menlo Studio (pictured below) and MART 363 – Advanced Photography course (coordinated by Professor Emanuela Quaglia) for capturing many of Cañada's end-of-year celebrations. The student photographers include Eliyah Mach, Tim Busa, Tri Nguyen, Greta Dimitrova, Sasha Mezzich, Debra Zupancic, Mynor Bac, Drew Sherman, Linda Shum and Robin Bickford. Their creativity, professionalism and keen eye for meaningful moments helped preserve memories that our community will cherish for years to come. We appreciate the time, effort and artistry they brought to each celebration.



2026 Academic Senate Employee Excellence Awards

Academic Senate is proud to celebrate the incredible contributions of this year's honorees, whose exceptional dedication, leadership and spirit of service continue to enrich the campus community.

Outstanding Classified Staff – Paul Gaskins, Library Support Specialist:

In recognition of his dedication, kindness and service to the campus community, Paul consistently goes above and beyond to support students, faculty and staff in the Library,

often serving as the primary evening resource for students after other campus services have closed.

Outstanding Part-Time Faculty – Nada Nekrep, Biology Faculty & DE Coordinator:

In recognition of her leadership, dedication and service to the college community, Nada has transformed the Online Instruction Coordinator role and built a strong foundation that has allowed the Distance Education Program to flourish.

Outstanding Full-Time Faculty – Rebekah Sidman-Taveau, ESL Professor:

In recognition of her outstanding teaching, leadership and commitment to equity and student success, Professor Sidman-Taveau has made significant contributions to the college through her leadership with ACES, the Honors Transfer Program and the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) community.

Thank you to Paul, Nada and Rebekah for your exceptional commitment to student success and for helping make Cañada College a more supportive and inspiring place to learn and grow.

Cañada College Dining Survey

Pacific Dining is requesting feedback to understand what's working well and how they can continue to improve Cañada's campus dining experience. [Take the short survey here.](#)

This will be my last Weekly Update for the academic year and I will resume Weekly Updates when the Fall semester begins. We will share important and timely information as needed throughout the summer. Thank you so much for the incredible energy and focus you've put into this past year. Sending best wishes to you and your loved ones for a relaxing, fun-filled summer and look forward to continuing our collaboration in the year ahead!

Sincerely,
Kim