

Accolade

Spring 2024

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Board President's Message

I RECENTLY HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE TO MEET THREE

STUDENTS who shared their journeys at the Cochise College Foundation's first Legacy Society donor appreciation reception. Ezequiel Ovando, Skye Robinson and Jeffrey Stoner are all scholarship recipients who talked about their college experience, how they came to be enrolled, and what the financial assistance they are receiving means to them.

Speaking to an audience of organizations and individuals who have demonstrated a deep commitment to the institution, or who expect to make planned gifts in the future, Dr. Rottweiler showed us some of the exciting ways that charitable gifts have furthered college priorities and overall excellence. In addition, board member Doug Dunn discussed why giving to support higher education, and especially Cochise College, is important to him and his wife Donna. Doug will finish his service on the board at the end of June; on behalf of the board, I thank him for his ideas, enthusiasm and dedication to the college.

As Dr. Rottweiler prepares to retire, big things are underway at my alma mater. I want to say just how heartening it has been to see all of the accomplishments and advancement that have occurred during his time here. Dr. Rottweiler has done a wonderful job of building partnerships and taking the college into the community, and that makes the foundation's role of supporting the institution that much easier.

*Joanna Michelich, ('68) Ph.D.
President
Cochise College Foundation*



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"Accolade" inspires charitable support of Cochise College by raising awareness about competitive advantages of the college and the activities of its students, faculty, staff, and the Cochise College Foundation, which promotes student success through scholarships, facilities development, and program support.

Cover photo: Scott Sinquah, Colby Afraid of His Tracks, Micayla Silas, Skye Afraid of His Tracks, Sampson Sinquah
Cover photo by Danielle Foti



From the Cochise College President

EARLIER THIS SEMESTER, I ANNOUNCED MY INTENT TO RETIRE EARLY IN 2025. Leading the college has been the honor of a lifetime, but it's time to move on to other service opportunities. My target timeframe allows the Governing Board flexibility in its search for a new president.

By the time I go, the college will have completed two major capital projects - a firearms training center for those enrolled in the Southeast Arizona Law Enforcement Academy, and Bugen Hall, residential living at the Sierra Vista Campus. It also will have begun admitting students to bachelor's degree programs in nursing and organizational leadership and management. Meanwhile, students have perhaps never been better served by the college than they are today, with a wider array of certificate and degree options led by a wonderful faculty,

and scholarship funding and easily accessible guidance available to assist.

The last 15 years have been the highpoint of a career dedicated to serving students, communities, and colleges. I am blessed to have had the opportunity to work with outstanding educators at all levels of the college. I appreciate all the support the college has received from community leaders, local and state policy makers, and business/industry partners across southeast Arizona. Together, we have worked to position the college as a community asset. Of this, I am extremely proud.

*J.D. Rottweiler, Ph.D.
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Transfer students earn prestigious scholarships

DANIELA ESCALANTE'S LIFE CHANGED ON MAY 3 when Cochise College surprised her with the news that she was one of 60 recipients in the nation of a prestigious Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship. The scholarship provides up to \$55,000 per year for three years to community college students transferring to universities to earn bachelor's degrees.

Escalante, a Douglas High School graduate, plans to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering. The scholarship means the doors of many institutions she hadn't previously considered may be open to her, though she intends to enroll at Northern Arizona University. At Cochise College, she is a participant in the federally-funded TRiO Student Support Services program and Phi Theta Kappa honor society.

The scholarship aims to help community college students who have demonstrated exceptional academic ability, leadership, and service transfer to top four-year institutions and avoid student debt. Cooke scholars have access to generous financial support, college planning support, ongoing advising, and the opportunity to connect with the thriving community of fellow scholars. There were 1,600 applicants for the scholarship and 459 announced as finalists in March.



In front of the Douglas High School senior class and counselors, who happened to be visiting the Douglas Campus that day, Cochise College surprised Douglas High grad and Cochise graduating student Daniela Escalante with the news that she had been selected to receive the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship.

IN ADDITION, four students were named to the All-Arizona Academic Teams, earning each a tuition waiver from the Arizona Board of Regents to pursue a bachelor's degree at one of the state's public universities, plus a cash scholarship from the Cochise College Foundation.



Nursing student **Rosalie Collins** was named to the second team. She plans to pursue a bachelor's degree at Arizona State University and to become a psychiatric nurse practitioner.



Engineering major **Kevin Robles** was named to the first team and will pursue a software engineering degree at Northern Arizona University. He also was named a Coca-Cola Academic Team Gold Scholar, a national honor that comes with a \$1,500 scholarship.



Fine arts major **Nikko Ochoa** was named to the second team. He will pursue his passion for anime in the Northern Arizona University School of Art. Inspired by an interest he discovered in his formative years, he aims to create and develop his own anime series.



Math major **Jonathan Sigona** was named to the second team and will pursue a bachelor's degree in mathematics and statistics at the University of Arizona. He plans to become a statistician dedicated to the environmental sector.

Employees recognized

COCHISE KUDOS

Web Content Administrator Daniel Gordon and Computer Information Systems Instructor Angela Moritz earned the Cochise KUDOS employee recognition award for the first quarter of 2024. The program promotes a friendly and productive workplace and recognizes staff who exemplify the college's guiding statement values of collaboration, encouragement, civility, innovation, and service.

Gordon was nominated by an external entity for his dedication to his work and for his willingness to take on extra duties. Moretz was nominated for her warmth in the classroom and her ability to inspire a love for education in students.



NISOD

MOS Credentialing Coordinator Joel Evans and TRiO Program Director Angie Bustamante also were honored by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) for their service to students, the college and the community.

Evans ('08) began his Cochise College service as a graduation tech 23 years ago. His experience as an alum who understands the challenges and pressures of being a college student while working enriches his service to students.

In various roles with the college over 14 years, Bustamante ('09) has supported and empowered students as they navigate academic and personal challenges. She is also a co-advisor for the Alpha Beta Zeta chapter of Phi Theta Kappa.



Effort to graduate engaged voters earns approval

COCHISE COLLEGE ACTIVELY WORKS TO INCREASE NONPARTISAN DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT and graduate engaged voters by building a robust action plan. For this, the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge has again rewarded the college with the Highly Established Action Plan Seal. The college is one of four in Arizona and 93 in the nation to earn the seal.

In addition, student Aidyn Alexia Durazo is one of 137 students across the nation to be named to the 2024 ALL IN Student Voting Honor Roll, which awards college students who are doing outstanding work to advance nonpartisan democratic engagement.

The college's action plan includes activities open to students and the general public. This year, it co-hosted a session with Cochise County Government that demonstrated voting machines. It also spearheads the multi-session book discussions Conversations in Civility and provides links and information for voters on its website. Activities are managed by the college Civic Engagement Committee.



Academic leader completes fellowship program

DR. JAMES PEREY, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMICS at Cochise College, has completed the 2023-24 Aspen Rising President's Fellowship. The fellowship prepares college leaders to implement transformative changes, enhance student outcomes, and contribute to broader educational reform. Dr. Perey was one of 35 in the nation selected for the program.

"Over the last year, I have had the opportunity to learn from national leaders in higher education, build a network of forward-thinking peers, and explore innovative and groundbreaking strategies focused on meeting student success challenges," Dr. Perey said. "I am grateful for the opportunity to have this life-changing experience. Although the formal fellowship ends, the great work begins."

Many Aspen fellows become college presidents within a few years of completing the fellowship. They join a network of more than 300 peers, including 155 current college presidents, implementing innovative strategies to enhance student success at their institutions.



Alumni lead Class of 2024 at commencement

Cochise College invited four former students to participate as alumni marshals at its 59th commencement in May. Jason ('08) and Angie ('07) Bowling, Sen. David Gowan ('02) and Brian O'Brien ('96) were recognized for their service to the college and community, and their engagement with the institution.

JASON AND ANGIE BOWLING

Jason and Angie Bowling's connection to Cochise runs deep, and their commitment to community and education are expressions of values shared with the college.

The couple met when Angie, a banker at the time, helped Jason, a human resources staff member at Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC), establish an employee benefit program. They were both students. After graduation, Jason earned a bachelor's in psychology from the University of Arizona and an MBA from Southern New Hampshire University. He is the chief executive officer of SSVEC. Angie focused on work in banking and mortgages and now volunteers and homeschools their youngest child.

At SSVEC, Jason fosters the utility's community partnerships, awarding resources to many causes that make Cochise County a great place to live. SSVEC recently renewed its long-standing annual contribution to the Cochise College Foundation in support of scholarships for its members.

Angie is passionate about community. A board member for the Boys and Girls Club of Sierra Vista and a volunteer with the National Alliance for Mental Illness, she has been on the Sierra Vista Soccer Club board and is involved with Peach's Pantry, Relay for Life, and Buena's Project Graduation, to name a few. She is the driving force behind the family's community involvement, to include participation in the Pathway



to \$150K Challenge scholarship fundraiser and other Cochise College-sponsored events.

Jason has facilitated leadership classes for various businesses in the county through the college's Center for Lifelong Learning, further strengthening their bond with Cochise. He also serves on the board of the Sky Islands Regional Partnership and the Huachuca 50, is active on various electric cooperative boards, and has previously served on the Arizona@Work board.

In addition, three of the Bowlings' four children are past or present Cochise College students.

DAVID GOWAN

After graduating from Cochise College, David Gowan attended the University of Arizona. He has served in the Arizona legislature for 15 years.

As a member of the House of Representatives from 2009 until 2017, and as a member of the Senate since 2019, he has been a tireless champion for Arizona's rural community colleges. David led the charge in establishing the Aid to Rural Community Colleges formula providing additional workforce development dollars for Arizona's eight rural college districts. At Cochise College those additional dollars have been instrumental in the development of the Automotive Trades Building, the Cyber and Virtual Reality Center, and the Firearms Training Complex.

David was the first recipient of the Arizona Community Colleges Legislative Champion, presented by the Arizona Community College Coordinating Council (AC4) in August 2016, and he has been recognized as a passionate fighter for veterans, first responders and businesses.

In his last term in the House, he became the 52nd Speaker of the House. In the Senate, he has chaired the Appropriations Committee.

David, father of two who have also attended Cochise, is also involved with Veritas Christian Community School, Mountain Vista Baptist Church, and the Sierra Vista Elks Lodge. He practices karate and has his 4th Degree in Isshin Ryu (pronounced Ish-in-do) and a 9th degree in Tai Shin Ki Do. When the legislature is not in session, he is a real estate agent.



BRIAN O'BRIEN

Born in Wiesbaden, Germany, Brian O'Brien was a product of the U.S. Army. He moved to Sierra Vista in 1978, when his dad was stationed at Fort Huachuca.

At 17, Brian enrolled at Cochise College to pursue an associate of science degree with an emphasis in environmental science. The facilities department hired him as a student worker, and he became a full-time employee in 1995, a year before he graduated with an associate's degree.

An avid car guy, and following in the footsteps of his Opa, who successfully raced motorcycles in Germany, Brian began stock car racing in 1997. During that time, he met Kristi, who he married in 2002. Daughter Anika arrived four years later, and racing moved to the back burner. Son Maddox was born in 2011.

Brian was promoted to facility services supervisor in 2014. He also returned to racing and has two stock car championships to his credit. His kids followed in his footsteps, and his daughter enrolled at Cochise at the age of 15 in pursuit of a career in law enforcement.

In 2020, Brian was promoted to facility services manager. In the course of his 30-year affiliation with the college, Brian has made lasting connections and friendships. As a student, he liked the small classes and availability of the instructors, many of whom were influential. As a staff member, he enjoys contributing to a fun and exciting learning facility. Had he not joined the college family, he knows that many of the opportunities that he has experienced would have passed him by.



Cochise celebrates diamond anniversary in 2024-2025

COCHISE COLLEGE KICKS OFF A CELEBRATION OF 60 YEARS OF SERVICE

in August when a traveling display of college archives makes its appearance at the Douglas Campus and in the Douglas community, where it will remain through September. The display will rotate to Bisbee in October/November 2024, Willcox in December 2024/January 2025, Benson in February/March 2025, and Sierra Vista in April/May 2025.

The college also will invite the community to join in a Founders Day celebration at 3 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 19. A homecoming week planned in mid-November will include a variety of commemorative events.

The college opened its doors in 1964, with the first classes offered on Sept. 21 of that year. The establishment of the college can be attributed to the efforts of the dedicated citizens of Cochise County, who voted in 1961 to create a community college district, and in 1962 to fund the construction of the Douglas Campus. In addition to the original campus, the college now operates physical locations in Sierra Vista and on Fort Huachuca, in Benson and Willcox, and online. Offerings have evolved to meet the needs of the local population and employers.

Visit cochise.edu to find details about anniversary activities.



COCHISE COLLEGE

Event demonstrates power of giving



EZEQUIEL OVANDO DID NOT SPEAK FOR THE FIRST EIGHT YEARS OF HIS LIFE, but you would never have known it as he worked the room at the Cochise College Foundation’s first Legacy Society donor appreciation event in April.

Ovando, an administration of justice student, was one of three scholarship recipients selected to share their stories. He focused on his early years and family, his confidence that hard work and drive will help him achieve great things, his desire to motivate others through public speaking, and what scholarship assistance has meant to him.

Art major Skye Robinson shared her passion for the college. A Buena High School graduate, she had her sights set on Cochise at a young age. She plans to earn a degree in illustration, which will set her up to pursue careers in comic creation, graphic design, visual development, character design, storyboarding and more. Entering local art shows, visiting museums, working on community murals, being a member of the Art Club, and working on art projects with kids attending the Youth Arts Festival have highlighted her experience at Cochise.

“For the first time in a long time, I am excited to learn,” she said. “My portfolio has never looked better, and I have gained so much experience.”

Jeffrey Stoner’s story covered his time in Los Angeles pursuing an acting career, which was cut short by the pandemic and resulted in a return to his roots in Cochise County. At one point he considered returning to L.A., but the economy had turned. At home, his parents let him stay with them rent-free so long as he attended college. He credited the Financial Aid Office personnel and the Non-Traditional Student Scholarship he received for helping him through the first year. When he

graduates in 2025, he intends to fund his passion for the arts by working in cybersecurity.

The Legacy Society is a new effort by the college foundation to open conversations with donors about their future plans. Attendees at the event included individuals and organizations who previously demonstrated a deep commitment to the college, or who have stated their intent to make a planned gift.

In addition to the students, college president Dr. JD Rottweiler presented and showed images that demonstrated how charitable gifts have helped move college priorities forward. Contributions and bequests have made it possible for the First Responders Academy to purchase healthcare and law enforcement simulation training vehicles, transformed neighborhoods by allowing the college foundation to provide financial support for the residential construction program, developed student housing, and provided a consistent stream of scholarship funding for students. Foundation board member Doug Dunn discussed the positive emotions he and his wife feel about the difference their gifts make in the lives of people in the county.

More information about the Legacy Society is available in the “Planning Your Legacy” document at cochise.edu/give. The publication provides details about the types of gifts that can be accepted and how they can be structured, as well as a form that donors can use to document their wishes.



Athlete honors family, Native American traditions

MICAYLA SILAS CAN BE DESCRIBED IN MANY WAYS. A COLLEGE BASKETBALL PLAYER, A DAUGHTER, A SISTER, A PHOTOGRAPHER, A STUDENT, AND A NATIVE AMERICAN.

She is many things, and during her first year at Cochise College, she has made it a priority to focus on her identity and to share it with others.

The 5-foot, 9-inch freshman guard took the initiative to be recruited onto the women's basketball team during her senior year at Mesa High School. Despite not playing for the season due to a torn ACL, she emailed the Cochise coaches and received an answer the next day. She was on her way to being successfully recruited, overcoming one of many obstacles that have shaped who she has become as a 19-year-old.

"The injury built a lot of character and mental toughness," Silas said, traits that she has been shaping since a young age, growing up on a reservation in Oneida, Wisconsin. "There are not a lot of opportunities, especially for us back home. We don't have a lot of educational resources and you see a lot of people growing up on the rez just staying there."

Recognizing her talent on the court, her parents sent her to live with family in Mesa, Arizona, to give her a chance to play and to pursue her goals. While away from her reservation, she continued to practice her other talents, dancing and performing in powwows, carrying on the traditions of her ancestors. She's been performing since childhood and as an adult feels it is an obligation to her people.

"I want to teach about Native Americans, that we are still here," she explained. "We've adapted to today's society while keeping our way of life. We have the ability to live two different lives."

With only a small percentage of the student population at Cochise College identifying as Native American, Silas felt that creating a cultural event was necessary to help bring to life who she represents. Silas is affiliated with the Salt River Pima (Arizona), Oneida

(Wisconsin), and Nakota/Assiniboine-Sioux (Montana) tribes.

For months she planned and then hosted an event in April called Native Pride: Honoring Indigenous Identity Through Art and Music. Silas served as the emcee, greeting the audience and explaining the performance. She wore symbols of her identity, her family, her culture, and heritage: moccasins and a white blouse with intricate purple and gold beadwork designed and sewed by her mom, earrings borrowed from her grandmother, and a protection necklace with cedar and sage, a gift from her uncle.

The program featured five dancers, members of her family and friends, including two world champion hoop dancers. An exhibit of Micayla's photography featured vibrant images of the strong yet delicate movement of dancers, lit to reveal the colorful clothing, hand-sewn beads, feathers, jingles and ribbons that all communicate elements of her culture.

"It felt so gratifying to dance, reconnect and bring awareness about the cultural importance of the Nakota, Salt River Pima and Oneida tribes," she reflected after the event.

Silas considers herself a communicator, like her late grandfather Roy Track, who was a well-known broadcaster and emcee at many powwows.

"My grandfather's memorial powwow took place on the same day I was born," said Silas. "When he passed away, our spirits crossed, too."

Silas hopes that the event she hosted and her photography exhibit are just the beginning in her goal to educate her peers and community about what is most important in life.

"No matter where I live, I knew I was always going to be involved in my tradition. We want to be able to be here as a people for as long as we can."



"No matter where I live, I knew I was always going to be involved in my tradition."

College to offer bachelor's degrees in Fall 2024

THE PATHWAY TO PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT WILL BECOME MORE ACCESSIBLE

in August when Cochise College begins offering the curriculum for bachelor's degrees in nursing and leadership, management and operations.

The programs have been in development since the Arizona legislature authorized community colleges to award baccalaureate degrees in 2021. Cochise identified areas of high need locally, and the Higher Learning Commission accredited the institution's plans in May.

The degrees will enable those already prepared for or working in certain fields to advance. To enroll in the Registered Nurse to Bachelor's of Science in Nursing Program, students must already hold an Arizona nursing license. Much of the coursework will be online, with some on-site services provided as needed. The college has selected Dr. Janet Neil, who previously managed the Copper Queen Community Hospital emergency department, to coordinate the BSN offerings.

The Bachelor's of Applied Science in Leadership, Management and Operations Program includes concentrations designed for public safety and military personnel, who need a bachelor's degree or higher in order to advance. The concentrations include law enforcement officer, fire science, paramedicine, intelligence operations studies, military intelligence systems technician, military unmanned vehicle operator and military unmanned vehicle technician.

A graphic for Cochise College's Bachelor of Applied Science in Leadership, Management, and Operations. It features the college logo at the top, the program name, and a photo of a smiling man in a grey t-shirt sitting at a desk in an office setting. The background is dark with white starburst icons. A red banner at the bottom contains the text "Start here, Finish here." in white cursive.

COCHISE COLLEGE

Bachelor
of Applied Science in
★ **LEADERSHIP** ★
MANAGEMENT, AND OPERATIONS

*Start here,
Finish here.*

A graphic for Cochise College's Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. It features the college logo at the top, the program name, and a photo of a smiling man in white nurse scrubs with a stethoscope around his neck, holding a clipboard. The background is dark blue with white icons of a cross and a syringe. A red banner at the bottom contains the text "Start here, Finish here." in white cursive.

COCHISE COLLEGE

Registered Nurse to
Bachelor of Science in
★ **NURSING** ★

*Start here,
Finish here.*

New certificate program available for educators

Cochise College will launch a 27-credit teaching Paraeducator Certificate program in Fall 2024. The program will be stackable with the Associate of Arts in Elementary Education. It is geared at helping individuals already working as instructional assistants and substitute teachers gain credits and professional skills while working toward teaching licensure, but it is open to all students interested in learning essential skills for the classroom as a workplace. The college hopes to partner with county high schools to incorporate this as a dual enrollment program for interested students in the near future. The ultimate aim of the Paraeducator Certificate is to help address the teaching shortage in Southern Arizona and bolster the teacher pipeline in Cochise County by investing in local sources of talent.



Coming soon: First Responders Academy simulators

In May, Cochise College awaited the arrival of four new simulation training tools for the First Responders Academy. The units will be installed at the Downtown Center, in a space next to an ambulance simulator the college previously purchased. The new tools include three law enforcement vehicles and a helicopter. They will provide continuing education opportunities for law enforcement personnel to practice driving in high-pressure situations and for paramedic and EMT students to practice “care in the air.”

The college has embraced virtual reality and the use of simulators in training and now offers a Virtual Reality Developer Program. Using the simulators allows students the chance to learn from and practice in situations that are safe and that they might not often see in a rural area. For example, Cochise County roads were digitally mapped so that the simulations can take place using true-to-life experiences.



Historic season concludes at national tournament

By Angel Ortega

COCHISE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL HAS ESTABLISHED ITSELF AS A NATIONALLY COMPETITIVE TEAM AND EARNED RESPECT FROM COACHES AND ATHLETES ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

With nowhere to go but up, the 2023-2024 season began with high expectations. The Apaches were coming off a season in which they appeared in the NJCAA national tournament, which included a first-round win over Collin College. Misty Opat began her fourth season as head coach and welcomed new assistant Scott Zacker, who previously served as a graduate assistant coach for the Wichita State University women's basketball team.

The Apaches bid farewell to key starters Jess Lawson, Angela Bigovic, and Alayna Contreras, who transferred to universities after their sophomore year.

Coach Opat's "re-load" mentality kept the Apaches afloat, bringing in standout recruits Michelle Nkolo, Micayla Silas, Leamsi Acuna, and transfer Ameena Muhammad to go along with star returners Fortuna Ngnawo, Ali Hardwell, and Clara Gonzalez. Cochise also welcomed local walk-on freshman forward Karolina Padilla (Douglas High School), who previously won region defensive player of the year honors.



With many new faces in the locker room, the team took some time to gel. A 3-2 record to start the season in November was not ideal, but Coach Opat knew it would take time for the Apaches to catch fire. The Apaches went 4-3 in December, losing twice to Arizona Western College (AWC) on the road.

But Cochise began to roll in the new year, beginning the second half of the season with 10 straight wins, including defeats of nationally-ranked Eastern Arizona College (EAC) and AWC. During their streak, Cochise spent time in the Division I rankings, appearing as high as No. 22. The team finished the regular season winning six of seven games and the Region I tournament on their minds.

Cochise hosted AWC for the region semifinal, defeating the Matadors 61-60 to earn a championship rematch with EAC. Having lost to EAC in the Region I Championship the previous season, the Apaches were all-too-familiar with the Gila Monsters. But, this time around, Cochise dominated from start to finish and cut down the nets following their 68-49 regional championship win.

continued on next page

Having come together as a team, Cochise returned to the NJCAA National Tournament in Casper, Wyoming, with hopes of winning their first national title. Their convincing first-round win over Chattanooga State College showed promise. It was all Apaches as they ran away with a 72-43 win. However, they faced heavily-favored No. 1 seed Hutchinson College in the second round. While Cochise led the contest the majority of the game, Hutchinson battled back to take down the Apaches late in the fourth quarter.

While the 26-8 season didn't end the way the coaches and players had hoped, history was made.

The Apaches advanced to the national tournament two consecutive years, and Coach Opat achieved her 300th career win. Outgoing sophomore Fortuna Ngnawo capped-off her Cochise College career scoring more than 1,000 points and collecting more than 700 rebounds. She was named First-Team All-Region and All-Conference, Region I Player of the Year, and NJCAA First Team All-American. She is transferring to NCAA Division I Troy University.

In April, Opat, Ngnawo and sophomore Ali Hardwell participated in the inaugural NJCAA Women's Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame 3-on-3 Tournament in Knoxville, Tennessee. During the trip, which included a tour of the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, a meet-and-greet with Hall of Fame inductees, and attendance at the induction ceremony, Ngnawo was able to see her own Cochise basketball jersey hanging in the rafters of the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame alongside those of the other NJCAA and NCAA All-Americans nationwide. The jersey will be displayed at the Hall of Fame museum all year. In addition, Ngnawo's team won the tournament. Coach Opat was one of only nine NJCAA coaches from across the country selected to coach at the tournament.



Adult Education instructor comes full circle in her Cochise College journey

By Abe Villarreal

SUSANA GREENO HAS ALWAYS FELT A CONNECTION TO HER PEOPLE - THE PEOPLE OF THE BORDERLANDS.

All her life, she has experienced what it is to be educated as a transborder student, crossing borders to make it to campus, and crossing borders to make it back home.

“When I started in the ESL program, I thought I knew English,” said Greeno about her first semester as a student at Cochise College in 2016. “I could order food and ask for directions but I couldn’t have a full conversation.”

Greeno thought that learning a new language would be easy, and it’s what some of her students in Adult Education think today. “One thing is understanding a language by seeing someone’s body language, but writing and reading is different.”

She ended up learning the language, graduating from Cochise College, earning a bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of Arizona and a master’s degree in social work from Arizona State University, and starting a career in higher education at Cochise College as an academic advisor.

After high school graduation, Greeno planned to study at the University of Sonora in Hermosillo, Mexico. “I wanted to be a chemist, but I always wanted to learn a second language. I saw people easily go from one language to another.”

When her older sister visited the Cochise campus to learn more about the ESL program, Greeno also discovered the possibility of learning English in college.

“My parents didn’t go to college. My mom worked at a factory for 40 years, and dad worked in factories and sold cars,” Greeno said. Her mother told her that getting an education was the answer to not living in poverty. “Mom thought that this was the way out of being stuck in a factory 10 hours a day, the way out of the life we had growing up.”



At the age of 9, Greeno’s grandmother passed away and her mother had to step up to help take care of her grandparents.

Her family’s story is the story of her students today. For the last two years, she has served as a full time Adult Education instructor, teaching English as a Second Language to community members of all ages, but of similar backgrounds and life trajectories.

“I’ve been using my own journey as an example in the classroom,” said Greeno. She knows that students come into the classroom with fears about speaking, reading, and writing English. “Having been an ESL student helps me understand their journey. It’s about practicing and making mistakes. The only way to learn English is by trying.”

Greeno has several teaching goals, including creating a community so that students feel comfortable speaking a new language, and she knows that her students come in with their own goals and dreams.

“Some of my students want to get a job and some want to help their kids with homework,” Greeno explained. “Some students are older and want to better communicate with their doctors.”

The Adult Education program offers three levels of English language learning. Community members can continue through the program in all levels, or learn enough to feel comfortable with meeting their desired goals.

When students complete the program, they are better prepared for the workforce, for communicating with their social circles, and for some of them, to continue their academic careers as future college graduates.

Instructors like Greeno provide the example that all of this and more can be accomplished one class and one new word at a time.

Partnerships open enrollment, cultural exchange opportunities

By Abe Villarreal

A HISTORIC HIGHWAY AND TWO MILES OF DESERT are all that separate the Mexican border and the Cochise College Douglas Campus, and since 1964, that short distance has positioned the communities on both sides of the border to benefit from education and learning for students and teachers.

Throughout the history of the college, students from the Mexican State of Sonora have attended Cochise College, many to learn English, and many to earn a degree. The college has been a close and affordable option, as well as a first step into the American higher education system, a system different from the one south of the border.

Those differences were highlighted in February with the visit of 14 college students and five professors from two teacher colleges in Hermosillo. The week-long English immersion experience was coordinated by Cochise College, in partnership with the Hermosillo-based institutions who were looking for a regional partner to offer their students an opportunity to learn about the U.S. education system.

Cochise College leaders created a schedule with tours of local public and charter schools, presentations by college faculty, and cultural experiences throughout Cochise County.

The English immersion program was the latest among recent efforts by the college to revitalize Sonoran

relations. An articulation agreement, originally signed in 2005 with the Instituto Tecnológico Superior de Cananea, was re-signed in 2023, opening up possibilities of student, faculty, and cultural exchanges.

Cochise College representatives have made visits to CBTis 81 high school in Agua Prieta and attended the International Education Day in Hermosillo in April to open up dialogue with high school students and teachers from schools throughout Sonora.

Sonoran students have attended Cochise College because of the affordable tuition rates, its reputation as a well-known quality college in the area, and the support given to international students by a dedicated international students coordinator. As of Spring 2024, enrollment in the academic ESL program was at a 10-year high.

Recognition of this has led to the creation of a Spanish language Cochise College Facebook page called Cochise en Español, and bilingual Zoom sessions for parents and community members who want to learn more about what Cochise College has to offer.

The education of the students of the borderlands, from both sides of the border, continues to be a point of pride for Cochise College, as the institution strives to live up to its mission of providing inclusive and educational opportunities that support social responsibility, community engagement, meaningful careers, and lifelong learning.

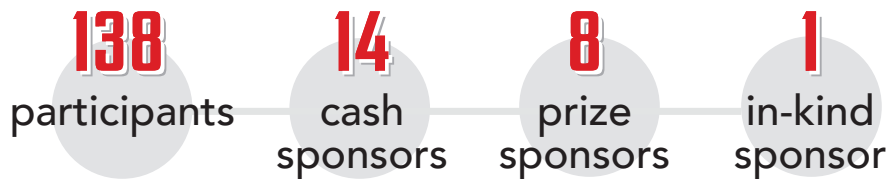




22 - 54 Cochise County students will receive scholarships of

\$500 - \$1,200 each

because



raised

\$27K

for the Senior Scholarship, Non-Traditional Student Scholarship, & Early College Programming

Thank you!

From the board and staff of the Cochise College Foundation

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