

## Monarchs Prepare to Take Center Stage

As the academic year closes, students get ready to receive their diplomas.

Milan Rafaelov,  
Editor-in-Chief

As the curtains of the 2023-2024 academic year draw to a close, students and faculty make preparations to take center stage on graduation day. Monarch Stadium will be filled with proud graduates, their families, and friends as students who have completed their degrees in the last four semesters step on stage to receive their diplomas on June 4. In addition to the main commencement ceremony, the LACCD is hosting several district-wide affinity graduations to celebrate the diverse backgrounds and cultures of its students. These ceremonies—including the Black, Lavender, Mi Gente, and Asian Pacific Islander graduations—offer students and their families a more intimate and culturally relevant celebration, highlighting cultural unity and providing a space for these diverse communities to share and celebrate their experiences. The affinity graduations began with the on-campus Black Graduation on May 14, offering relevant speakers, food, and entertainment. Musical performances from African Soul International and a keynote address by Kareem Grimes, an actor from the show All-American, welcomed enthusiastic family members and friends to take their seats at the Student Union Plaza.

“Our biggest triumph is in the event itself,” said Dr. Coney, the counselor and coordinator of the Umoja Black Scholars. “It was our inaugural all-Valley graduation celebration that received participation from approximately 45 high school and middle school graduates in addition to 28 participating LACCD Black Scholar graduates and various other program award recipients. The visibility of the great work of our program and the outcomes of our students have positioned us as a marquee staple of Black success in the great San Fernando Valley.” In a month marked by vibrant celebrations of diversity and academic achievement, these notable ceremonies each took place to honor the unique identities and cultures of their graduates. On May 17, Mission College hosted the Lavender Graduation, providing a supportive and inclusive environment



Milan Rafaelov for The Valley Star

The youth group from African Soul International perform on stage as the students, families and friends find their seats and wait for the Black Affinity Graduation to begin.



Ivonne Elias for The Valley Star

Medals given out during the Mi Gente and Dia de Reconocimiento graduation.

for LGBTQIA+ students to celebrate their accomplishments. This event recognized the resilience and dedication of students who have navigated their academic journeys while advocating for their identities and rights. The following day, May 18, LA Harbor College held the Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIIDA) Graduation. This ceremony was rich with cultural significance, featuring traditional performances and a catered lunch. Graduates were awarded APIIDA medallions, symbolizing their hard work

within their communities. To conclude the affinity graduations, the LACCD is hosting the district-wide 3rd Annual Mi Gente Graduate Celebration at East Los Angeles College on June 3 to honor Mexican, Central American, and Latino students and their families. “I’m graduating from Valley this spring and I’m transferring to UCLA as a political science major,” said Gianella Urtecho at the Mi Gente ceremony. “I’m excited to be here and really proud that I am the first one in my family to experience higher education here in California. It’s because of my family that I am here, it’s not only my achievement, it’s theirs too.”



Javier Carbajal-Ramos

Natalie Guerrero, the Counselor and Coordinator for the Rainbow Pride Center addresses students during Lavender Graduation.

tion here in California. It’s because of my family that I am here, it’s not only my achievement, it’s theirs too.” In the days leading up to June 4, Valley College prepares for its final commencement ceremony, celebrating a diverse student body, 70% of whom belong to one or more minority groups. The campus is filled with a mixture of excitement and nostalgia as roughly 500 graduates get ready to walk stage according to student life, and embrace the next chapters of their lives. “I’m going to go home re-

membering and feeling the sense of community,” said Alexander Mc Daniel, who received certificates on stage but will officially graduate as a dual enrollment Cinema Major next year. “When you think about memories, the first thing that hits you is what you associate with that memory, and I just feel the community here, that’s what I’m always going to remember.”

## ASU Election Brings in New Members

Results for the Elected Candidates Occupying ASU Positions Starting in July.

Maia Richaud,  
Valley Life Editor

The current student representatives held their bi-weekly Student Union Executive Council Meeting, where they announced the elected candidates who will occupy a position on the board from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. ASU publicly announced the results on their Instagram May 14. The candidates have to go through a predefined process to become eligible, which includes writing a personal statement and collecting 35 signatures. Five students have been elected,

**“I could be that voice for students who are not able to do that. So one of the reasons was, and it may sound cliché, but to be the voice of those who cannot raise their own voices.”**

Sofia Orellana Rivas, reelected Commissioner of Political Affairs.

reelected, or approved, including three new members. From April 29 to May 5, Valley students had the opportunity to vote online via their student portal. Throughout the week, the campus was abuzz with campaign activities as candidates engaged with students, persuaded voters, and distributed promotional flyers. This year, ASU saw a significant increase in the number of candidates running for elections compared to last year. Among the newly elected officials, Astghik Rzyan has been chosen as the new Commissioner of Fine Arts, while Georgi Almazyran will serve as the upcoming ASU President. “I wanted to help people because it was really hard for me when I just got to the co-

lege,” Almazyran said about his motivation for applying for the position. “I want to build a more friendly community. I like helping people, and I see the difficulties that our students have on campus, mostly the immigrants because I’m an immigrant too. I think ASU is capable of making some changes on campus. It’s the student voice, so that’s important.” Trang Vu has been approved as ASU Vice President for a second term. Reflecting on her reasons for running, she said, “The reason why I chose the Vice President is because it’s mainly focused on clubs. That’s one of the main reasons why I joined as well, because I want to improve the student experience in college and, you know, just make it more fun.” Sofia Orellana Rivas has been reelected as Commissioner of Political Affairs. She shared her motivations, saying, “I always try to help as many people as I can. As a first-generation student and as an immigrant as well, there are certain things that we’re not able to say, talk about, when it comes to politics and anything like that. And I could be that voice for students who are not able to do that. So one of the reasons was, and it may sound cliché, but to be the voice of those who cannot raise their voices.” Alina Lysak has been elected as Commissioner of Student Life. She explained her involvement, stating, “I was always involved on campus, even though it’s just my first year at LACCD. I started the Ukrainian Student Union, I was going to the events actively, and I was actually able to become part of this community. I kind of realized that I can actually make it better, and I’m actually motivated to make a positive change here because I care about this campus. I have a lot of fun here. So that’s why I think that being in ASU is very important, if you have ideas and if you have a desire to make the community a better place.”



Lluvia Marinero Arevalo for The Valley Star

(L-R) Alina Lysak is the newly elected ASU Commissioner of Student life and is a Computer Science and Economics Major. Georgi Almazyran is a Business Major who has been elected as ASU President.



Lluvia Marinero Arevalo for The Valley Star

(L-R) Trang Vu is a Chemistry Major reelected as ASU Vice President. Sofia Orellana majors in Business Administration and was reelected for Commissioner of Political Affairs.

## Budget cuts loom over state education.

Star Eisenberg,  
Editor-in-Chief

Gov. Gavin Newsom recently unveiled a revised budget plan in response to a multi-billion dollar deficit projected for the 2024-25 state budget. The revised proposal announced on May 10 reveals a \$27.6 billion shortfall, in addition to \$17.3 billion in proactive cuts recently agreed upon between the administration and the state Legislature, resulting in a total deficit of \$44.9 billion. “These are propositions that I’ve long advanced, many of them. These are things that I’ve supported,” Newsom said during a press conference in Sacramento. “But you’ve got to do it. We have to be responsible. We have to be accountable. We have to balance the budget.” TK-12 and community colleges have largely been safeguarded from severe cuts. “I appreciate that [Newsom] largely left California Community Colleges intact,” said Valley College President Barry Gribbons. “I know he was dealing with some major fiscal challenges, and he had to make some tough decisions. He made a lot of cuts that were absolutely necessary, but by and large, he kept California Community Colleges whole, and that’s deeply appreciated.”

The budget reflects a change from prior commitments as Newsom will not fulfill his earlier promise to expand the Cal Grant program. This promise originated in 2022 when he signed into law Assembly Bill 1746, the Cal Grant Reform Act, to allow more students to qualify and provide increased funding each year. Community college students, who heavily rely on financial aid, face heightened vulnerability to these budget cuts. The Cal Grant program offers crucial support to low-income students pursuing higher education. While the program currently offers around \$1,600 annually to eligible students, the lack of expansion implies that this support may not increase in the foreseeable future. The Middle Class Scholarship initiative, established in 2013 and serving as a lifeline for many students by offering direct financial assistance, is also facing a decrease. With a proposed cut of \$510 million, the future of the program now hangs in the balance. The proposed budget, totaling \$288.1 billion, includes \$201 billion for General Fund spending. It addresses this year’s \$27.6 billion shortfall and a projected \$28.4 billion deficit next year by proposing significant spending reductions across state services. This includes an 8 percent cut for all state agencies, including the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. “Our District is fully committed to participating in the ensuing budget negotiations and to crafting a budget that best serves our colleges, community, and, most importantly, our students,” said LACCD’s Chancellor Francisco Rodriguez in a statement Wednesday. “The Governor’s reaffirmation of his commitment to funding several key initiatives across our state’s community colleges provides financial stability and is a recognition of our vital role in shaping California’s future.” CSU Chancellor Mildred Garcia has expressed concern regarding the revised state budget, indicating no increase next year and only a 2 percent increase in 2025-26, a contrast to the previously promised 10 percent increase over two years. “As the institution that educates the evolving workforce of California, this budget places us in a position of making difficult decisions,” Garcia said in a statement. UC President Michael Drake said in a statement, “This is a challenging budget period for California, and Gov. Newsom’s revised budget proposal reflects that reality.”



Read more at  
thevalleystarnews.com



VALLEY LIFE

New Volleyball Club

Victoria Tellez did not dig the lack of a volleyball team.

Lamonta Amos,  
Staff Writer

While Valley College offers a volleyball class, it lacks a competitive volleyball team. Motivated by her desire to play the sport, Victoria Tellez took matters into her own hands and started her own volleyball club. The freshman ambitiously started the campus volleyball club after encouragement from the campus's Athletic Director Dave Mallas. The club was officially chartered in fall of 2023 and has since accumulated between 30-40 members. "We didn't have a team or anything, I talked to the Athletic Director Dave and he said, well if you want to play volleyball, why don't you start a club," said Tellez. "So I went ahead and started the club" Tellez said that her interest in volleyball started back in ninth grade. She was initially drawn to softball but had a friend who convinced her to join the volleyball team together. The fun they had practicing influenced this decision. After some time,

her friend ended up leaving the team but the club founder stayed behind due to her newfound love for the sport. "Just leave whatever you have at the door and just come in and play volleyball for a bit and then just go back to your normal life for a bit," said Tellez. The kinesiology major was able to recruit members from the volleyball class run by health and kinesiology professor Anna Morente. According to Tellez, the recruiting process was simple given that she was already familiar with many of the students in the class. Along with one-on-one invitations, Tellez also put up flyers online as an open call for those interested in the sport. This effort resulted in over 20 additional players for the club. Watching the club grow and seeing everyone get along is fulfilling for Tellez, whose initial desire to play volleyball with friends has evolved into something potentially bigger than ever thought possible. The hardest part about keeping the club together

was working around students' schedules. With so many people on the roster the 18-year-old can't always accommodate everyone. "I wanted to start a club, and next thing you know the position of president just kinda fell on me and I just ran from there," said Tellez. Tellez would love to have a more structured volleyball team. She said that the laid-back vibe that they have now is great, and that's what they are keeping just for the semester with hope for it to grow and evolve. "If one day the club were to be turned into a team, that would be amazing and I would love that, but currently we are just not there yet," said Tellez. "I know a lot of people here and the main reason that people joined the club was because they want to play volleyball competitively and would love to be on the team. I know that they would be really happy, so I would be overjoyed to have a team established here."

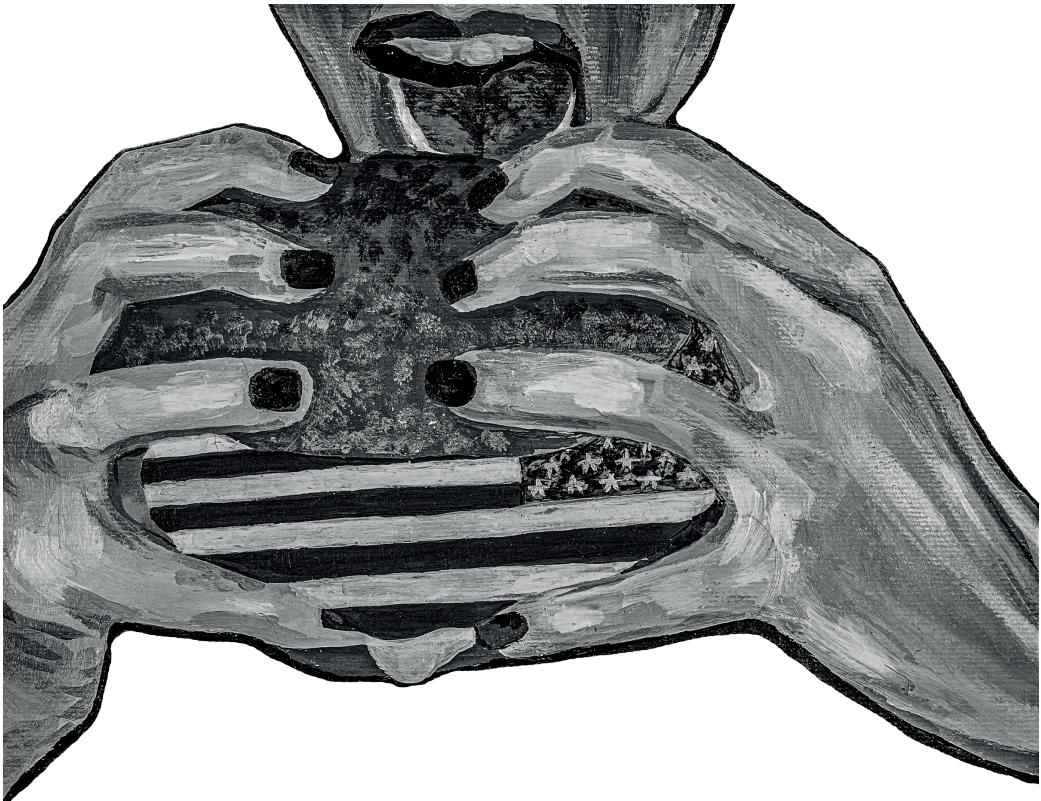


Lluvia Marinero Arevalo for The Valley Star

Victoria Tellez, a first year major in Kinesiology, steps up as President of the Volleyball Club. She poses for a portrait in front of the volleyball net at the North Gym.

First Taste of the U.S.

An experience of the U.S. through community college.



"Taste of the U.S." Illustration by Kaia Mann.



Maïa Richaud,  
Valley Life Editor

International Student Experience

Getting a first taste of the United States through community college is certainly a very enlightening experience for an international student who wishes to discover a new culture. An international student can decide to study abroad for many reasons: academic purposes, to discover a new culture or a new language. The language part is actually not easy when you realize that the English you learned at school is totally different from the one Americans speak. At that moment, talking to people can seem the hardest thing ever because you did not master the language perfectly. "Even though I have been here for 15 years, usually people when they hear that I have an accent when I try to say something, they shut off," said Anita Boli, Hungarian student. "They won't even try to understand." But with some difficulties, talking was one of the most

enjoyable things to do. Talking to people. Talking to some staff members and instructors at Valley College and realizing how much they love working here, particularly on this campus. Talking to other students, meeting people from all over the world with the same path as you. "When I got here, I really liked the environment," said Counselor Margaret Sarkisyan. "I don't want to sound biased, but I truly believe that our campus is the most beautiful campus. Environmentally, it's very green, we are known as a tree campus. I have been to many other college campuses, but I really like ours." Being immersed in a new culture also means observing and discovering other people's habits that they think are totally normal when it's actually something you are not at all used to. "When I arrived, it felt like a different world," said Anita Boli. "It was interesting but very scary as well." Trying to understand and learn not only a new language but also studying the classes you attend can be confusing in an educational environment with different

methods of work and a different way of doing that requires a time of adaptation. Having online classes surely does not help for the social aspect of learning and discovering a community college campus. Thankfully, Valley's campus life is animated by lots of events, organized by its different programs, clubs and associations, which is useful for people to have fun and meet others. Being in a city like Los Angeles certainly played a huge part as the experience environment is full of opportunities and diversity. Discovering a country and a culture is through many aspects, taking public transportation, doing activities, going to events, even going to the supermarket. Discovering the United States through Valley College can be an enlightening experience, being able to discover this part of the country through a full immersion, studying and interacting with people allows international students to discover American people beyond stereotypes.

Media Arts Department Celebrates Student Films

Some of Valley's young visual storytellers can now call themselves award-winning filmmakers.



Kamani Alana Sawyer gleamed after Professor Jonathan Burnett presented her with the Achievement in Cinematography Award at LAVC Media Arts Showcase Spring 2024.

"The Media Arts Department is extremely proud and honored to celebrate the work of our students and can now call themselves award-winning filmmakers, even if they had their film screened today. It is a major accomplishment and we're proud of all of our students."

Eric Swelstad



Professor Jason Williams presents Artavazd Ovakimyan with the Audience Choice Award.

Natalie Gazazian,  
Staff Writer

Master of Ceremonies, Department Chair Eric Swelstad, along with members of the media arts faculty, presented awards to student filmmakers at the Valley College Music Building - Recital Hall to celebrate the Media Arts 2024 Spring Showcase. The event showcased student films from Fall of 2023 where students, faculty, family, and friends gathered to celebrate the hard work and efforts of these young visual storytellers. The audience of around 60 used their phones to cast votes via QR code. When Professor Jason Williams announced the winner of the Audience Choice Award, "Burning Autumn Leaves: Treachery," by Artavazd Ovakimyan, the crowd burst into applause as he got up to address the audience. "I am just getting started," said Ovakimyan after he collected his award. Filmmaker Julia Durham was grateful to win Best Story "Don't" and took the opportunity to thank her friends who participated in the making of the film. Kamani Alana Sawyer took the Award for Cinematography for her film "Fast Backward" which depicted the complicated relationship between a mother and daughter, just in time for Mother's Day. Valerie Garcia took home the top honors for editing in "The Getaway" and best sound went to Juliet Garcia for "Imagination." Luciana Serrano was emotional upon taking home the Best Visual Effects award for her horror film "Vampire Heart."

The Media Arts Department's next showcase will take place in the fall semester and will feature two nights of films. At the end of the hour and thirty-minute event, Swelstad said, "We want to see them continue on in our program." Of the films screened, 36 were produced from two Cinema 101 courses, fourteen of which came from Professor Chris Childs' evening class and 22 others were produced in Swelstad's morning class. Like Ovakimyan, most of these young filmmakers are just getting started. "The Media Arts Department is extremely proud and honored to celebrate the work of our students and can now call themselves award-winning filmmakers, even if they had their film screened today," Swelstad said. "It is a major accomplishment and we're proud of all of our students."



Read more at  
TheValleyStarnews.com



Valerie Garcia beams as she accepts her Achievement in Editing Award.



Juliet Garcia brings up her little cousin to accept her Achievement in Sound Design award.



Award Winner Luciana Serrano accepts her Achievement for Best Visual Effects and Animation.

Taylor Cowhey for The Valley Star



OPINION

How DEI and Umoja Affect Change

A testament to DEI Programs through the lens of a mother and soon to be graduate.

Kaya Dantzler,  
Special to The Star

With a radiant smile and stunning makeup, the soon-to-be graduate stands naturally suave at the entrance of the Umoja Center. Sable Thomas pays homage to the culture with effortless flair in her acid-washed jean jacket layered over a Malcolm X T-shirt and camo pants, with cream and dark chocolate Air Jordan 1 sneakers. Thomas' journey to graduation has been wayward. She dropped out of Santa Monica College with a full scholarship and dreams of attending USC after becoming a mother. When her daughter was two, she enrolled at San Bernardino College but left due to a lack of support and challenges securing consistent housing. Eventually, she found her footing once she started working the night shift at the post office. Umoja is a mentorship-based program that empowers African American students to achieve academic success and define their futures through culturally specific engagement and support. After 15 years of attending three different colleges, Thomas is graduating from Valley this fall. With vital support from the Umoja Black Scholars Program, she achieves this milestone amidst an accelerating anti-DEI movement that threatens triumphs like Sable's. In January 2023, the same month she enrolled at Valley, the Manhattan Institute released a model legislative brief advocating for the elimination of DEI initiatives at public universities. The brief has become a blueprint



Sable Thomas, former BSU president, poses for a portrait at the Umoja Center at Valley.

for conservative activists to ban programs like the Umoja Black Scholars nationwide. The Manhattan Institute's ideology spawned over 80 bills in 20 plus states and Congress targeting DEI programs in higher education which contributed to the repeal of Affirmative Action in June 2023. Right-wing figures like Texas Lt. Governor Dan Patrick claim that D.E.I. initiatives encourage censorship, are discriminatory, misuse funds, and undermine meritocracy. Eight years into unflinching work at the post office, Sable decided to finish school to demonstrate the importance of education to her 13-year-old daughter. After a brief conversation with a general counselor at Valley, she was referred to the Umoja Center, the campus hub for a D.E.I. program for African American students, led by counselor Coney, Rip, J, and Yvonne. Sable left the

counseling office with Coney's email address still nervous about returning to school. "I emailed Dr. Coney, and he told me to stop by," Sable recalled. "He immediately got on the ball. He asked about my major, looked at my transcripts, and said, 'You'll be a great fit for nursing. Here are the requirements.' In less than five minutes, he typed up my entire educational plan. In my head, I said, who is this man? How did he

know this is what I needed?" Sable's story is an example of "Black Girl Magic" and the transformative impact of the Umoja Program. It demonstrates how D.E.I. programs expand access to opportunities, advance equity, and support students impacted by the legacy of discriminatory legal precedents like Plessy vs. Ferguson, Jim Crow Laws, or the 1994 Crime Bill. Sable left that first meeting at the Umoja Center, enrolled in classes, relieved of her anxiety, and on her way to achieving her goals. She became a fixture at the center, learned to advocate for herself, and eventually formed a study group with other nursing students enrolled in the Umoja Program. "Bailey and Ifeoma," Sable shared, "There's something to be said about encouraging one another. The accountability is real. Girl, are you studying? What did you get on this test? Where are you lacking? Did you look for tutoring? That was such a beautiful thing. I got straight A's again in the summer session." The community care, support, and resources Sable accessed through the Umoja Program helped her earn straight A's in her first two sessions at Valley, ultimately setting her up to graduate after a 15-year hiatus from pursuing her education. As the debate over D.E.I. continues, Sable's story reminds us of the importance of D.E.I. initiatives in education, their real-world impact, and their role in creating a more equitable and brighter future for everyone.



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VACC Serves as a Reminder of Unmet Promises

The costly and endless construction of the VACC is unfair to current students and faculty.

Kaia Mann,  
Opinion Editor

The prolonged construction of the Valley Academic and Cultural Building has left students and faculty displaced, disgruntled and disappointed. The production of the new arts facility started in 2016 with a budget of \$78.5 million and a two-year completion plan. Despite Valley's pledge to upgrade facilities for the Arts Media and Design programs by 2018, after four graduating classes and an additional \$20 million, the VACC now sits as a dormant, money-eating eyesore. It is not fair that Valley students and their learning conditions bear the brunt of the districts and administration's failures. Despite Valley being the closest, most convenient option for many, students might be inclined to leave to other campuses that provide students the facilities they need. One of the most egregious examples of the VACC construction's negative influence is evident in the theater department. The start of the VACC ripped away the theater student and faculty's home and replaced it with empty promises. The cinema department is in a similar boat, mostly sanctioned to the Administration and Career Advancement building while broadcasting restricts students with limited class offerings. The prospect of a state-of-the-art 480-seat mainstage, outdoor amphitheater, and

150-seat horseshoe theater is undoubtedly exciting. However, the over eight-year delay has lessened the appeal and enthusiasm. Waiting for the VACC is like waiting for Rihanna's ninth studio album, which has been in the works since 2016, coincidentally the same year the VACC began construction. In fact, there is no completion date in sight for the VACC, and the ongoing legal battle with the previous construction firm, Pinner, will only slow things down more. It is improbable that Valley will be able to "cut the ribbon" of the VACC until at least 2026. Even the departments that have not been displaced are still struggling. The last renovation of the art building was almost 20 years ago. The classrooms are small with no ventilation despite holding classes involving oil painting, woodworking, and ceramics. An evident issue, present not only in the art building but also in several others across campus, is the unpredictable and temperamental heating and cooling system. The temperature fluctuates over ten degrees in 20 minutes, creating discomfortable and frustrating learning environments. Classes in the broadcasting department are held at night due to.... The needed upgrades in these buildings and programs will not be taken seriously because Valley's money is being eaten up by the consistently insatiable VACC. The VACC has reportedly cost the school and



Carson Tarabochia-Martin for The Valley Star

View from original campus looking at the unfinished VACC.

its taxpayers upwards of \$100 million. Following the termination of Pinner Construction on March 8, BuildLACCD, the firm overseeing the VACC, is in search of a replacement but has yet to secure one. In the wake of this, Pinner has filed a \$30 million

wrongful termination lawsuit against LACCD. The district is seeking to delay legal proceedings until the completion of the building's construction. As of today, the legal situation remains uncertain and the VACC is accumulating dust. The potential of the VACC's

new and improved classrooms and workspaces is great and would be even greater if they were delivered on time. The extensive and costly nature of this project has stalled necessary upgrades for other campus buildings, adversely impacting Valley students.

VALLEY VIEW | What are your thoughts about how colleges and universities have responded to protests on campus?

Photos by Lluvia Marinero Arevalo  
Text by Maia Richaud



"To be honest, I'm actually not involved in any kind of protest, but I have seen protests at CSUN. I live near CSUN, and my friend is studying there. They listen to the students and try to solve the problem as soon as possible, that's what I have seen. It happened, I guess, in winter, there was a protest at CSUN so they had to cancel the classes. They said they would cancel the classes for one week, but they resolved the issue in two days. So I guess they are pretty quick about it."

-Shweta Vij, nursing major



"My thoughts? I think it doesn't belong there. I mean, colleges should talk about those protests going on, like in their newspaper, and give guidance to students that want, but the protests shouldn't be done at college campuses because it might turn messy, it might lead to anarchy, it might lead to violence, and nobody wants that."

-Artavazd Ovakimyan, film major



"Not well, to be honest. Canceling graduations isn't really something that I find really good and something that they should find a way to monitor. Plus, the police get involved, they sometimes get too involved and it could lead to extremes that I don't think anyone wants to see."

-Nickolas Roque, psychology major



"I think it's a show of where their priorities lie and where their morals lie as universities, especially considering how a lot of our major universities are run as companies instead of platforms for education, and because their priorities lie in profits, they don't see the moral argument that the protesters are making about the fact that their tuition is being used to either indirectly or directly fund a genocide."

-Lily Cortes, studio art major



SPORTS

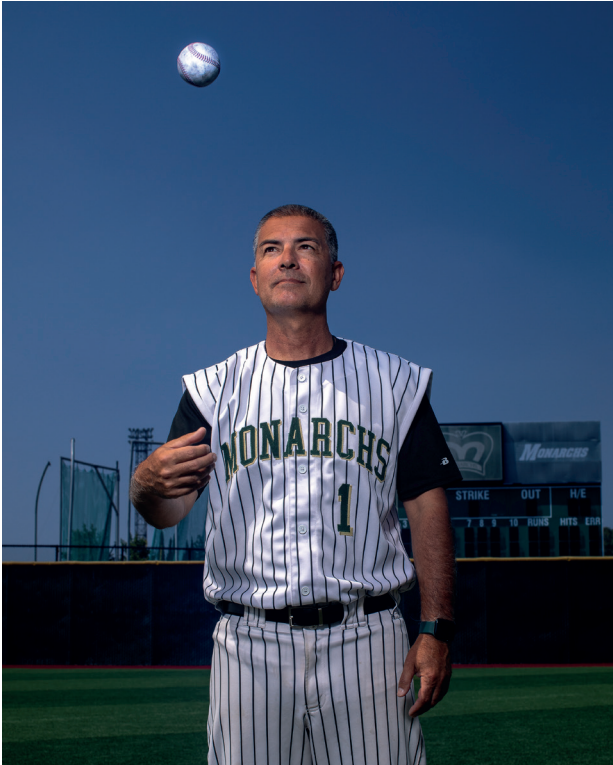
Mallas Walks Away as Head Coach to Concentrate on AD Role

Dave Mallas will concentrate his time as Valley College athletic director after stepping down as baseball’s skipper.

Alex Diaz,  
Sports Editor

The clock strikes 11:30 a.m., and Dave Mallas is in his Valley College baseball cap, driving down to the field for the start of practice, a familiar scene over the past 20 years - which has now come to an end. Mallas announced this week that he is stepping down as head baseball coach to focus

said Mallas. “I wasn’t burnt out from coaching. It was just time to give up one of them. I decided to give up the coaching as hard as that is.” The Chico State alumni was a part of a successful group of players. In 1997, they won a state championships and then Mallas went on to pursue a master’s in education at Azusa Pacific University. Valley has provided him with 19 seasons of experience, to which he attributes most of his success as impacting generations of players. The former coach expresses that he will miss player interactions the most. “The players, these kids are 18-22 - such an important time in their lives,” said Mallas. “The interaction between coach and player on a daily basis is what I really enjoyed. I hope that’s what the players enjoyed, having me as a head coach.”



Taylor Cowhey for The Valley Star

Dave Mallas will keep his eye on the roll of athletic director.

During the 2023-2024 season, Mallas led the team to the playoffs and reached the Super Regionals. In his first year of coaching at Valley, he also led the team to the first round of the playoffs, marking a full-circle moment for him. With 22 years of coaching and two decades devoted to generations of college athletes, he admires, and has focused his expertise,

de men’s and women’s track and field, men’s and women’s cross country, men’s soccer and women’s volleyball. As for his first order of business as full-time athletic director, Mallas plans to secure roles for the fall sports. “We need to fill the baseball coach position,” said the director. “As well as the women’s soccer coach position. We want to get the coaches on board permanently.”

“The interaction between coach and player on a daily basis is what I really enjoyed.”  
-Dave Mallas

on his role of athletic director. In 2021, Mallas took on two roles at once at Valley: athletic director and head baseball coach. The administration permitted him to take on both roles for a few years. Ultimately, he decided to focus on his role as athletic director with Will Skett, former assistant coach, taking Mallas’ place for the moment. “Doing both, it felt hard to give 100 percent to both,”

rience, to which he attributes most of his success as impacting generations of players. The former coach expresses that he will miss player interactions the most. “The players, these kids are 18-22 - such an important time in their lives,” said Mallas. “The interaction between coach and player on a daily basis is what I really enjoyed. I hope that’s what the players enjoyed, ha-

“We are looking to make 2024-2025 a very successful athletic year for Valley.”  
-Dave Mallas

on baseball from Los Angeles Harbor College to Valley. “It’s no secret that you need the players,” said Mallas. “It’s the biggest ingredient in having success and we had a really good group of guys this year.” Heading into the next semester, he is eager to address some administrative tasks in the athletic department and reintroduce the sports that Valley lost in 2013. These sports include

In the next five years, Mallas shares that there will be significant improvements coming to the campus at Valley. This includes renovating the South Gym and new bleachers for the Valley football field. “We are looking to make 2024-2025 a very successful athletic year for Valley.”



Taylor Cowhey for The Valley Star

Lilliana Noriega finished her career at Valley College on an up note. The Burbank resident set multiple records and collected many medals in her time as a Monarch.

Noriega Makes Waves at State

The sophomore leaves a lasting mark a Valley

Taylor Cowhey,  
Special to the star

Valley College record holder, Western State Championship medal collector and accomplished swimmer Lilliana Noriega leaves in her wake multiple swimming marks as she heads for new waters at the University of the Pacific. Noriega collected three medals at this year’s event held in Costa Mesa earlier this month. “At state, I tried focusing on me and my individual race rather than the swimmers I was racing,” said the Burroughs High School graduate. “As long as I tried my best, I was happy.” Her best was good enough for three medals: a gold in the 100-yard backstroke, a silver in the 50-yard freestyle, and a bronze in the 100-yard freestyle. The accomplishments come on the heels of

Noriega’s success at last year’s state competition where she won the 50-yard freestyle and 100-yard freestyle. “I love being able to swim next to girls of the same speed as me,” Noriega said. “Going into finals and being ranked top in the state was nerve-racking, especially with the swimmers who were finishing their races within tenths of a second of each other. But that was also very exciting because I had people pushing me in the water to swim as hard as I could.” Noriega credits hard work and her coaches for much of her success. “I’ve been really putting in the effort and the work this season to get the results I wanted,” she said. “I have to thank my coaches [Jim] McMillan and [Pete] Loporchio for helping me push to help me reach my goals.”



Taylor Cowhey for The Valley Star

Sophomore Lilliana Noriega collected gold, silver and bronze medals at the recent State Championships held in Costa Mesa earlier this month.

Zuniga Helps Swim Team Meet Swim Goals

Freshman Nick Zuniga represented the Monarchs at state championship meet.

JC Rosa,  
Special to the star

Nick Zuniga glides through the water, making history for Valley College’s men’s swim and dive team, helping the Monarchs snap an eight-year drought in making it to the State Championship Meet. Alongside his teammate, Greg Carillo, the college freshman excelled in the regular season, ranking amongst the top 24 swimmers in the state in three events, propelling him to the state championship in Costa Mesa. “It was a lot of fun,” said Zuniga, “I got to get faster and compete against faster people.” Moving swiftly in the pool during the showcase, the swimmer ended up clocking in times of 1:45.44 in the men’s 200-yard freestyle swim, 4:51.53 in the men’s 500-yard freestyle swim,

and 17:21.08 in the men’s 1650 yard freestyle swim. With these times, Zuniga saw himself place 17th in the 200-yard event and

“Having one guy make it shows the rest of them that it’s possible, Nothing is sacrificed without hard work.”  
- Jim McMillan

13th in both the 500-yard and 1650-yard events. His drive speaks to his early success in the program which has ultimately earned him the respect of Valley’s head coach, Jim McMillan.

“His work ethic is great,” said coach McMillan. “I pushed him pretty hard all year and he did great.” In making the postseason, the freshman is now a leader of the team, showing his teammates that through hard work, dedication, and a competitive spirit, they too can compete in the state competition. “Having one guy make it shows the rest of them that it’s possible,” McMillan said. “Nothing is sacrificed without hard work.”

The competitor felt fortunate to have earned the chance to swim in the contest against such stiff competition. “It was tough to compete against them,” said Zuniga. “I managed to try my best, and give it everything I had.” The 19-year-old is hopeful for next season, looking forward to sharpening his craft in the off-season, so he

can get the chance to compete in the title meet next year as well. Zuniga takes his standings in this year’s contest into account. “Next year I could be a lot faster to compete with more of them,” said coach McMillan. “I pushed him pretty hard all year and he did great.”



Read more at  
TheValleyStar.com



Taylor Cowhey for The Valley Star

Freshman Nick Zuniga poses fresh out of water during his weekly practice at Valley’s Aquatic Center.



Taylor Cowhey for The Valley Star

Outfielder Eddie Zapata tosses the ball moments before the beginning of an inning during the first night game. This is Zapata’s last year playing at Valley College.

Monarchs can Now Play Ball Under The Lights

The Valley College baseball field shines bright lights for night games.

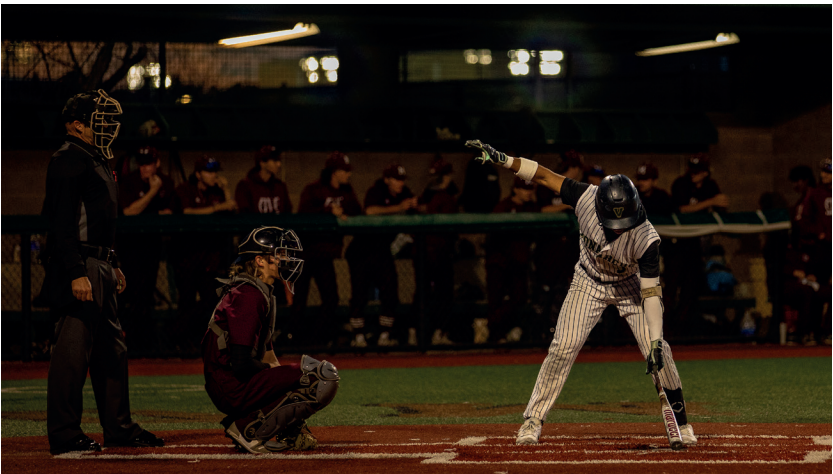
Alex Diaz,  
Sports Editor

LIGHTS, CAMERA, PLAY BALL! Valley College sets a new stage with lighting the baseball field. The Monarchs baseball field underwent a major transformation as it was illuminated with eight new lights, allowing the first night game to be played on April 25. Valley College introduced the Campus-wide Exterior Lighting Master Plan in 2010. After 14 years, the plan has finally been completed with the installation of lighting at the baseball field. “I’ve been here for 20 years, so the talk of it has been going on for years,” said Head Coach and Athletic Director Dave Mallas. “It is pretty exciting to have the back of the district and the administration at Valley College.” As the lights provide opportunities for evening games, they also bring in revenue and new communities to Valley College, with the hope of attracting high school teams and offering them chances to play under the lights. “Getting youth athletes on

campus and them having a great experience is what matters,” said President Barry Gribbons. “We will probably generate some revenue but it’s also all about being a part of the community.”

The first Major League game played under lights took place in 1930 during the Great Depression. As the lights were introduced to the minor leagues in 1935, it was considered to be the “savior of Minor League

made baseball the sport it is today was daytime games. Businessman Larry MacPhail wanted to challenge this idea. The entrepreneur believed that lighting could bring benefits to Major League Baseball by allowing more people to attend games and creating a new atmosphere. Some players believed that MacPhail’s proposal would bring about a drastic change to their daily routine. They were concerned that the lights might be too intense and affect their eyes, or not intense enough to properly illuminate a Major League stadium throughout the season. MacPhail preserved, and the first night game was played on May 24, 1935, at Crosley Field where the Cincinnati Reds beat the Philadelphia Phillies. After MacPhail spent the next decade working for the Dodgers and the Yankees, he left the sport in 1947. He was celebrated as one of baseball’s greatest innovators. In 2024, the MLB will play about two-thirds of its games under the lights.



Taylor Cowhey for The Valley Star

Right handed batter Dorian Asher prepares to swing under the lights at Valley’s first night game. Asher was an honorable mention in the Western State Conference.

Valley makes history with the installation of the lights as the only baseball program with lights. The MLB started with their first night game 89 years ago.

ball” due to the financial pressures of society at the time. Many were hesitant to adopt lights as baseball was considered the sport that revolved around the sun. What