



Calendar

DEC. 11

OCC Wind Ensemble Holiday Program, 6:30 p.m., College Center Ballroom B, Free admission

DEC. 13

Doug Bennett's Retirement Party, 2-4 p.m., College Center Ballrooms

DEC. 13 & 14

An Old Fashioned Christmas Melodrama & Ice Cream Social, 7 p.m., Drama Lab Theatre

DEC. 14 & 15

An Old Fashioned Christmas Melodrama & Ice Cream Social, 2:30 p.m., Drama Lab Theatre

DEC. 14

An Evening Chat with Broadway, 7:30 p.m., Robert B. Moore Theatre

DEC. 19-JAN. 1

Winter Break - Campus Closed

JAN. 2

Winter Intersession 2025 Begins



Travel OCC Debuted on Travel Tuesday

Prepare for your next group travel adventure with Travel OCC, Orange Coast College's on-campus, student-run travel agency. Travel OCC officially launched during a grand opening on Tuesday, December 3.

The grand opening coincided with Travel Tuesday – a national shopping event that offers consumers greater access to travel deals. The event kicked off with a welcome ceremony, followed by an open house. Attendees had the chance to explore the new space and gain exclusive access to Travel OCC's first travel deals.

"We are thrilled to see Travel OCC come to fruition," says Travel OCC Director Katherine Collette. "Travel OCC is so unique because we collaborate with students, faculty, staff and alumni to create and curate trips. Anything a full-service travel agency would do, we do it."

Travel OCC will be staffed entirely by student interns from the Hospitality, Travel, and Tourism program, providing them with the necessary internship hours to complete their program without leaving campus. The student interns will gain hands-on experience in running a full-service travel agency.

Revenue generated by Travel OCC will be reinvested into the program, funding scholarships, course materials, and other resources that directly benefit students.

Travel OCC will focus on group travel, prioritizing affordability and experience-based student travel.

"We're creating group trips that cater to student travel – at a good price point, featuring interesting destinations, and often local," says Collette. "Some of our travel deals won't require a passport, allowing students from different programs to come together for unique travel experiences."

OCC's Sylvia Mendez Wins Statewide Equity Champion Award

Sylvia Mendez, an alumna of Orange Coast College and a dedicated civil rights activist, has been selected as the recipient of the 2024 Alumni Equity Champion Award by the Community College League of California (CCLC). This recognition was presented at the CCLC's Annual Convention on November 22 in Burlingame, California.



"Sylvia Mendez's recognition as an honoree of the Alumni Equity Champion Award is especially significant as we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling and the recent passage of AB 1805, which requires schools in California to teach the *Mendez v. Westminster* case," says OCC President Angelica Suarez. "Her lifelong dedication to civil rights and ongoing commitment to social justice align directly with the values of Orange Coast College and the California Community Colleges."

The Alumni Equity Champion Award recognizes outstanding alumni who have made a significant impact by advancing equity and inclusion. This prestigious honor celebrates individuals whose leadership, advocacy, or initiatives have fostered positive change, dismantled barriers, and empowered underserved communities, exemplifying the values of diversity and social justice upheld by California Community Colleges.

Sylvia Mendez played an instrumental role in the groundbreaking *Mendez et al. v. Westminster* case. This triumph against racial segregation in California schools was a pivotal moment in the fight for civil rights. *Mendez v. Westminster* successfully ended de jure segregation in California, setting a precedent for the nation. The case was named after Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez, Sylvia Mendez's parents, who were at the forefront of the battle for equal education.

Today, Mendez continues to share her story and discuss civil rights, including a notable return to OCC. She continues her parents' legacy by advocating for quality education and encouraging students to stay in school. After working in the field for more than 30 years, she retired as a nurse.

Mendez earned an associate degree in nursing from Orange Coast College in 1964 and her bachelor of science degree in nursing from California State University, Los Angeles.

Orange Coast College Receives Sustainability Award for Campus to Table Project

Orange Coast College received the Excellence in Energy and Sustainability - Faculty/Student Initiative Award from the California Community Colleges Board of Governors during the November Board of Governors' meeting.

OCC was recognized for its multidisciplinary collaboration among marine science, horticulture, culinary arts, and food and beverage management programs. This effort aimed to introduce advanced agriculture techniques and created the Aquaponics Lab and the Campus to Table Project.

"We are honored to receive this Sustainability Award from the CCC Board of Governors, reflecting the dedication and innovative spirit of our college community," says OCC President Angelica Suarez. "Coast's reputation as a leader in sustainability and climate action is built on our commitment to multi-disciplinary collaboration and innovation that is evidenced through our rich traditions such as Green Coast Day. This award is not just a recognition of our efforts—it underscores our leadership in tackling some of the most pressing environmental challenges."

In 2020, OCC horticulture faculty and staff began considering upgrades to train students in sustainable agriculture techniques; simultaneously, the marine science program sought to teach students how to use aquaculture skills to promote sustainability. These interests merged to create the Aquaponics Lab, one of the most visible sustainability projects at OCC, which opened in early 2022. Aquaponics combines aquaculture (raising fish) and hydroponics (growing plants in water), creating a sustainable cycle to grow lettuce and tilapia.



At the Aquaponics Lab, marine science and horticulture students work together to produce 300 heads of lettuce with just one bucket of water daily. Culinary arts and food and beverage management students then use the produce at Captain's Table, OCC's student-run, casual-upscale restaurant. Additionally, the harvested produce is distributed to Pirates' Cove, OCC's on-campus food pantry, helping to address food insecurity among Coast students.

This year, OCC's Hot Food Team won regional and national recognition through the American Culinary Federation competitions for their "campus to table" menu, which included tilapia and greens sourced from the Aquaponics Lab.

Established in 2012, the Board of Governors Energy and Sustainability Awards are divided into four categories: Excellence in Energy and Sustainability - Climate Action Leadership; Excellence in Energy and Sustainability - Sustainability Champion; Excellence in Energy and Sustainability - Innovative Project; and Excellence in Energy and Sustainability - Faculty/Student Initiatives.

Justin Dion Selected as Director of OCC Waterfront Campus



Orange Coast College is pleased to welcome Justin Dion as the new Director of the Waterfront Campus.

Dion joined OCC from the East Coast, bringing valuable experience as a maritime professional on United States Navy and government cargo vessels. He is licensed as a U.S. Coast Guard Master 1600 GRT and Second Mate Unlimited, and has practical experience in the maritime industry.

"It is an honor to be named the next Director of the OCC Waterfront Campus," says Dion. "My maritime career has afforded me lifelong friends, unmatched professional development, and the opportunity to sail worldwide alongside dedicated maritime professionals. I am excited to move my maritime career ashore and contribute to the continued success of OCC's maritime programs."

For over eight years, Dion served as a Surface Warfare Officer in the U.S. Navy, where he held positions as the Strike Warfare Officer on USS Howard (DDG 83), Navigator on USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98) and as a case manager for the Navy Wounded Warrior program. Following his active duty service, he began sailing as a civilian mariner for Crowley Maritime Corporation, where he worked as 3rd

Officer on board USNS Stockham (T-AK-3017).

Dion's educational background includes a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the United States Naval Academy and a master's degree in business administration from Boston College.

"I am very excited to have Dion join our leadership team and look forward to his contributions," says Vice President of Instruction Dr. Tara Giblin.

OCC Dance Faculty Member Honored with Choreography Award

Orange Coast College part-time faculty dance instructor Zachary Groenewold was selected as the First Runner-Up at the Palm Desert Choreography Festival 2024. He was one of nine choreographers who presented their work on November 10 after submissions from over 100 applicants.

Groenewold entered the festival with his 2023 piece, "we're only as sick as our secrets," which he choreographed for OCC students as part of last year's annual Fall Faculty Dance Concert. This was his first time applying to the festival.

"Zach is what I tell my choreography students is a smart choreographer," says OCC dance department chair Rachel Berman. "He intuitively knows how to move bodies around in space and constantly comes up with innovative ideas and concepts. This work was also submitted for adjudication at the American College Dance Association's Baja conference last year and was selected for their culminating gala performance."



On each of the two nights, a panel of esteemed judges chose a Grand Prize winner and a First Runner-Up. Winners received prize money and a bouquet of flowers from the mayor of Palm Desert. Zach was honored as the First Runner-Up in the pre-professional division.

"It was an amazing weekend watching our students shine on a professional stage and for Zach to be honored!" says Berman.



OCC Marketing & PR Department Wins 12 Regional NCMPR Awards

Orange Coast College's marketing and public relations department won 12 Medallion Awards at the National Council of Marketing and Public Relations District 6 annual conference and awards ceremony held on November 7 in Tucson, Arizona.

The Medallion Awards recognize outstanding communication achievement at community and technical colleges throughout the U.S. OCC is part of the NCMPR's District 6, which includes Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Utah, and Guam.

Coast was recognized with three gold, four silver, and five bronze awards for creative work produced during the 2023-2024 academic year. OCC won gold awards for the sailing schedule, a video promoting an OCC Doyle exhibition, and a social media post highlighting the student-built house. The College also nabbed silver awards for the professional mariner schedule, OC Children's Book Festival webpage, a staff spotlight, and the Aquaponics Lab Tour social media video. OCC took home five bronze awards in the "Video," "Microsite/Landing Page" and "Social Media" categories, including the OCC Pirate Athletics video and OCC Performing Arts landing page.

"Each year, we gather at NCMPR's district 6 conference to join our peers from community colleges across the Western United States and engage in collaborative learning and recognition of successful marketing and public relations campaigns and projects," said Director of Marketing and Public Relations Juan Gutierrez. "OCC's marketing team is consistently recognized as one of the best in community college marketing and PR for their publications, video, graphic design, and photography efforts, and this year was no exception."

Mr. OCC: The Heart of the OCC Foundation Retiring After Nearly Four Decades

Doug Bennett, the first-ever Executive Director of the Orange Coast College Foundation, is retiring after nearly four decades of dedicated service.

As the driving force behind the OCC Foundation, Bennett has been the vital link between the College's aspirations and the community's generosity. He has steadily guided the growth and development of the Foundation while raising millions of dollars for student scholarships, programs and special projects.

Affectionately known as Mr. OCC, Bennett embodies the school spirit of Orange Coast College. His love and enthusiasm for the College are palpable. You can often find him wearing OCC gear, attending athletics games, participating in campus events and sharing his extensive institutional knowledge.

His first major campaign occurred in 1989 when he led efforts to remodel the Robert B. Moore Theatre, originally built in the mid-1950s. The successful campaign resulted in significant improvements, including adding air conditioning and upgraded acoustics.

"Back then, some people didn't really understand why I was hired and what my role was, but when they saw what we were able to achieve with the Moore Theatre, it gave us credibility because we were successful," Bennett explained.

Since then, under his leadership, the Foundation has raised millions of dollars through scholarships, grants and partnerships. However, it's not solely about the money; it's about fostering a community of support. Bennett works tirelessly to cultivate relationships that benefit the College and the broader community.

Bennett's achievements range from securing donations of boats and equipment to million-dollar gifts, even an island in Canada. Yet, his proudest moment was securing a grant to support foster youth at the College, which eventually evolved into the Guardian Scholars program we see today.

"For me, it's crucial to focus on how our work helps students and how the gifts people make change student lives," he stated.

