



VENTURA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VCCCD Celebrates LGBTQIA+ Students at Lavender Graduation

Moorpark, Oxnard, and Ventura colleges' students honored at first-time ceremony

Camarillo, Calif. (May 8, 2023) — In concert with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts on our four campuses, the Ventura County Community College District hosted its inaugural Lavender Graduation, which honored graduating LGBTQIA+ students. The districtwide ceremony was held Apr. 28 and was open to all students identifying as LGBTQIA+ who attend Moorpark, Oxnard, and Ventura colleges and Ventura College East Campus. Family, friends, and other supporters were invited as well.

The event included student and community speakers and the presentation of lavender stoles to our graduates. It honored the achievements and success of LGBTQIA+ students of all nationalities, genders, and ethnicities, while acknowledging the systemic obstacles that impact these students at higher rates. LGBTQIA+ students report their education being disproportionately impacted by homelessness, reduced sense of safety, and discrimination, among other concerns, than their non-LGBTQIA+ peers, according to a 2021 report by the US Department of Education.

“Serving our LGBTQIA+ community runs at the heart of our mission to build a more inclusive and prosperous Ventura County,” shared Dr. Oscar Cobian, interim president of Oxnard College, who spearheaded the project with a committee of students, district employees and staff from community organizations. “Oxnard College is immeasurably enriched and strengthened by the daily contributions of our LGBTQIA+ students and employees, which is why we’re honored to host this inaugural Lavender Graduation ceremony on our beautiful campus.”

The first Lavender Graduation was held at the University of Michigan in 1995. Professor Dr. Ronni Sanlo was inspired to create the event to celebrate the achievements of LGBTQIA+ students after she was unable to attend her own children’s graduations due to her sexual orientation. In the years since, over 200 colleges nationwide have joined the tradition of holding Lavender (or Rainbow) Graduations.

The color lavender is a reclaimed symbol of pride for LGBTQIA+ rights activists after formerly being weaponized against those who did not conform to gender norms. LGBTQIA+ graduation celebrations use this color as a representation of pride, legacy, and connection to the global LGBTQIA+ community.

“Our LGBTQIA+ students are invaluable to our campuses, and this event was an opportunity for us to show our appreciation and support for their accomplishments,” said Bernardo M. Perez, Chair of the Ventura County Community College District Board of Trustees. “They are making a great impact in this world, and their identities, experiences, and unique perspectives help our communities to flourish.”

The Ventura County Community College District prioritizes the support and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ students throughout the year. Some of these efforts include support groups, campus clubs, mental health services, resource centers, Pride Month events, and employee trainings, among others.

For more information about the Lavender Graduation ceremony, [visit the LGBTQIA+ webpage](#).

About Ventura County Community College District

The Ventura County Community College District is a member of the 116-campus California Community College system and serves approximately 30,000 students annually. The District's three colleges—Moorpark, Oxnard and Ventura—offer programs in general education for degrees and certificates, transfer to four-year colleges and universities, career technical education and provide opportunities to engage in co-curricular campus activities. For more information, visit vcccd.edu.

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