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## 4CD Celebrates Newly Tenured Faculty and Classified Professional of the Year

At the April 15 Governing Board meeting, the Contra Costa Community College District (4CD) hosted its 20th Annual Reception honoring the Classified Professional of the Year, **Arturo Torres**, Custodian II, from Diablo Valley College, and newly tenured faculty for 2026, including:

### **Contra Costa College**

Leslie Allums  
Anton El Khoury  
Matthew Lee  
Christopher (CJ) Price

### **Diablo Valley College**

Kaitlin Bove  
Chien-I Chiang  
Daniel Cornejo-Warner  
Marisabel Etter  
Mona Khabiri  
Emmanuel Perez  
Jeffrey Pollock  
Aaron Prater  
Amber Shields  
Todd Steffan  
Frederick Vincent

### **Los Medanos College**

Jennifer Finnigan  
Nicholas Gale  
Benaz Mendewala  
Linda Riley  
John Schall

Each honoree received a certificate from their college president and was congratulated by the Governing Board.



## CCC Student Selected for Statewide Leadership Award

Contra Costa College (CCC) student Ode Tso Kunthar was recognized by the California Community College Chancellor's Office with the Student Leadership Award, which was established to recognize a commitment to outstanding leadership in college and service in the broader community.



Ode is a political science student, a former dual enrollment student, and a Tibetan refugee whose advocacy is deeply personal and profoundly impactful. She serves as president of the CCC Associated Student Union and as Legislative Affairs director for Region III of the SSSCC. She also co-directs the SSSCC's statewide work on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Anti Racism, and Accessibility. Her leadership extends even further: she chairs the SSSCC Land Acknowledgement Task Force, served as a student representative on the California Community Colleges AI Council, and sits on the Richmond Youth Council. She also volunteers with Dear Asian Youth, refugee aid organizations, and Tibetan advocacy groups.

## Ethnic Studies Summit Draws Hundreds

The 3rd annual 4CD Ethnic Studies Summit drew hundreds of students and faculty to Los Medanos College on April 17. This year's theme—*The Future of Ethnic*

*Studies: Student Empowerment through Community Activism and Solidarity*—centered on students and the transformative possibilities that emerge when education, activism, and community partnerships come together.

The event featured student presentations from programs such as Puenete and Honors, emphasizing the role of lived experience in learning. Attendees also took part in interactive workshops and panels that explored the impact of ethnic studies in education and beyond. LMC ethnic studies professor **Dr. Adrianna Simone** presented a workshop, titled "Like Falling In Love: Ethnic Studies as Opportunities for Life," which explored her academic journey and underscored the wide-ranging career possibilities within the field.

A keynote presentation and student-led performances, including spoken word poetry, underscored the power of storytelling and self-expression. The summit concluded with a reflective closing ceremony that invited participants to acknowledge community, place, and shared learning.



## Los Medanos College Hosts Farmworkers' Legacy Celebration

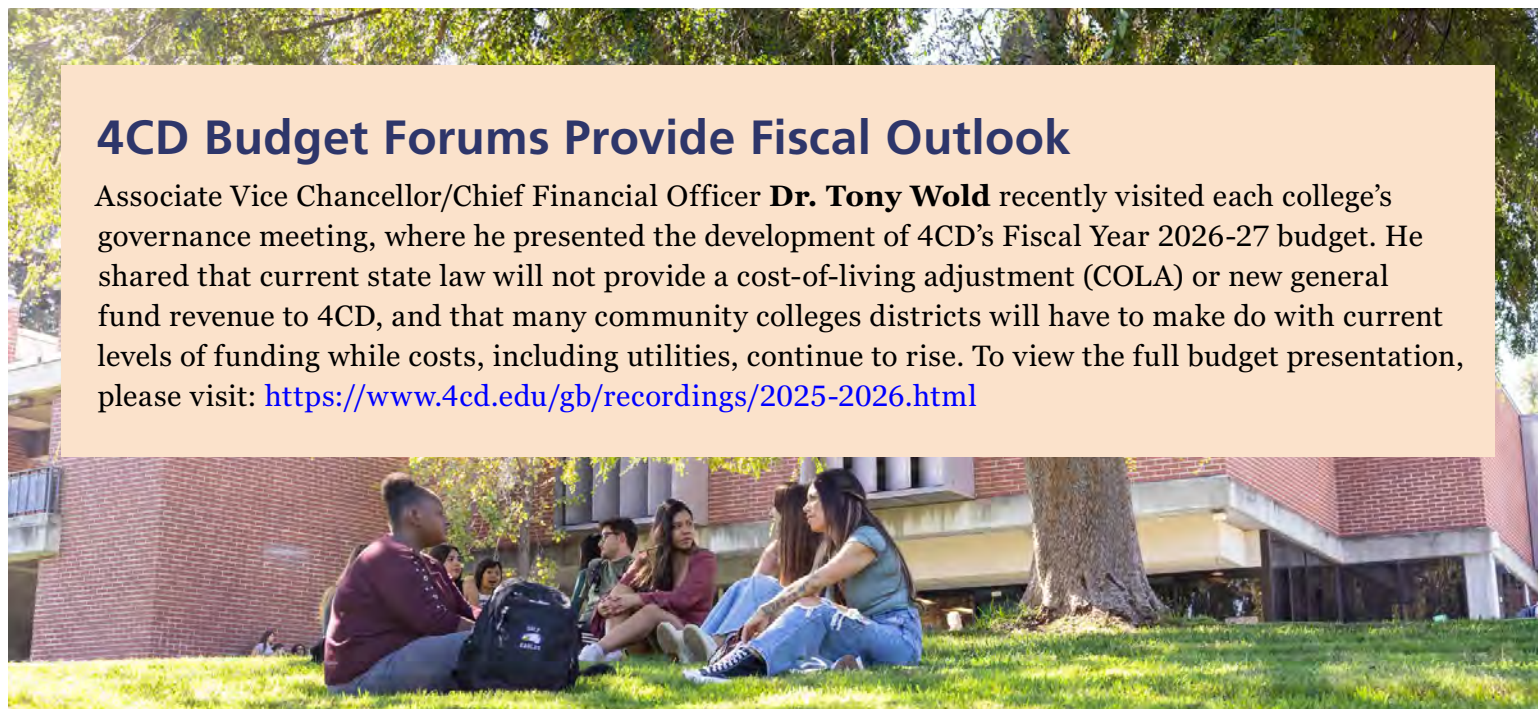
Los Medanos College (LMC) hosted the La Fuerza del Pueblo: Farmworkers' Movement Legacy Awards on April 3, recognizing community members, educators, and students whose leadership and service reflects the enduring values of the farmworkers' movement. The celebration highlighted commitment to service, equity, advocacy, and social justice across East Contra Costa County.

The La Fuerza del Pueblo Spirit Award recognized emerging student leaders who made a significant impact through advocacy and service. Honorees included Natalia Longoria, an LMC student and president of the Puente Club, for her leadership and community outreach; Juan Rubio, an Antioch High School student, for founding the Youthful Hearts United Club and engaging peers in service; and Salvador Velazquez, LMC Associated Students president, for representing student voices at the state and federal levels and advocating for affordable, high-quality education and basic needs support.

The Exemplary Community Service Award was presented to Maria Reyes, a longtime community organizer and community health education manager for La Clínica de la Raza. Reyes was honored for more than two decades of service advancing health education, outreach, and access to care for underserved populations, including her leadership during the COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

Two educators received the East County Educator Award for their dedication to student success and equity. Elizabeth Cruz Gonzalez, an English teacher at Liberty High School, was recognized for her advocacy for multilingual learners and her leadership in building stronger connections between students, families, and community partners. Italo Rossi, an Antioch High School Biology and Human Anatomy/Physiology teacher, was honored for his 23-year career inspiring students to pursue higher education and careers in science through inclusive and engaging teaching practices.





## 4CD Budget Forums Provide Fiscal Outlook

Associate Vice Chancellor/Chief Financial Officer **Dr. Tony Wold** recently visited each college's governance meeting, where he presented the development of 4CD's Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget. He shared that current state law will not provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) or new general fund revenue to 4CD, and that many community colleges districts will have to make do with current levels of funding while costs, including utilities, continue to rise. To view the full budget presentation, please visit: <https://www.4cd.edu/gb/recordings/2025-2026.html>

## 4CD Welcomes New Employees

Please welcome the following new employees who were approved by the Governing Board in April.

### Los Medanos College

Faculty

Devin Toma, Disabled Student Programs and Services Counselor

Contra Costa Community College District  
500 Court Street, Martinez, CA 94553

The News, 4CD Employee Newsletter

District publications are posted online at  
<https://www.4cd.edu/crpa/the-news/index.html>

Your comments and suggestions are welcome.  
E-mail the Communications and Community  
Relations Office at [info@4cd.edu](mailto:info@4cd.edu).

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**Community News**



Contra Costa Community College District is committed to equal opportunity in educational programs, employment, and campus life. The District does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, marital status, national origin, parental status, race, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in any access to and treatment in College programs, activities, and application for employment.