

Accolade

Spring 2025

MEET THE PRESIDENT

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EMBRACING AI

Grant allows the opportunity to
garner awareness and inspiration
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A publication of the



Board President's Message



SOMETHING I THINK WE ALL HAVE

IN COMMON is that we carry a torch for Cochise College. Whether it's because of a personal educational experience, our volunteer or employment service that's given us a unique perspective, or our admiration of its mission and position in the community, we collectively applaud this institution and want it to succeed.

As you'll see in this issue, the torch is being passed, or, rather, shared. New faces are filling three of five Governing Board positions, the president's office, and the vice president for academics' office. Luckily, their predecessors have set the college up for further success. Its reputation for quality and innovation is due in no small part to the dedicated leaders who have served before them.

The changes to our Governing Board are noteworthy. Special respect and gratitude goes to trustee emeritus Jane Strain for 27-plus years on the board. She, accompanied by her colleagues and retirees Dennis Nelson and Tim Quinn (along with tenured board members David DiPeso and Don Hudgins) have established high standards of service to the college, and I congratulate them all. I look forward to working with Stephanie Money and Stephen Leeder as we seek to keep Cochise College accessible but also innovative. I wish Dr. Sheena Brown all the best as she works with deans and faculty to light the fire of knowledge and curiosity among students.

I welcome Dr. James Perey as he leads the institution in the next step of its journey. I feel compelled to point out that he has school-age children who will be poised in a few years to attend Cochise College. The leaders named in this letter are working for their futures as much as they are working for those of all our current and future students.

Despite the rapid and unpredictable changes taking place in education circles, I hope that reading about these folks and the other activities at Cochise College inspires hope and pride in you as it does in me. Thank you, as always, for your unwavering and important support.

*Larry Borger
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: New Cochise College president, James Perey, Ed.D. Photo by Hamah Whaley.



From the Cochise College President

ON FEBRUARY 15, I OFFICIALLY BEGAN MY TENURE AS THE 12TH PRESIDENT OF COCHISE COLLEGE.

Over the past several months, I've had the privilege of meeting with faculty, staff, students, and community leaders. Their passion and dedication to the college's mission has been truly inspiring.

I was drawn to Cochise by its reputation for quality and innovation. Since 1964, Cochise College has shaped lives, communities, and the economy and remained committed to providing affordable, high-quality education. What makes Cochise College so impactful goes far beyond cost savings. The college offers life-changing opportunities for students, many of whom do not realize the full value of their decision to enroll until they experience the dedicated support from our instructors, advisors, and staff. What's more, one student's education can impact the outlook of families and generations, and that makes our work even more meaningful.

Cochise College is at the forefront of innovation in education, redefining what accessible learning can achieve. Through

strong partnerships and your support, we are preparing students for in-demand, well-paying careers in fields like healthcare, aviation, law enforcement, cybersecurity, and skilled trades. We are also introducing exciting new programming in electric vehicle service, viticulture, first responder training, and customized corporate education. These offerings reflect the college's commitment to evolving alongside industry trends and the needs of our community.

For many students - past and present - choosing Cochise College wasn't just a good option; it became their best decision ever. I'm proud to be part of it and thankful for your ongoing dedication to keeping the college accessible to all and affordable by our diverse and changing communities.

*James Perey, Ed.D.
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Event raises \$25,000 for scholarships



UP TO 50 STUDENTS will have improved access to a Cochise College education because proceeds from the fifth annual Pathway to \$150k Challenge will be directed to scholarships.

The virtual run/walk or cycle event gave participants an outlet for their wellness efforts and raised funds for the Senior Scholarship, the Non-Traditional Student Scholarship, and Emergency Scholarships. Participants recorded more than 12,200 miles during the month of

March and earned prize drawing entries for distance milestones achieved.

The Cochise College Foundation wishes to thank all who participated, including numerous employees of Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative and Cochise College, along with the following sponsors. Plans are already underway for the 2026 event. To learn more, search Pathway to \$150k at runsignup.com.

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New leader undaunted by changes in higher ed

THE POTENTIAL CLOSURE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,

a redirect of accreditation, perceived threats to academic freedom, major changes to financial aid, and the introduction of new technology have caused uncertainty in the environment in which colleges and universities operate. So it would be easy to think that the future is not especially bright.

Fortunately, uncharted territory doesn't scare Dr. James Perey, who became the 12th president of Cochise College on Feb. 16. Rather, he embraces it.

Prior to his appointment, Perey served for several years as the college's executive vice president for academics. He also spent about 20 years at Arizona's Yavapai College, where he last served as the associate vice president for strategic initiatives, guiding strategic priorities and goals that focused on student success. He was attracted to Cochise because of its reputation, and because it was moving in some innovative directions with curriculum.

Perey hails from the Arizona community of Mayer, so it's not a stretch for him to understand how a rural county works, and that creative thinking might be necessary in order to meet its needs. What he saw happening at Cochise was an effort by the college to partner to "grow its own" workforce in the county, including simulation as a mechanism to develop and reinforce skills, and a focus on first responders.

"Having grown up in rural communities and taught most of my career in rural communities by choice, I think I understand first hand the barriers that our students face," Perey says. "It pushes me to advocate for students where they are. I thought I could add value and contribute to the overall mission."

After graduating from high school, Perey decided that he wasn't ready to seriously pursue higher education. He enlisted in the U.S. Army, did basic training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and completed a tour in Korea. His three years of service started shortly after Operations Desert Shield and Desert



MORE ON DR. PEREY

- ▶ Dr. Perey serves on the American Association of Community Colleges' Commission for Small and Rural Colleges.
- ▶ He is a graduate of the project CENTRL leadership program, the Harvard Institute for Management and Leadership in Education, and the Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship.
- ▶ He is the county representative for the Southern Arizona Sports, Tourism, and Film Authority board.
- ▶ Dr. Perey lives in Sierra Vista with his wife, Jessica, and two daughters, Hayden and Brooke, who attend Sierra Vista Public Schools.
- ▶ In addition to spending time with family, Dr. Perey enjoys tinkering in the garage, whether he's rebuilding a carburetor or working on his 1971 Toyota Land Cruiser. The mountains and the outdoors recharge his batteries and he loves to hike and bike.
- ▶ Dr. Perey advises students to find their calling at the intersection of what they love, what they're good at, and what the world needs, as well as to try new things, embrace failure, and know that Cochise College is here to help.

Storm. Perey's time in the Army taught him resilience, discipline and the importance of teamwork.

The influence of his father, who was a high school agriculture teacher, and the Future Farmers of America (FFA) resonated with him, so after leaving the Army, he studied agriculture education at the University of Arizona. Perey witnessed how education could change lives, and he wanted to be part of helping others follow a path toward success.

In addition to a bachelor's of science in agriculture education, Perey holds a master of arts in educational leadership from Northern Arizona University and a doctorate of education in organizational leadership from Grand Canyon University. His experience in education spans 28 years, beginning with teaching in the K-12 system. He is especially passionate about the transformative role community colleges play in improving lives and enriching communities.

"I am drawn to the idea that education not only impacts a single person's life, but a family's life, a generation's life," Perey says. "In many cases, community colleges are the first or only opportunity for a student to pursue higher education and to help create the life they want."

Perey's vision is that the college is positioned to be a model for the 21st century and beyond. Over the course of the next five years, he expects to lead the college in connecting deeply with the communities it serves while continuing to develop pathways for K-12 students, workforce training and university transfer. He's excited about new technologies and teaching students to use AI responsibly (See related story on Page 14), and he's undaunted by shake-ups on the national stage, instead stating that the college will find a way to work through challenges.

"He's looking for solutions, not problems," says Serena Westbrook, who previously served as Perey's administrative assistant and describes him as tenacious, high energy, consistent and forward looking. "Someone else might be exasperated by unknown territory, but he embraces it."

Perey describes his approach as collaborative and mission driven. His experiences as faculty, associate dean, and vice president have given him a comprehensive understanding of how colleges work and, more importantly, how people work. Engaging individuals in discussions is important to him, since ideas often come from those closest to the work.

Since his arrival, Perey has been involved in the development of bachelor's degrees in



ACCREDITATION TOP PRIORITY FOR ACADEMIC VP



DR. PEREY'S SHIFT into the college presidency left an important seat to be filled, that of the vice president of academics. With reaccreditation on the horizon, that hole is being filled on an interim basis by Dr. Sheena Brown, who first joined the college as the dean of academic affairs in 2022. Brown had already been leading the charge on the institution's report to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), so her appointment means continuity and expertise for the project.

Dr. Brown has a strong record of leadership in academic affairs, accreditation, and strategic planning. In addition to reaccreditation, she also oversees institutional effectiveness, curriculum and program development, and student success initiatives.

A graduate of the University of Arizona (M.P.H.) and New Zealand's University of Otago (B.S., Ph.D.), Dr. Brown has led cross-functional teams through accreditation self-studies, program reviews, and data-informed planning processes that support both academic and institutional improvement. She is deeply committed to fostering inclusive, student-centered environments and values collaboration across departments and communities.

"I am proud to serve the students and communities of Cochise County and dedicated to advancing initiatives that promote student success and strengthen the college's mission."

leadership, management and operations and nursing, as well as the finalization of a dental assistant certificate program. He's developed relationships that helped secure a significant bequest that will create a new viticulture program, as well as others that may lead to new workforce training.

Top priorities at Cochise College include advancing strategic initiatives that position the institution for long-term success and impact. These efforts are anchored by preparations for the 2026 Higher Learning Commission accreditation visit and the development of a documented, yet adaptable, two- to three-year strategic direction document with key priorities and strategic initiatives. These initiatives will be informed by an environmental scan and a comprehensive economic impact study of the college and its service area. Together, these initiatives will guide decision-making, align resources with institutional priorities, and ensure the college remains responsive to the evolving educational and workforce needs of the region.

The college has a really strong foundation, and great faculty, staff and students who bring energy to everything they do, Perey says. But he also sees chances to grow as each of the very different Cochise County communities evolves, whether it's in programming or student engagement.

"I'm extremely honored to serve as the 12th president of Cochise College. This is a very special place with a special mission. I'm committed to building on the college's strong foundation and working beside our students, employees and community to continue building a brighter future for the college and ensure that it remains a strong pillar of what makes the county thrive and a leader in accessible, high-quality education."

Leadership changes at Governing Board level

TWO MEMBERS RELOCATE, ANOTHER RETIRES

Five individuals representing Cochise County precincts serve on the elected Cochise College Governing Board. Changes in membership are placing new volunteers in seats held by their predecessors for at least 10 years and are bringing new passion and expertise to the board.



Jane Strain left the board in June to move closer to family. She became Cochise College's longest-serving Governing Board member in 2024, the same year she was inducted into the Arizona Veterans

Hall of Fame, which recognized her outstanding efforts and achievements in service to the community outside of military service. Having been appointed in 1998 and re-elected five times, Strain's passion is civic engagement that results in an improved society. She was named trustee emeritus at her final board meeting in June.

"Education will do that. Ensuring that our veterans and their families are treated with respect and receive all the benefits they have earned and deserve will do that. Our family pets are important as a component of our mental health."

The list of organizations Strain has served mirrors this personal mission statement. She spent 22 years in the military and moved to Sierra Vista in 1992, marrying Bob Strain, a mayor of Sierra Vista and former college foundation board member who passed away in 2022, on March 21, 1999. She's a former director of the Coronado Chapter of the Surviving Spouse Advisory Council of the Military Officer Association of America and is committed to the Arizona Coalition of Military Families. She spent four years raising funds for a mobile unit for the Nancy J. Brua Animal Control Center in Sierra Vista. She has been a volunteer,

mediator and arbitrator for Cochise County, where she learned to listen, identify others' motivations, and ask questions without generating conflict. She was named woman of the year by the Sierra Vista Boys & Girls Club and was honored on the Veterans Wall at Canyon Vista Medical Center by the Legacy Foundation of Southeast Arizona.

During her time as a Governing Board member, she has appreciated the pride and joy of serving the community college population of students, and the excellent leadership of college presidents Dr. Karen Nicodemus, Dr. J.D. Rottweiler and now Dr. James Perey.

"All graduation ceremonies are powerful memories of all the graduates' smiling faces. Cochise College is THE best community college in the universe!"

Strain's sons work for the U.S. Forest Service and UPS in another state, and she announced her plans to relocate there at the May Governing Board meeting. Because her elected term has not concluded, Strain's replacement in the sprawling Precinct 3 that includes north and west Sierra Vista and Huachuca City will be appointed by the Cochise County superintendent of schools at a later date.

The departures of Strain and two other members come after they participated in one of the governing body's most important acts - the selection of a college president (See related story on Page 5.)



Dennis Nelson represented Precinct 5 (southwest Cochise County, including Bisbee) from 2012 until his second term ended in December 2024. Nelson chose not to run again. Bisbee's Stephanie Money is filling his seat and participated in her first board meeting in January.



Stephanie Money, whose background is in finance and hospitality, is passionate about community service.

"After living in eight different states and traveling extensively, I've called Bisbee home for 20 years and have come to recognize Cochise County as truly exceptional. Having put down deep roots here, I'm eager to increase my involvement in our community."

Concern about the state of higher education in America also drove Money to become actively engaged. While America still offers world-class opportunities, she says, rising costs and competitive admissions have transformed it into what feels like a luxury good, placing it out of reach for many. Meanwhile, Cochise's affordable opportunities and vocational training offer vital pathways to success that should be celebrated.

Money says her primary motivation is ensuring every student in Cochise County understands these opportunities are available to them. A university graduate herself, she now believes attending a community college first would have benefited her tremendously in terms of the cost and time invested toward completion. It's a perspective she hopes will be beneficial to the institution.

"I want to help identify and remove obstacles—whether financial or situational—that prevent potential students from attending. By investing in our next generation and developing our most valuable resource—our people—we enhance quality of life across our entire community, from security to infrastructure to healthcare."

In addition to serving as the vice president of RD Revenue Inc., she is the treasurer for Step Up Bisbee/Naco and an active volunteer with the

Friends of the Truman Foundation in Washington, D.C., and the Bisbee Coalition for the Homeless. She also runs her own bookkeeping business.



Tim Quinn represented Precinct 4 (a populated area of Sierra Vista south of Highway 90 and Fry Boulevard) from 2015 until 2025, when he moved out of the area. Filling his seat is

Stephen Leeder, who recently retired after 28 years as a U.S. Army civilian and 10 years as an active-duty officer. Leeder was the director of doctrine and chief of doctrine and collective training as part of the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence (USAICoE). His passion for education stems from his mother's career training nurses, his bachelor's degree in history from West Virginia University, his children's education, his daughter's call to teach high school, and his wife's career at Buena High School and the USAICoE.

"I am honored to join the phenomenal team that comprises Cochise College and excited to make a contribution to the college's mission and vision."



David DiPeso ('73) is the most tenured member remaining on the board. He was appointed to represent Precinct 1 (northern Cochise County) in 2005, having previously served on the Cochise College Foundation board of directors.



Don Hudgins, who represents Precinct 2 (southeastern Cochise County to include Douglas and Tombstone) was appointed in 2018 and re-elected in 2022.

New facilities open at Sierra Vista Campus



THE OPENING OF TWO FACILITIES

in recent months has made new services available at the Sierra Vista Campus.

The college cut the ribbon on an indoor Firearms Training Complex in December by inviting the public to observe local law enforcement officials testing it out. The building contains eight-lane and 12-lane ranges, each 25 yards long. It also includes a 20-station cleaning room, an armory work room with vice, tools and a vent, secured armory storage and 24 lockers. Users can even practice shooting from a car. The ranges allow for practice with handguns up to .45 caliber, as well as BB guns, air rifles, air pistols, .22 caliber rifles, and a maximum of 5.56 or .308 rifles.

The complex is not currently open to the public. Users need to be with an agency that has secured time at the range or taking a Cochise College firearms class.

Currently, five local and federal government agencies use the facility. The range is also being used by students enrolled in the Southeast Arizona Law Enforcement Training Academy (SEALETA) at Cochise, as well as Cochise College Center for Lifelong Learning (CLL) pistol classes. This

spring and early summer, CLL offered Basic Pistol Levels 2-4, Personal Protection in the Home, and Basic Pistol Fundamentals. The college seeks to expand course offerings to include cleaning and a concealed carry weapons (CCW) class, among others.

The college covered about half the cost of the complex, with the other half provided via a state appropriation through the office of Sen. David Gowan ('02).

A bequest from Bisbee resident George Bugen funded a major portion of a new residence hall that now houses a number of the SEALETA cadets. The two-story Bugen Hall opened on the northeast side of the campus in January. It can house 45 students in suite-style units plus a hall director. The residence hall includes laundry facilities and group study areas. It is the first to open at the Sierra Vista Campus, and residents have access to faculty and classes, as well as on-campus services and amenities, including food. Currently, hall and meal rates differ between the Douglas and Sierra Vista campuses due to the different offerings at each location.

Viticulture program to meet local industry needs

SOME 74 PERCENT of the wine grapes grown in Arizona have their roots in Cochise County. So when the friends of long-time AJ's Fine Foods master sommelier Ann Marie Stephens decided her legacy ought to be remembered, they turned to Cochise College. The college developed a viticulture curriculum to offer the Ann Marie Stephens Viticulture Program at the Douglas Campus upon receipt of gifts and a pledge.

Cochise County is home to the Willcox American Viticulture Area, a designated region for growing wine grapes that provides an official appellation for the benefit of consumers and winners. The county counts a dozen vineyards and multiple tasting rooms, providing exciting opportunities for students to participate in an emerging industry. The college's program aims to

meet local industry demand for skilled workers while also supporting sustainable farming practices and innovative wine production techniques. In addition to hands-on learning and authentic experiences, students will learn both the scientific and artistic aspects of the wine industry, preparing them for careers in vineyard management, winery operations, sales and marketing. They'll also have access to local venues that can provide practical experience and exposure to industry professionals.

Stephens' gifts are expected to provide for a faculty position and cover program startup and marketing costs, as well as scholarships, internship opportunities and professional development. The future may include a viticulture facility.

A career-ready student fashion show was held in February. Students that participated were provided with clothing hand-selected by stylists at Dillard's, based on each individual's tastes and personality.



Other new efforts serve community need

RESPONDING TO A REQUEST

for Arizona Department of Economic Quality testing within the county, the Cochise College Benson Center served as the location for ADEQ Operator certification testing in April, drawing an unexpected 39 participants and opening the door for more testing in the future.

In addition, the college offered Occupational Safety and Health Administration 10-hour training for the City of Douglas in May as it prepared to work with contractors to begin construction on a new port of entry. Double the number of anticipated registrants signed up for the course.

The Center for Lifelong Learning is offering a one-day orientation in July for a five-day,

in-person Project Management Professional (PMP)® Certification Bootcamp in August. The course fulfills the 35-hour education requirement needed to qualify for the PMP exam, one of the most respected certifications in the field. "We were asked to bring this opportunity to Cochise County, and we're excited to offer training that prepares individuals for the globally recognized PMP certification," said Ana Smith, CLL director. "PMP-certified professionals report earning up to 33 percent more than their non-certified counterparts. This course is not only academic—it's professional development and a career accelerator."

Celebrating COCHISE COLLEGE

The logo features a large red '60' with '1964' above the '0' and '2024' below it. A black banner with the word 'YEARS' in white is positioned between the '0' and the 'COCHISE COLLEGE' text.





Leading the wAI

COCHISE EMBRACES NEW METHODS TO SET STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS

ON A CHILLY SPRING SEMESTER

MORNING prior to the busy end of the school year, Dr. Jose Antonio Bowen stood in the Sierra Vista Campus Community Room and delivered a message of optimism about artificial intelligence (AI) in the classroom. Bowen, known for his work on innovative teaching strategies, is the author of “Teaching with AI.” He was on campus to inspire teachers and administrators to embrace AI as a growing reality of the workforce and to prepare students accordingly.

Local employers already ask how the college is teaching AI, and Bowen’s public workshop in March attracted more than 100 people. It was part of the college’s AI literacy campaign, an initiative supported by a \$20,000 grant from Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative Foundation. The campaign, led by the academic affairs office, is a 1.5-year program offering resources, training and a supportive community to help educators confidently and responsibly integrate GenAI into their teaching. It also seeks to create clear expectations for AI proficiency from elementary school through college to ensure students are workforce ready, according to Cochise College Instructional Designer Wendy Ashby.

“In five years, AI will be so ubiquitous that it’s inevitable,” Ashby was quoted in Herald/Review Media. “The question is: Do we get out ahead of it or get dragged behind it?”

The college has chosen the former and is pursuing a multi-pronged approach to reimagine classrooms at Cochise and beyond. It is in the first of three phases:

Understanding AI, Using AI to Teach, and Evaluating AI Teaching Products. The county’s school personnel are invited to participate. In addition to Bowen’s workshop, Phase 1 includes reading circles with books funded by the SSVEC grant, and development of an AI instructional toolkit. Phase 2 involves more hands-on how-to, pedagogy, reimagination of teaching strategies and developing student AI literacy. The third phase will train educators to critically evaluate AI-generated teaching resources and involves analysis discussion groups focused on improving AI teaching and learning strategies.

Many students already use AI, but, as Ashby points out, they may not have the life experience to recognize unreliable sources. In addition, 80 percent of U.S. jobs already have been impacted by AI, and up to 20 percent of workers will need to rely on AI for more than half of their jobs in the near future, according to the college website.

Ashby said the college hopes to foster dialogue between K-12 and college-level educators to establish AI performance measures for students as they progress through the school system. It’s about ensuring that by the time students reach college, they already have a foundational understanding of AI, so the college can build on that knowledge to prepare them for the workforce, Ashby said.

“We have to be teaching AI in order for our students to be competitive in society and in the job market,” Ashby said. “They need to know the ethics, possibilities and limits.”



Student Accolades



Cochise College awarded 1,301 associate's degrees and 874 certificates during 2024-2025. More than 350 walked at commencement. About 30 students celebrated successful completion of the high school equivalency, and 40 participated in the nursing pinning in May.



Donald Reay ('66), Laura Howard Kull ('81), Jackie Howard Underwood ('78) and Mike Hand ('81) all attended the Douglas Campus and served as marshals for the 60th commencement ceremony there.

MAY GRADUATE AUTTUM SMITH is spending her summer working alongside top cancer researchers at the University of Arizona thanks to her selection for the American Cancer Society Summer Internship Program. Smith, a past recipient of the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative Scholarship, has aspirations of becoming a physician scientist, an ambition that grew when she explored ethnobotany in the college's undergraduate research program. As part of the summer program, she will receive one-on-one mentorship and a stipend, and she will conduct real-world applications in cancer science and treatment. Smith already holds three healthcare certificates in medical assistant, EKG technician and phlebotomy.



Student Accolades continued



STUDENTS BOLANILE RICHARDSON

(left), Miguel Ruiz, Alma Buelna, Gisela Orozco and Isaiah James, along with three employees (not pictured), attended the 30th Annual Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) Capitol Forum in Washington, D.C. in April. The college's Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) Committee interviews and selects students to represent the institution at the event, with a focus on positive advocacy for resources that support student success. Arizona was one of 24 states represented. Students took part in the Student Track to learn how to advocate for HSIs, with particular focus on student success, mental health resources, and workforce development. Students were offered advocacy training and opportunities to present policy recommendations to lawmakers. They also visited monuments and historic sites.

The Arizona delegation, which included participants from Pima and Yavapai community colleges and the three state universities, visited the offices of Congressman Ruben Gallego, Congressman Juan Ciscomani, and Senator Mark Kelly, gaining valuable experience in civic engagement and public advocacy. The students had face-to-face conversations with Sen. Kelly.

The experience empowered the participants to become civic-minded advocates for their college and the Cochise County community.

HSI QUICK FACTS

- 615 Existing HSIs
- 425 Emerging HSIs
- 5.6 Million Students (Undergrad and Grad total) are enrolled in HSIs
- 37% are Pell grant recipients
- 67.3% of all Hispanic undergraduates attend HSIs

AEVAH RIOS, a Cochise College fine arts student, has been awarded the distinguished 2025 AAG/AWA Gayla Bonnel Scholarship for water media. In addition to the \$1,000 scholarship, Rios' artwork will be featured in a statewide exhibition at the Shemer Art Center and Museum in Phoenix from May 21 to July 10, 2025. Originally from Safford, Rios has been immersed in the world of art since childhood. She enjoys skateboarding, painting portraits, and creating comics and credits her parents for nurturing her early interests in art. Prior to graduating in May, Rios also delivered an artist talk at the Arizona Artists Guild in Phoenix, where she reflected on her creative journey and shared her passion for visual storytelling with the broader arts community.



RECENT GRADUATE KAYLA

MCLEOD has been selected as the 2025 New Century Transfer Scholar, earning a prestigious scholarship award of \$2,250. She achieved the highest score in Arizona in the All-USA Academic Team competition, which reviewed nearly 2,100 applications from more than 1,300 colleges nationwide. Nominations were evaluated based on academic achievement, leadership, service, and significant endeavors, and only one scholar per state was selected. McLeod serves as an officer for the Undergraduate Research Club, is an active member of Phi Theta Kappa honor society, works as a student aid in the library, and volunteers with the Peer-to-Peer Recovery group. She was

chosen for her outstanding academic performance, leadership roles, and active involvement both in and out of the classroom. McLeod plans to transfer to Northern Arizona University's College of Social and Behavioral Sciences to pursue a bachelor's degree. Her career goal is to work with a nonprofit or federal organization, focusing on global environmental challenges and solutions. The Century Pathway Scholarship program is sponsored by The Coca-Cola Foundation, The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation, the American Association of Community Colleges, and Phi Theta Kappa.



ELEMENTARY EDUCATION STUDENT

Valentina Soto Calzada and psychology major Byanka Ramirez spent last semester at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, as part of the Disney College Program. The program is a highly competitive internship that offers students the opportunity to gain real-world experience in various roles, including hospitality, guest services, and entertainment. Participants engage in leadership training, networking events, and career-building workshops while working alongside industry professionals. Students undergo an extensive application and interview process in which they are evaluated on their academic achievements, communication skills, and ability to thrive in a fast-paced environment. Both students began the internship working in guest services and operations while also participating in Disney's professional development sessions.



Employee Recognition



Dr. J.D. Rottweiler, recently retired Cochise College president, was designated president emeritus at the April meeting of the Governing Board. Emeritus status is awarded to former presidents in recognition of extensive and exemplary contributions to the college and the community. With 15 years of service, Rottweiler was the longest serving president, serving as an ambassador at the local, state, and national levels. During that time, Rottweiler remained faithful and loyal as a strong supporter of students, faculty, staff, and an advocate of the institution's role in the community.

In addition, **Margarita Fate** and **Chris McVean**, both retired business faculty, were conferred faculty emeritus status, which recognizes the profession of teaching as a lifetime commitment and rewards past exemplary service. McVean joined the college in 1986 and retired in 2023. Fate joined the college full time in 2005 and retired in 2024.



Curriculum Development Manager **Melissa Faglie** ('94) and Douglas Campus Dean **Abe Villarreal** ('01) were recognized with the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Award for their service to students, their department, the college and the community. The award made them eligible to attend NISOD's International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence in Austin, TX.



Nursing faculty **Kendra Kaiser** and art faculty **Ash Dahlke** recently earned Cochise KUDOS, an employee recognition established to promote a better, kinder, and more productive Cochise College workplace. Honored staff exemplify collaboration, encouragement, respect, innovation, and service. Kaiser was nominated for her dedication to the success of her students and her invaluable contributions to her department. Dahlke was nominated for the safe, supportive space that she provides her students and for her unending dedication to their growth.



Recent donations support students, programs

THE COCHISE COLLEGE

FOUNDATION VISION is that Cochise College is accessible to all and affordable by our diverse and changing communities. We wish to recognize the donors of the following new funds, which are helping to make that vision a reality.

The Appel F5 Ranch Scholarship assists full-time students with documented need.



The Artemizia Foundation Scholarship provides funding for art classes for students with demonstrated artistic potential as identified by the art faculty. The scholarship is named for Bisbee's premier museum

exhibiting the work of contemporary, graffiti and street artists.

Long-time AJ's Fine Foods sommelier **Anne Marie Stephens** has pledged assets to fund a



viticulture program at Cochise College. The **Anne Marie Stephens Viticulture Program fund** recognizes the needs of the local wine industry and will assist the college with the costs of faculty, marketing and recruitment, and

scholarships. It may also cover capital costs based on growth in the program.

The **Bruce Wertz and Johanna Allen Scholarship** supports adults returning to college after a year or more away from education. The scholarship was established by Wertz, a 1968 alumnus, honoring the memory of a distant relative who gave generously to others and who was helpful to him when he attended the college.

Parents enrolled in the phlebotomy, EKG, billing and coding or medical assistant programs qualify for the new **Adora Arzaga and John Bright Scholarship**.

Graduating high school seniors and adults returning to college who may have been supported by the Senior or Non-Traditional Student scholarships now also qualify for the **Karen and Jimmy Horton Memorial Scholarship**.

Family and friends established the **Joan and Rich Tavares Memorial Scholarship** to support students enrolled in nursing or trades programs.

The Jack and Marge Corkery Scholarship, named for the college's first dean of students and his wife, supports Cochise County high school graduates pursuing associate's degrees.

The **Frank and Barbara Adams Scholarship**, named for the late college rodeo coach and Douglas Campus nurse, respectively, will provide awards in alternate years for rodeo team members and nursing students.

The **Stephanie Brown Scholarship**, named for the late welder and artist who returned to college at the age of 38 to earn her high school equivalency and pursue an associate's degree, supports welding students with documented financial need.

The **Linda Hipol Pasinato Trade Up Scholarship** provides financial assistance for students enrolled in trades programs.



Women's rodeo wins region, headed to CNFR

SIX COCHISE COLLEGE RODEO

ATHLETES headed to the College National Finals Rodeo (CNFR) in Casper, Wyoming, this month following a spring season of success.

In early March, the women's team captured the top spot at the University of Arizona. Led by Head Coach Lynn Smith and new Assistant Coach Quint Bell, veteran Macie Fowlie won the goat tying competition while newcomer Walker Story finished first overall in tie down roping.

Both teams finished third overall at the spring Cochise College rodeo at Fort Huachuca later that month. Fowlie again took the top spot in goat tying, while sophomore Taten Erickson led the men's team with a second-place finish in steer wrestling.

The spring season concluded with two Grand Canyon Region events over a span of two weekends in Payson and Prescott. In Payson, Erickson won first place in tie down roping, solidifying a spot at the CNFR. Freshman Braulio Barraza won the bull riding, and Fowlie again took first in goat tying.



Sealey Bottom competed in the College National Finals Rodeo in Casper, Wyoming in June.

The NIRA Grand Canyon Region title was secured by the Cochise women in Prescott. Fowlie, Murphy Gaasch, Sealey Bottom, and Rilee Christensen will be joined at the CNFR by Barraza and Erickson.

The CNFR ran June 15-21, with results unknown at deadline, and was televised on ESPN+.

Baseball 2025: Resilience and Milestones

THE 2025 COCHISE COLLEGE

APACHES baseball season was marked by resilience and emerging freshmen talent. Building upon the foundation laid in previous seasons, the Apaches navigated a competitive schedule, which included the addition of Community Christian College (Redlands, CA) and the College of Southern Nevada (Henderson, NV) to the ACCAC Conference.

The Apaches began the season in January with a commanding 14-6 win over the College of Southern Nevada (CSN). This offensive showcase set the tone for a team consistently demonstrating its high-powered offense throughout the season.

One of the standout moments came March 15, when Cochise overwhelmed then-ranked No.

2 CSN in a high-scoring series finale, securing a 17-11 win. Sophomore Francisco Laya emerged as the key contributor, delivering a grand slam and accumulating five RBIs.

Throughout the season, which at one point saw Cochise ranked No. 10 nationally, the Apaches' offense was bolstered by consistent performances from players like Laya, who demonstrated power and precision at the plate. The team's ability to generate runs in crucial moments was instrumental in their success.

On the mound, sophomore right-handed pitcher Mathis Nayral showcased his potential, delivering solid performances that kept the Apaches competitive in tight contests. His ability to maintain composure under pressure was evident in several key games.

A pivotal series in mid-April against Central Arizona College tested the Apaches' mettle. Cochise demonstrated resilience despite facing a formidable opponent, with players like Laya and Nayral stepping up to challenge the opposition. These contests served as a litmus test for the team's playoff aspirations.

Another significant moment occurred during a doubleheader against Eastern Arizona College, where the Apaches secured a 10-8 extra-inning victory. This win snapped a losing streak and reignited the team's confidence as they approached the season's final stretch.

In the conference semifinals at home, Cochise split the first two games with Central Arizona College before being dealt a tough loss in the third.

COACH TODD INGLEHART'S 900TH CAREER WIN

A defining highlight of the 2025 season was Head Coach Todd Inglehart's 900th career win. On March 4, 2025, the Apaches defeated Scottsdale Post Grad in a doubleheader at the Douglas Campus Bo Hall Field, marking this milestone in Inglehart's illustrious coaching career.

Inglehart, who became the all-time wins leader in Cochise history in 2006, has been at the helm for 25 seasons. Under his leadership, the Apaches have averaged nearly 40 wins per year, reached the postseason 14 times, and secured multiple championships, including four ACCAC titles and a Region 1 championship.

His 900th win reflects his personal dedication and strategic acumen and symbolizes the

sustained excellence of the Cochise College baseball program.

Cochise finished the regular season with a 42-14 overall record and a 23-13 mark in conference play. Their position in the ACCAC standings placed them in contention for a Region 1 playoff berth as the second seed.

The Apaches' performance throughout the season underscored their growth and potential. The blend of experienced players and emerging talent positioned Cochise as a formidable force within the conference.

POSTSEASON ACCOLADES

The ACCAC Conference and NJCAA Region 1 honored nine Apaches as members of the all-conference and all-region teams. Sophomores Kenneth Rhein and Mathis Nayral, and freshmen Tyson Owens and Collin Smith earned First Team All-ACCAC, and sophomores Francisco Laya, Alex Dabrowski, and Alex Vanegas, and freshman TJ Shaw earned Second Team All-ACCAC. Shaw and freshman Andrugh Yee each were awarded the NJCAA Region 1 Gold Glove recognition.

LOOKING AHEAD

Cochise baseball team will return 13 freshmen to next season's roster, along with a promising group of talented recruits that span the globe. With a commitment to excellence and a culture of perseverance, the Apaches are poised to build upon this season's success, aiming for greater heights in the years to come.



Downtown Center Open House

& First Responders Academy

Simulation Lab Ribbon Cutting



OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT



**Tuesday, July 22
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.**

**Cochise College
Downtown Center**

2600 East Wilcox Drive,
Sierra Vista

Join us for a hands-on experience with new cutting-edge training tools and see how Cochise College is using the latest in learning innovation and redefining hands-on learning for our local communities.

Come for the ribbon cutting and stay for an open house of the Downtown Center.





COCHISE COLLEGE
FOUNDATION

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Today's Cochise College graduates wear red caps and gowns at commencement. But that was not always the case. In this image, it appears that female graduates wore white and males wore red. If you know anyone in this picture, can pinpoint the year it was taken or explain the wall behind the faculty (wearing black), or if you want to share a story, please contact Librarian/Archivist Ashlee Gray at graya@cochise.edu.