

# Accolade

Spring 2026

## HALL OF FAME

Foundation inducts five who inspire passion, purpose, and enhance our community  
page 4

## ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

13 staff and faculty are celebrated for earning a credential  
page 15



# Board President's Message



## THIS SUMMER, WE SAY GOODBYE

to Cochise College Foundation Charitable Gifts Coordinator Rose Berumen. Normally, I would not remark on individual college staff. But as a foundation board member, I have spent most of my time with the two employees who work directly with the board. Rose is one of them, and she is retiring from Cochise College after 38 years of service. I think she deserves it.

Rose, a Cochise County native with history and family connections in Benson, Willcox and Douglas, has worked under five college presidents. She began her career at Cochise in human resources in the 1980s. She later transitioned to the Finance Office and then to the college foundation, which found her personable demeanor, empathy, loyalty to the college, trustworthiness and deep knowledge of the area useful. Rose has left her mark on nearly every charitable gift made since about 2011. If your gift hasn't passed directly through her hands, it most certainly has been recorded by her. She's also sent all of you timely acknowledgement letters, forwarded thanks directly from students, and kept records of any communications sent with your gifts. Sometimes they are letters of thanks. Other times they are obituaries. Your personal situation is noted, respected and remembered by foundation staff.

Rose has helped make college accessible to thousands of students. Her attention is often spent on numbers and spreadsheets, but she's reminded of the good the foundation is doing when she's forwarded you scholarship recipient thank you notes and stories. She's welcomed you at events or gotten to know you over the phone. She's played an important role in keeping our foundation board family just that – a family.

Your foundation family will miss you, Rose. "Thank you" doesn't begin to express our appreciation, and we wish you all the best in retirement.

Larry Borger  
President  
Cochise College Foundation

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### Other Contributors

Sharrina Cook-General  
Dani Foti  
Angel Ortega

"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:** The 2026 Hall of Fame inductees and the Cochise College president, from left: Humberto Lopez, David Gowan, Jane Strain, President James Perey, Charles "Red" Young, and Rebecca Orozco.  
Photo by Dani Foti.



# *From the Cochise College President*

## **THIS ACADEMIC YEAR,**

we celebrated the awarding of 1,200 degrees, including 25 bachelor's degrees, and 800 certificates. The impact of students' achievements will be felt not only by each individual who earned a credential, but also by their families and communities.

Cochise College is pleased to inspire passion and purpose in individuals so that we enhance our communities. Having said that, we also celebrated members of the Cochise College Hall of Fame Class of 2025, which includes three alumni, a volunteer, and a retired faculty member. Their actions over time have shown them to be exemplary ambassadors for the college's efforts.

The Hall of Fame reflects the very best of Cochise College. It recognizes those who have made a meaningful and lasting impact, not only on the college, but across Cochise County and beyond. Members' influence and commitment have shaped the college and those around them in positive ways. Our strength as an institution comes from people who step forward, engage, and help move both the college and our region forward.

I hope you'll read the stories in this issue of the newest Hall of Fame members. Individually and collectively, they have invested their time, leadership, and vision into something bigger than themselves. They have made a generational impact that will be felt for years to come.

At Cochise College, we often talk about being student-centered, community-anchored, and future-ready. The newest Hall of Fame members bring those words to life. They remind us that the work of a community college extends far beyond our campuses. It is about strengthening communities, building pathways, and creating a better future together.

*Dr. James D. Perey  
President  
Cochise College  
pereyj@cochise.edu*

# College inducts five into Hall of Fame

A dedicated volunteer, a retired faculty member and community servant, and three alumni were inducted into the Cochise College Hall of Fame during a ceremony at the Sierra Vista Campus in April.

Dozens of family members and friends joined the inductees as the college celebrated individuals whose actions, over time, exemplify the college's reason for existing: to inspire passion and purpose through the education of individuals so that we enhance our community.

"Every member of the Class of 2025 has enhanced the community in some way that goes beyond job descriptions or standard professional responsibilities," said Denise Hoyos, executive director of the Cochise College Foundation, which has managed the Hall of Fame program since 2015. "We're extremely proud to be part of their individual journeys."

## REBECCA OROZCO



A retired Cochise College faculty member, Orozco is a world traveler who shares her experiences through community presentations. She has served numerous county organizations in a volunteer capacity. Her most enduring passion, however, has been the preservation of Camp Naco south of Bisbee. Built in 1919, the camp was part of a 1,200-mile chain of 35 permanent military camps constructed by the U.S. War Department's Mexican Border Defense Construction Project. It was one of only two made of adobe. Orozco, a historian and archaeologist, began a grass-roots campaign in 2000 to save the camp from demolition. Since then, she has seen the site through a complex modern history that included coordinating with new property owners, establishing the Naco Heritage Alliance (NHA) as

a nonprofit organization, listing Camp Naco on the National Register of Historic Places, expanding public awareness and education, and the pursuit of numerous grants, culminating with the receipt of \$8 million from the Melon Foundation and the State of Arizona. The funding allows NHA to take enormous strides toward preservation and public education. Camp Naco expects to open to the public in December 2026 and will be prepared to host tourists while also providing services like outdoor recreational facilities, community gathering spaces, and library facilities/computer lab usage at no charge to the public. The organization also works with other groups to preserve the stories of Buffalo Soldiers who were housed at Camp Naco when it was active.



## CHARLES “RED” YOUNG (‘73)

A Vietnam veteran from Tennessee, Red Young walked onto the Cochise College baseball team in 1970, at the age of 24, and became a power hitter during the 1971 and 1972 seasons.

Among the latter team consisting of many good contact hitters, Red stood apart as exceptionally adept at generating bat speed. This ability was particularly effective against the top fastball pitchers throughout the league. It provided a needed edge in the team winning the 1972 division championship, closely contested due to an abundance of talented players on all teams.

After graduation, Young was awarded a full baseball scholarship at the University of Missouri, which had won multiple NCAA National Championships. His name is in the permanent records book due to outstanding performance in leading the 1973 team in batting average

(.327); total hits (33), runs scored (18), runs batted in (15), home runs (5), and total bases (54). Young then accepted a full baseball scholarship and transferred the next year to Northern Arizona University.

After earning a bachelor’s degree in 1975, Young entered the most meaningful part of his career. He served as a teacher, coach, principal and dean of students in the Benson Unified School District for 30 years. During his tenure, Benson won the state baseball championship in 1987. He also earned a master’s degree at the University of Arizona in 1988. He served a two-year term on the Benson City Council and was a board member of Southeastern Arizona Federal Credit Union. To this day, he is stopped by former students on the streets and thanked for his service with the school district.



## DAVID GOWAN (‘02)

David Gowan was first elected to the Arizona House of Representatives in 2009. During the 2015-2017 legislative session, he was elected to be the 52nd Speaker of the House. Most recently, he was elected to the Arizona State Senate, where he served as chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee. As Speaker of the House and Senate Appropriations Chair, Gowan is a tireless champion of Arizona’s rural community colleges. He led the charge in establishing the Aid to Rural Community Colleges formula providing additional workforce development dollars for Arizona’s eight rural college districts. At Cochise College those additional

dollars have been instrumental in expanding access and new opportunities to the students of Cochise County, including the development of the automotive trades building, the cybersecurity and virtual reality center, and the firearms training complex.

Sen. Gowan was the first recipient of the Arizona Community Colleges Legislative Champion, presented by the Arizona Community College Coordinating Council (AC4) in August 2016, and he has been recognized as a passionate fighter for veterans, first responders and businesses. He and his wife Jessie have two sons, both of whom also graduated from Cochise College.



## HUMBERTO S. LOPEZ ('67)

Humberto Lopez started his career as a certified public accountant developing expertise in real estate with a California firm. Eight years after graduating from Cochise College, he founded HSL Properties. He has formed in excess of 200 limited partnerships and limited liability companies, acquired and disposed of more than \$2.5 billion in real estate, and handled all phases of ownership and management of more than 30,000 apartment units, 2,000 hotel rooms, shopping centers, office buildings, industrial buildings and thousands of acres of land. He has chaired or served on the boards of numerous firms, governmental agencies and non-profit organizations. He was a member of the Young Presidents Organization and is currently a member of the World Presidents Organization.

In 2004, Lopez founded The H.S. Lopez Family Foundation, a non-profit organization that has contributed more than \$20 million to non-profit organizations with an emphasis in health, welfare and education. In 2017, he founded the Center for Opportunity, a homeless shelter where approximately 50 non-profits provide services ranging from shelter and therapy to medical

services and education. In addition, the foundation is a primary funder of the Non-Traditional Student Scholarship at Cochise College.

Over the course of four decades, Lopez has been recognized for his community contributions and involvement: Southern Arizona Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and City of Hope Man of the Year, Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Legacy Award, Father's Day Council sponsored by the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation Father of the Year, Outstanding Tucson Citizen Award, Real Estate Legend by the Certified Commercial and Industrial Brokers of Tucson, University of Arizona Foundation Hispanic Man of the Year, Hispanic Business' 100 Most Influential Hispanics, Tucson Volunteer Fund Raiser of 1998, Nogales High School Hall of Fame Distinguished Alumnus, Tucson Rodeo Parade Grand Marshal, Steven M. Gootter Philanthropic Award, Catholic Foundation Honoree, and honorary doctoral degree in humane letters from the University of Arizona, The Eller College of Management. The H.S. Lopez Business School of Analytics in the UA Eller College is named for him.

### HELP US MATCH INDUCTEE'S FINANCIAL CHALLENGE TO LIFT STUDENTS



Humberto Lopez attended the Douglas Campus of Cochise College for two years between 1965 and 1967. His family, which included his mother, Lopez and five siblings, struggled after the unexpected passing of his father. Federal loans provided financial support for college.

Lopez paid those loans back and now wishes to pay it forward. During his Hall of Fame induction remarks, he pledged \$250,000 in support if the college raised that amount by the end of the year.

"I was fortunate enough to receive help when I attended Cochise College," Lopez said.

The LIFT (Local Investment for Transformation) campaign seeks to match Lopez's pledge. Donors may make a contribution directly to the campaign at [cochise.edu/give](https://cochise.edu/give). Alternatively, those who wish to establish a named fund may do so by contacting the Cochise College Foundation at (520) 417-4148 or [foundation@cochise.edu](mailto:foundation@cochise.edu).

## NOMINATE SOMEONE FOR INDUCTION!

The Hall of Fame program relies on nominations, which are now being accepted.

The college seeks nominations of former students, volunteers, community leaders and former faculty/staff whose actions have exceeded the expectations of their role while positively advancing the college's legacy, or who have left a legacy that made a significant impact on the institution and/or its students.



Look for the nomination form by searching "hall of fame" at [cochise.edu](http://cochise.edu).



Or contact Amber Baxter, Administrative Assistant for the Community Engagement Division, at [baxtera@cochise.edu](mailto:baxtera@cochise.edu)



or **(520) 515-5490**.



## JANE STRAIN

With more than 25 years of service, Jane Strain became the longest-serving elected Cochise College Governing Board member before relocating to another state. Strain's time in this volunteer position included terms as secretary, chair, and representative to the state and national trustee organizations. In 2009, she was recognized with the Association of Community College Trustees Trustee Leadership Award; she was elected as its Pacific Region director in 2013.

Strain is passionate about children and their development, education, military families and animal welfare. Her resume of volunteerism includes active service with or leadership of the Arizona Coalition of Military Families, the Arizona Business and Education Coalition, Arizona Town Hall, Arizona Commission on Appellate Court Appointments, First Things First-Cochise County Regional Partnership Council, Boys and Girls Club of Sierra Vista, Sierra Evangelical Lutheran Church, City of Sierra Vista Commission on Disability Issues, Thunder Mountain Republican Women, Dodie Londen School of Excellence for Republican Women, Friends of the Sierra

Vista Animal Shelter, Women's Army Corps Veterans' Association San Pedro Chapter 95, Blue Stars Moms, and Surviving Spouses of the Military Officers Association of America chapter. She was recognized as alumnus of the year by the University of Arizona South and Sierra Vista Police Department volunteer of the year. She received the First Things First Champion of the Young Child award. She is a Flinn-Brown Fellow and was inducted into the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame in 2024.

Strain enlisted in the U.S. Army in the Women's Army Corp (WAC) in Texas in 1974. She was promoted to the rank of lieutenant for signal battalion at Ft. Hood, Texas, and transferred to Mannheim, Germany, as a planning officer with the 7th Signal Brigade, then to Worms, Germany, with the 5th Signal Command. Her next duty posts were in Heidelberg, Germany, and Ft. Huachuca, Arizona, where she served as a secretary of the general staff, total quality management director, and garrison equal opportunity officer, retiring in 1994 with the rank of major after 20-plus years of active duty.

# Grant positions Cochise to lead AI innovation

Cochise College has been awarded a \$1.87 million U.S. Department of Education grant as part of an initiative supporting the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance teaching and learning in higher education. Awarded through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the grant supports the development of tools and training to help community colleges nationwide adopt AI responsibly and effectively while bridging the gap between education and workforce development.

Initiatives supported by the grant include the development of a rural AI playbook, a K-12 to industry taskforce, a GenAI workforce microcredential, and faculty and staff development. The Rural AI Playbook the college is building will be replicable for other colleges and demonstrate how institutions can lead in ethical AI implementation. The project's instructional modules and training guides will be released as Open Educational Resources (OER), providing a scalable blueprint for rural colleges nationwide.

The “AI-Powered Success” grant will equip approximately 4,000 students (including first-generation, military-connected, and low-income learners), faculty, and regional employers with the skills to navigate the AI revolution. Cochise College is moving beyond “keeping up” with technology to define how rural colleges implement it.

“This grant marks a strategic shift for rural education,” said Dr. James Perey, Cochise College president. “By remaining student-centered, community-anchored, and future-ready, the college is empowering our students and communities not only to understand AI but to shape today’s evolving workforce.”

The initiatives will be implemented over a four-year period, with a primary emphasis on ethical artificial intelligence integration, workforce readiness, and leadership in rural education. New milestones related to the project will be shared publicly as the initiative develops.

# Creative projects unite learning with purpose

Art students this semester transformed healthcare spaces at Canyon Vista Medical Center with two murals designed to bring comfort, imagination and connection to patients and families.

Through the ART 292: Special Topics in Art: Mural course, students worked in two designated teams, with each team responsible for designing and completing one mural project in partnership with the hospital.

Installed in the Emergency Pediatric Room and Labor & Delivery Unit, the murals were developed specifically for their healthcare environments and audiences while sharing a common goal of creating visually supportive and welcoming spaces.

“The Emergency Pediatric Room mural draws inspiration from the rainforest and features lush

vegetation, flowing water and vibrant wildlife,” said JenMarie Zeleznak, art instructor. “The imagery was designed to encourage curiosity, provide gentle distraction and create a sense of wonder for young patients and their families during stressful or unfamiliar moments.”

The Labor & Delivery Unit mural reflects the landscapes and wildlife of southeastern Arizona.

“Quail serve as a central visual narrative throughout the piece, alongside imagery connected to water, rest, renewal, peace and togetherness,” added Zeleznak. “The mural moves through scenes that symbolize transition, community and new beginnings.”

The project unfolded across the 16-week semester. During the first half of the course, students met with





representatives from Canyon Vista Medical Center, formed teams, conducted research and developed collaborative proposals tailored to each location. Students refined their concepts through feedback from hospital staff before preparing the large-scale wall transfers and completing the murals during the second half of the semester. Throughout the process, students balanced concept development, craftsmanship, communication and adaptability while working within the demands of an active healthcare environment.

“Foundational studio courses are where students build the technical, observational and conceptual skills that support their growth as artists,” said Zeleznak. “A course like this allows them to take those skills into a real-life environment where they must apply them with greater purpose, flexibility and accountability.” Zeleznak said the experience gave students an opportunity to see how their creative work can contribute to the community in meaningful and lasting ways.

“Instead of making work only for the classroom, students are creating for an actual site and community partner,” Zeleznak said. “That kind of applied experience can be especially meaningful because it helps students recognize the broader value of their training and what their creative skills can do in the world.”

The partnership also provided students with experience in collaborative communication, project

management, design thinking, environmental awareness and professional responsibility. Because the course centered on public art, students worked collectively to develop visual communication that responded thoughtfully to place and community.

“I am especially grateful to Canyon Vista Medical Center for seeing the value in this kind of applied learning and for creating space for students to contribute in a way that feels real, meaningful and connected to community,” Zeleznak said.

The murals are part of Canyon Vista Medical Center’s ongoing commitment to creating welcoming and calming spaces for patients, visitors and staff.

“Healthcare settings can feel stressful or impersonal, and incorporating local art helps humanize our spaces, reflect the character of our community and support overall well-being,” Natoyah Swift from Canyon Vista Medical Center shared in a statement.

The murals were unveiled during a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Canyon Vista Medical Center on May 7. A celebration for a third mural created this semester at the Cochise County Fairgrounds, with the guidance of art faculty Ash Dahlke, will take place around the time of the fair in September.

# *Changes enhance student, work environment*

A grant from the Paul Dwyer Memorial Trust provided funding for a variety of Douglas Campus improvements that became reality this semester. Bleachers installed near the runway now provide outdoor seating for guests at Aviation Department recruitment fairs and open houses, as well as for families supporting aviation students during important test flights. Students have identified plants and signage is being installed along a new botanical walk that showcases the campus landscaping. A sand volleyball court near the residence halls has been refreshed with new material. And students can now enjoy the outdoor beauty of the campus by gathering and studying at 10 tables with colorful umbrellas. The trust also annually provides a match for the IME Becas program, which awards

scholarships to students who best put into words how their cultural journey as a resident of the borderlands have shaped their academic goals and their commitment to contributing to the community.

At the Sierra Vista Campus, the Facilities Maintenance Department and the Information Technology Department moved in January into a building previously owned by Qwest Corporation and used as a CenturyLink facility. The move consolidates IT personnel, who have relocated numerous times over the years, in one facility and also provides office and equipment space for Facilities Maintenance. The building is located on the eastern edge of the campus, not far from Buena High School.



# *New funds help keep opportunities accessible*

In 2026-2027, the **American Legion Riders Post #16 (Bisbee)** will support two career trades majors who are retired military, veterans, or dependents of active service members.

Retired humanities faculty member Norm Bates recently established the **Norm and Irene Bates Distinguished PTK Graduate Scholarship** to supplement the awards provided annually via a similar fund to a graduating Cochise College PTK member who is transferring to another institution. During his tenure at Cochise, Bates served as a PTK (Phi Theta Kappa honor society) advisor.

The **Frank and Mary Jackson Scholarship** will provide additional support to Senior Scholarship recipients studying aviation, business or healthcare. Mary Jackson is the outgoing treasurer of the Cochise College Foundation board of directors.

The **Justice-Barrett STEM and Healthcare Scholarship** will provide renewable financial support for students pursuing majors in science, technology, engineering, math or healthcare.

The **Luke Robert Memorial Scholarship** will provide assistance for Buena High School graduates enrolling in the automotive technology program.

# *Media feature faculty in humanities, trades*

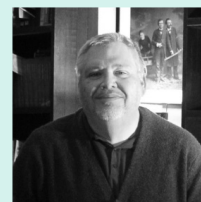
**Justine Rivera**, who will step into the role of full-time residential construction faculty in 2026-2027, is the cover story for the Spring 2026 issue of “Move Over Bob” magazine, a publication helping to shape the narrative around women in the trades. Rivera, who graduated from the program and who was mentored by retiring faculty member Doug Schlarbaum, will oversee the construction by students of one single-family home per academic year. Schlarbaum, the “project house” program’s first faculty member, is wrapping up his eighth student-constructed home. Each home is sold upon completion, with proceeds supporting the construction of the next home. The ninth property will be located at 100 N 1st Street in Sierra Vista.

Humanities faculty **Roman Briggs** is the recipient of the Information, Medium & Society (IMS) – The Publishing Studies Research Network International Award for Excellence. Briggs article, “Creative Labor and the Claim of Exclusive Rights to Non-Rivalrous Goods,” was selected for the award from among the top 10 articles emerging from the IMS peer-review process. The article will be featured on the IMS website, and Briggs has been invited to participate in the organization’s 24<sup>th</sup> annual conference on publishing studies in July.



## 2025 International Award for Excellence

“Creative Labor and the Claim of Exclusive Rights to Non-Rivalrous Goods”



**Roman Briggs**

COCHISE COLLEGE,  
UNITED STATES



Information, Medium, and Society: Journal of Publishing Studies

# College celebrates 25 years of TRiO

Cochise College joined colleges and universities across the United States in celebrating National TRiO Day in late February, while also marking 25 years of TRiO Student Support Services (SSS) at the college.

The federal TRiO programs were created through the Higher Education Act to remove barriers to postsecondary education. Today, TRiO programs serve more than 800,000 students nationwide each year, including middle school, high school and college students, adult learners and veterans.

Cochise College currently serves approximately 165 students through TRiO SSS. The program provides academic advising, mentoring, college readiness services, and career development opportunities for eligible students. The program also offers participants chances to unite as a group and carry out projects and learn leadership skills through Club TRiO. Together, these efforts bring together each cohort and give students opportunities to feel grounded and connected at the college.

“Our TRiO scholars are resilient, driven and determined to succeed,” said Angie Vega, TRiO director. “The national celebration and our anniversary on campus are opportunities to celebrate student accomplishments, acknowledge their hard work, and reaffirm our commitment to ensuring every student has the support and resources to achieve their academic and career goals.”



## New provost appointed

**Dr. Sheena Brown** has been named Cochise College’s next provost. Brown joined Cochise College in September 2022 as dean of academic affairs and has served as interim vice president for academics since February 2025. During her time at Cochise College, she has provided strong leadership in several key institutional efforts, including leading the college’s work in assessment and academic program review, coordinating the environmental scan process that will help inform future strategic planning efforts, and helping to strengthen alignment between academics and

student services in support of student success.

Over the past 16 months, Brown also played a critical leadership role in guiding the college through its successful accreditation reaffirmation process. Her collaborative leadership approach, commitment to continuous improvement, and focus on student success have made a meaningful impact across the institution. Brown will officially begin her role as Provost on July 1, 2026.



# Four students among top 60 in state

Four Cochise College students have been named to the All-Arizona Academic Teams. The honor recognizes academic achievement, leadership and community involvement among community college students. The students will receive tuition waivers and a cash scholarship to pursue bachelor's degrees at Arizona's public universities.



**Isaiah James**, a cybersecurity major, serves as treasurer of the Student Government Association and vice president of student programming. He is active in Phi Theta Kappa, a Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow, and was recently named to the All-IN Student Voting Honor Roll. He plans to transfer to the University of Arizona. James was also one of only 50 students from across the country to be chosen to participate in the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities' Voces Nuevas program. The program offers opportunities to learn leadership and advocacy skills in an online format. James was particularly interested in developing collaboration and problem-solving skills and says he's already grown more confident from the experience.



Also a cybersecurity student, **Jimmy Madrid Lopez** is a peer tutor for science, technology, engineering and math and is a member of the TRiO Student Support Services program. He will specialize in digital forensics at Western Governors University.



**Lily Wadsworth**, a social and behavioral sciences major, serves as vice president of the Alpha Mu Zeta chapter of Phi Theta Kappa and president of the Christian Challenge Club. She also works as a library student aide and volunteers with the Friends of the Sierra Vista Library. Wadsworth will transfer to Northern University Arizona. Her goal is to work as a museum curator or archivist.



**Jacqueline Ramirez**, a member of Phi Theta Kappa honor society, serves as president of the Film & Media Club. She also volunteered for Go Red for Women. She plans to transfer to Northern Arizona University to develop her creative skills and pursue a career in filmmaking.

# *Alum inspires Adult Ed graduates*

During his remarks as an alumni speaker at Cochise College Adult Education’s high school equivalency graduation this spring, Anthony Dinh described his struggles with math, his gradual evolution as a student, and his attraction to welding as something that required focus, precision and discipline - “stuff I had been building all along without even realizing it.” Welding competitions made him realize how far he had come, and those experiences taught him about confidence, resilience, and believing in his personal growth.

“I have now reached a milestone I could not have imagined. I received a job offer to weld for SpaceX and to work inside a rocket ship.”

Dinh isn’t alone. As of March, about 10 Cochise College welding students and one faculty member have been recruited into SpaceX’s employment training pipeline in Texas, where they’re translating the skills



they learned into careers with a high-profile tech company. SpaceX has also expressed interest in visiting the college welding facility, where students can pursue an associate of applied science in welding technology and certificates tailored to aerospace, motorsports, or pipe and fitting. The college offers all certification testing done on site through its AWS Accredited Test Facility, one of three in Arizona.

# *Awardees make Cochise kind, productive workplace*

Three employees nominated by their peers or members of the public have received the **Cochise Kudos** award, which recognizes those who promote a better, kinder, more productive Cochise workplace through collaboration, encouragement, civility, innovation, and service. Spring 2026 honorees are **Linda Sterling**, administrative assistant for aviation; **Melanie Molina**, Adult Education instructor; and **Diana Acosta**, property control technician.



# Employee academic achievements celebrated

An Academic Excellence Celebration event honored the achievements of faculty and staff who earned an academic credential this year.

New Faculty Academy classroom research presenters included **Andrew Carlson**, sociology; **Evan Cedor**, geology; **TJ Chenoweth**, cybersecurity; **Jacquelyn Clemmer**, nursing; **Malachi Coleman**, CNA/medical assisting; **Kathleen Keats**, leadership,

management and operations (LMO) bachelor's coordinator/instructor; **Dr. Cathy Matthesen**, education; **Dr. Janet Neil**, RN to BSN coordinator/instructor; **Dr. Donald Penner**, English/writing; and **Cheryl Salcido-Engols**, dental assisting. **Dr. Bradley Dever**, a faculty member in fire science, provided a doctoral degree presentation.

Employees recognized for earning a credential include:

- **Eric Bailey**, EMT faculty, Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Leadership, Management, Operations
- **Acacia Barnett**, director of the Small Business Development Center, Master of Construction Management
- **Malachi Coleman**, CNA/MA faculty, Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) in Nursing Leadership and Administration
- **Bradley Dever**, associate faculty, bachelor of applied science in leadership, management and operations program, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Fire Science and Emergency Management
- **Sonia Hernandez**, college success navigator, Bachelor of Strategic Leadership
- **Wendy Koop**, payroll benefits coordinator, Master of Organizational Leadership
- **Harim Manzanares**, senior accounts receivable technician, Master of Management and Leadership
- **Josette Membrila**, college success navigator, Master of Social Work (MSW)
- **Sharron Nason**, registration technician for military programs, Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, minor in History
- **Jessica Orozco**, instructor of medical professions, Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP), ANCC Board Certified (PMHNP-BC)
- **Larissa Runyan**, English faculty, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in English
- **Angie Vega**, director of TRiO Student Support Services, Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- **Serena Westbrook**, executive assistant to the vice president for academics, Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Humanities

# Artemizia scholars announced

Art faculty came together to celebrate the recipients of the 2025-2026 Artemizia Foundation Scholarship. Pictured in front of Swoon's "Sonia Mandala" at the Artemizia Foundation Museum in Bisbee are Tate Rich (left), art faculty; Denise Hoyos, executive director of the Cochise College Foundation; Sloane Bouchever, artist, museum founder and scholarship sponsor; scholarship recipients Estefania Medina and Natalie Andres; and art faculty JenMarie Zeleznak, Ash Dahlke, and Stephen Crout.



# *Athletic teams deliver memorable campaigns*

Spring 2026 brought another exciting chapter to Cochise College Athletics, as teams delivered standout seasons marked by championships, national qualifiers, postseason runs, and historic accomplishments. From the rodeo arena to the baseball diamond, Apache student-athletes continued to compete at the highest level in the region while representing Cochise College on the national stage.



## RODEO CONTINUES TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

Cochise College turned in another outstanding spring, consistently finishing among the top programs in the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association Grand Canyon Region. Competing across Arizona and New Mexico, the Apaches showcased depth across nearly every event while producing multiple regional champions and national qualifiers. The women's team recorded several runner-up finishes throughout the spring, while the men's team continued posting top-three team performances.

Several Cochise athletes emerged as top competitors. Braulio Barraza (Douglas, Arizona) captured the Grand Canyon Region Bull Riding Championship after multiple event victories and qualified for the College National Finals Rodeo (CNFR) in Casper, Wyoming, in June. Taten Erickson (Montana) excelled across multiple events, earning reserve region champion honors in steer wrestling and regional all-around cowboy. Teran Broderson (Fort Macleod, Alberta, Canada) finished as the reserve region champion in saddle bronc riding.

Macie Fowlie (Phoenix, Arizona) recorded multiple top finishes in goat tying and breakaway roping to qualify for the CNFR. Sealey Bottom

(Oklahoma) posted strong performances in goat tying, barrel racing, and breakaway roping, including a first-place finish in barrel racing during the regional finale in Prescott. Additional contributions from athletes across the roster helped Cochise remain competitive in the team standings throughout the spring.

One of the highlights of the season came when Cochise hosted its annual collegiate rodeo at the historic Wren Arena on Fort Huachuca, where the Apaches delivered one of their strongest team performances of the year in front of a home crowd. The momentum carried into the Grand Canyon Region finals, as Cochise once again solidified itself among the top collegiate rodeo programs in the region.

# BASEBALL POWERS THROUGH HISTORIC SEASON

The 2026 Cochise Baseball team delivered one of the most accomplished seasons in recent program history, finishing with a 46–15 overall record and advancing to the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Region 1 Championship in Henderson, Nevada. The Apaches remained nationally ranked throughout much of the spring while battling one of the toughest schedules in junior college baseball. Cochise earned key series victories over nationally ranked opponents, including Arizona Western College (AWC) and College of Southern Nevada (CSN), while securing the No. 2 seed in the Region 1 playoffs.

Offensively, the Apaches became one of the most explosive teams ever to take Bo Hall Field at the Douglas Campus. Cochise broke the program’s long-standing single-season home run record, surpassing the previous mark set in 1988 and finishing the season with more than 60 home runs. Big offensive performances and late-game heroics were common as players such as Shiryu Sato (Kangawa, Japan), Gavin Mesa (Phoenix, Arizona), Landon Blais (Las Vegas, Nevada), Jorge Cardenas (Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico), Andrugh Yee (Yuma, Arizona), Anthony Montez (Tucson, Arizona), Cesar Chavira (San Luis, Arizona), and TJ Shaw Jr. (Henderson, Nevada) consistently produced key hits in critical moments.

The pitching staff also played a major role in Cochise’s. Austin Cushman (Sierra Vista, Arizona) highlighted the year with a complete-game shutout victory over nationally ranked Southern Nevada and later earned Second Team All-ACCAC/

Region 1 honors. Pitchers including Collin Smith (Needles, California), Noah Miller (Tucson, Arizona), Shane Hooper (Bagdad, Arizona), Ben Couvreur (Nice, France), Dylan Torres (El Paso, Texas), and Daniel Gomez (La Guaira, Venezuela) provided valuable depth during the Apaches’ postseason push.

The postseason showcased the resilience that defined the Apaches all season long. After suffering a 13-inning loss to Arizona Western in the opening round of the Region 1 Tournament, Cochise responded with consecutive elimination-game victories over CSN and AWC to reach the Region 1 Championship. The Apaches eventually forced a winner-take-all championship game against Central Arizona College but fell one game short of advancing.

Cochise earned multiple postseason honors following the season, including five First Team All-ACCAC/Region 1 selections: Sato, Mesa, Blais, Cardenas, and Yee. Combined with a record-setting offense, deep pitching staff, and memorable postseason run, the 2026 Apaches established themselves as one of the top baseball teams in program history.



# Accreditation reaffirmed through 2035-2036

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has officially reaffirmed Cochise College's accreditation through the 2035-36 academic year.

The review process recognized the strength of the college's mission, operations, and institutional effectiveness and identified opportunities for continued growth related to student learning assessment and academic program review processes. As part of the reaffirmation, the college will participate in embedded monitoring during the Year 4 Assurance Review, focusing on demonstrating completed assessment and program review cycles and on how those efforts inform continuous improvement, planning, and resource allocation.

"This reaffirmation reflects the dedication, professionalism, and commitment demonstrated across our institution each and every day," said Dr. James Perey, college president, while recognizing accreditation liaison officer Dr. Sheena Brown, the accreditation committee, and the many employees who

contributed evidence, participated in meetings and supported preparation efforts. "Accreditation is not simply a compliance process. It is an affirmation of the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the work we do, as well as a reminder that continuous improvement is ongoing work. This accomplishment belongs to all Cochise College faculty and staff."

**"Accreditation is an affirmation of the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the work we do. This accomplishment belongs to all Cochise College faculty and staff."**



# Event sponsors, participants assist up to 50



More than \$25,000 raised through the March 2026 Pathway to \$150k Virtual Run/Walk/Cycle will assist up to 50 students seeking to attend Cochise College.

Participants spent March recording their exercise distances and earning entries in a prize drawing. Sponsors provided cash support and prizes.

Proceeds from registration fees, donations and sponsorships support the Senior Scholarship, Non-Traditional Student Scholarship, Emergency Scholarships and Early College.

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*Cochise College has never had a football team, but there was a time when the Douglas Campus served as the site of the University of Arizona pre-season football camp. This image is from 1984. If you can name anyone in this photo, email Librarian/Archivist Ashlee Gray, [graya@cochise.edu](mailto:graya@cochise.edu).*