The goals and interests of students enrolling at Cochise College vary widely. Some enroll for personal growth; others wish to explore degrees, certificates and vocations. Many seek to transfer to a university in a specific area of study; still others choose to prepare for a work-ready occupation. But one constant is the pursuit of growth and development; students seek to change their current status to something more, something better, something more fulfilling.

Cochise College best serves these students by looking to its own growth and development to improve. The identified purpose and revised mission and vision statements described in Dr. Rottweiler’s message are a sign of such renewal. The college community courageously looked at itself and the changing world and decided how it will adapt.

Continuous improvement is also on the minds of the Cochise College Foundation board of directors. At a recent retreat, we discussed how the foundation can best continue its mission of promoting student success and supporting the college. We talked through our shared values and vision and identified several strategic priorities we need to work on in the future.

Someone once said that the only constant is change. Both the college and the foundation have chosen to embrace change and plan for it. But one thing that has not changed is how much we appreciate the generosity of our donors. Thank you!

Joanna Michelich, Ph.D.
President
Cochise College Foundation

“With the death of my mother 5 years ago, I was left to figure out how to set and attain goals, and make things in my life happen. I had to learn how to take care of myself and with help from this scholarship I can attain my goal of graduating college.”

-- Nicholas Bloss, Senior Scholarship Recipient, Automotive Technology

“Having to work and study simultaneously has been complicated, but I know that my efforts will lead me to success. I am very fortunate to have people who support my dream without expecting anything in return. You can’t imagine the effort I had to make to be here and the times I had to sleep in my car or not buy food to save money. Tears ran down my eyes when I read the scholarship acceptance message. Thank you for supporting my dream of continuing my dental career and being able to help many other people as someone is helping me.”

-- Elsa Acosta, IME Becas/Paul Dwyer Memorial Trust Scholarship

“I would like to thank each and every person who is providing this scholarship to me. It means so much to know someone is willing to help me with my education. Thank you for providing some financial stability for a student who absolutely loves Cochise College.”

-- Francisco Price, Senior Scholarship Recipient, Welding

“I am returning to school as a single mom to a one-year-old with a full-time job. This scholarship helps me focus on making sure my academic journey is my priority. Working in social work has made me realize how much more I want to continue helping families in Arizona. My future plans are to become a counselor and to continue making a positive change in the lives of parents, children and infants to ensure our next generation has the ability to reach its potential.”

-- Monica Garcia Bustamante, Joe & Gladys Ziede Memorial Scholarship

Cover photo by Dr. Steve Merkley
The San Pedro River offers rich opportunity for Cochise College students to engage in undergraduate research while contributing to the knowledge base about everything from local mountain lions to invertebrates.
FROM THE COCHISE COLLEGE PRESIDENT

Last summer, college employees collaborated to identify the institution’s purpose and revise its mission and vision. These guiding statements are leading us into a new era marked by the same accessible, quality education for which we are known, but with an eye toward community.

• Purpose: To inspire passion and purpose through the education of individuals so that we enhance our community.

• Vision: Cochise College is a leading and responsive college which transforms and empowers our community by fostering collaborative relationships and providing innovative educational pathways.

• Mission: Cochise College provides inclusive and accessible educational opportunities that support social responsibility, community engagement, meaningful careers, and lifelong learning.

• How: In all we do, we exhibit collaboration, encouragement, respect, innovation, and service.

This issue of “Accolade” includes a look at some of the ways that faculty and staff have created active learning experiences that take the classroom into the community, engaging students in giving back both directly and indirectly. I hope these activities inspire you as much as they do me, because this is only the beginning!

J.D. Rottweiler, Ph.D.
President
Cochise College
jdr@cochise.edu
“Meeting students where they are” is an often heard statement at Cochise College. It is said regularly by faculty and staff working to ensure student success, sometimes in creative ways.

Traditional methods of academic support such as tutoring, advising, and informational workshops are now being supplemented with resources that provide basic needs not historically supported by institutions of higher education, including food pantries and mental health services.

According to the College and Universities Food Bank Alliance, nearly one-third of American college students missed a meal during the pandemic and over half (52%) use off-campus food banks to supplement their food needs. With food rising as a basic need, colleges have risen to the challenge, opening more than 700 campus food pantries in the last decade.

“We have long been aware of the many barriers causing students to not be retained,” said Marguerite Conners, student success manager. “They include financial need, transportation, technology, and food access.”

Technology and access to campus resources are tangible, easy-to-understand concepts colleges and universities have provided for decades, often paid for by the student through tuition and fees. Support in eliminating food insecurity is a newer concept, and one that is being provided by schools through little or no cost to the student or the institution.

At Cochise College, the Cochise Cupboard opened as a five-day operation, grocery-style model food pantry in Spring 2020. A space and a student worker to help manage day-to-day visitors formalized the distribution of food resources to students. “There is a strong stigma attached to food pantries and who has access to them,” said Abe Villarreal, Douglas Campus dean. “There is often shame that hinders someone from doing something as basic as getting food when he is hungry. Our job is to eliminate that feeling.”

The changing landscape in which the typical college student operates has also given rise to the need for food access. Students at Cochise College are largely non-traditional with families, jobs, and pressing needs that come together to create challenges in getting through college successfully. A 2018 survey conducted by a sociology class found that 54 percent of students routinely missed one to five meals weekly.

“We first became aware of this need through observation and discussions with faculty,” said Conners. “They shared with us that their students would be distracted in class because of hunger.”

Conners and a team of food security advocates formed a committee to help begin addressing the need. Today, with day-to-day operations at the Douglas Campus, the Cochise Cupboard welcomes students daily, where they first register and then take what items they need. The cupboards have expanded to not only provide non-perishable food items but also toiletries and laundry detergent.

“I’ve learned that students are especially grateful for the service,” said Conners, who often listens to students as they share the many pressures that their families are experiencing. “We have created a safe and welcoming environment for our pantry visitors.”

The establishment of the Cochise Cupboard has also expanded the college’s partnerships with the community, through food drives, donations, and fundraising.

“The next stage for us is to bring educational resources to help students become aware and to benefit from government benefits including WIC and SNAP,” said Villarreal. “We are happy to be a first point of contact for them as they learn about other community resources.”

Cochise Cupboard is planning to expand distribution services in Sierra Vista, and all students, regardless of their campus location, can request food pick ups through the college website.

HELP STOCK THE SHELVES
For more information about how to partner with the Cupboard and to learn how to give monetary or food donations, email foodpantry@cochise.edu or call (520) 417-4750.
Community connections teach life skills

Picking up trash, wiping down tombstones, and dropping off food for the needy is not something that you might expect to see in a college curriculum. For first-year students at Cochise College, these and other kinds of campus and community engagement activities are now a required component of the Connections For Success course.

Much research has been done on the academic benefits of students feeling a sense of belonging. The more a student is connected to what is read in a textbook, the more likely he or she is to find value in education and to graduate. For these reasons, Connections For Success was created as a course that many first-semester students take to learn good study habits, college resources, time management, and other valuable life skills to set them up for success.

“While we were happy with the curriculum, we decided that we could tailor students’ experiences in the course to match their needs and interests by creating a menu of engagement opportunities in which they could participate,” said Bryan Homrighausen, student success instruction department chair.

In the midst of the pandemic, and after a couple of semesters of online learning for all students, the student success instruction team began considering how they could incorporate more high-impact learning experiences.

“Students lost large parts of two school years due to the pandemic, and I can tell that they are hungry to get reconnected with their friends, classmates and larger school community. This course is an avenue for those relationships to develop,” said Homrighausen.

From those meetings, a set of learning outcomes was created. The class is commonly referred to as CPD 150, with learning outcomes centered around Connecting, Planning, and Developing. This year, with the additional element of “engagement,” the course is referred to by instructors as CPD+E.

“So far, the most rewarding part of our new curriculum has been seeing students make connections with fellow students and campus resources that they may not have made otherwise,” said Homrighausen. “Hopefully these connections will last through a student’s time at Cochise College.”

From the first day of the semester in August through the end of October, Connections For Success students, almost all of whom are in their first year of college, documented nearly 1,900 engagements. Students reported participating in community clean-up days, campus events, informational workshops, club meetings, tutoring services, and cultural programs.

Prior to the curriculum’s new emphasis on engagement, data of students enrolled in Connections For Success from 2015-2019 indicated higher rates of retention and persistence than first-year students who did not enroll in the course.

Enrolled students averaged an 84 percent persistence rate, meaning they continued enrollment after their first semester, and a 64 percent retention rate, indicating that they continued enrollment through the third semester, or second year.

The high levels of energy and enthusiasm shared by students through engagement have been passed on to instructors who have developed other high-impact learning experiences. At the mid-semester point, several students came together to create poster presentations illustrating learning outcomes. One group of students has developed self-reflection writings and is partnering with an art class on an interdisciplinary exhibit.

The engagement curriculum has also been attractive to higher education conference organizations. Two conference proposals created by a team of Cochise College instructors were accepted for presentations at national conferences in the spring.

With the many life responsibilities that students need to balance, they have found time to dedicate themselves to community engagement and are learning the important values of connecting, planning, and developing. That decision alone is a strong indicator of their future success.
The road to Katie Puckett’s marine biology career leads through the desert.

As president of the Undergraduate Science Research Club, she’s taking advantage of unique opportunities offered by the biology faculty at Cochise College. Puckett participates in every club activity, such as collecting aquatic invertebrates and sorting them in a lab, maintaining trail cameras, and sampling scat to extract and research DNA. She and another student also contributed to a research paper on local mountain lions that was authored primarily by biology faculty member Dr. Steve Merkley. The paper is expected to be published by The Journal of Arizona-Nevada Academy of Science in Spring 2022.

“It focuses on mountain lions in the San Pedro River National Conservation Area and hypothesizes that we have lions living near the river, rather than just using it as a place to grab a quick drink and a meal as they pass through,” Puckett says. “We saw cubs on our trail cameras, so that was exciting proof of the reasoning behind our hypothesis!”

The college delved into undergraduate research about nine years ago, joining the Community College Undergraduate Research Initiative (CCURI), a network of 38 schools dedicated to the development and implementation of research experiences at their institutions. At that time, Cochise College participants studied the proteins of bean beetles at different life stages.

Opportunities have grown and evolved, seeking to answer questions about the ecological environment of Cochise County and Sonora. Three biology faculty are leading projects related to the San Pedro River and Kino Bay in Sonora. In addition, anthropology faculty Megan Cleary manages the college archaeology collection and has worked with students to participate in an archaeological assessment of Camp Naco.

“I love that we have grown and continue on with our research projects,” says department chair Kari Durham, whose passion is microbiology.

The beauty of undergraduate research is that it’s authentic, Durham says. It differs from the labs in regular courses in that the faculty leading the project have research skills but don’t know the outcome.

“I tell my students that I’m learning just as they are learning. We’re going to have a lot of disappointment because that’s science. This is how research really is.”

Durham is leading students through projects studying the microbiome of the San Pedro River and antimicrobials. Concentrating on the bacteria in the area surrounding the river, students take samples using a solution that helps grow bacteria, watch them for 24 hours, and select which bacteria they want to identify, some using polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technology. PCR is a laboratory technique used to make multiple copies of a segment of DNA; it is very precise and can be used to amplify, or copy, a specific DNA target from a mixture of DNA molecules. Students seek to answer the question of how the microbiome changes in different climate conditions. They also search for antimicrobials and examine the stresses that cause them to reproduce, for how long, and whether they lose the ability to reproduce.
Colleague Frank Emanuele also has three projects, one of which focuses on the study of eelgrass, a flowering aquatic plant that grows along coastlines worldwide. What’s unique is that an indigenous community wants someone to study it because they believe the plant growing in an area along the Sonoran coast is a subspecies of *Zostera marina*; its flowers display a different pattern than others. The Comcáac people use the plant as part of their culture, and it’s important to the ecosystem of the sea turtle.

“Over the last four years, we’ve come up with a manner to extract DNA from it and to compare it to other species. During spring break, we collect it and look at how it might change from year to year.”

The plant is a good indicator of water quality, in that light has to penetrate the water to reach it. The location where it grows is in the Gulf of California, near strong currents, and is cut off from the rest of the nearby ecosystem.

“That’s why we believe it’s unique and are trying to show support that it is a subspecies,” he says.

Emanuele also works with students to look for scat, take samples, and run a PCR analysis to identify the animal and, in the future, what it’s eaten. Researchers hope to find lion feces so they can conduct a genetic analysis on lion populations near the river. Lion scat is elusive, as it turns out. But while they’re hunting, researchers can always collaborate on another project to collect freshwater insects in order to identify the species of invertebrates that exist in the San Pedro.

“Students get to experience how researchers analyze data that would eventually be published, as well as how studies can benefit conservation and impact their community,” Emanuele says. “Students get to do experimentation and go through a whole process and use technology that I didn’t have access to until I was in graduate school.”

In the past, students have participated and presented their work at the Southern California Conference for Undergraduate Research and the ANAS conference, according to Merkley.

“It’s really cool at this level to conduct research, present research and publish research. We are trying to include research components in our courses so students have the opportunity for research, statistical analysis, and presenting research in the class. Our projects cross the boundaries between teaching and research.”

In addition to the mountain lion and invertebrate projects, Merkley and his students monitor beavers, which were reintroduced to the San Pedro in 1999. He also volunteers with the Friends of the San Pedro River, which this year awarded a scholarship that is covering Puckett’s fall and spring tuition. Through the scholarship, Puckett has become a volunteer with the Bureau of Land Management. She also provides the Friends with Facebook content, monitors and maintains nesting boxes for Lucy’s Warblers, and will help with general landscape maintenance around the San Pedro House.

“The research club has provided a safe place for us science-loving folks to gather and learn and do what we love,” Puckett says. “The scholarship has allowed me to continue learning about the biology and ecology of this part of Southern Arizona, which I am learning is a very rich, diverse, and special place. It is a great place to be a young biologist and I feel lucky that I have gotten to start out here.”

SOCIAL
Follow students like Puckett by searching “undergraduate research” at cochise.edu, Cochise College Undergraduate Research on Facebook, and cochisecollegeresearchclub on Instagram.
1960s
One-time student body vice president and editor of the student newspaper “The Heliograph,” David Gurzenski-Lukes wrote and managed publications for a number of organizations, including the “State Press” of Arizona State University, where he earned a bachelor’s degree; the alumni magazine of the University of Arizona, where he earned a master’s degree; and San Diego State University, University of California - Los Angeles, and United Way, where he served as head of publications. Today he and partner Alan operate a cabin rental business in Big Bear, California.

David Gurzenski-Lukes

Following numerous professional experiences in education, Doris Huish Palmer ('67) discovered a passion for working with gifted students. She was recruited by Peoria Unified School District to coordinate and facilitate a gifted seminar program for junior high gifted students from the district’s 24 schools. She spent the next 22 years writing differentiated curriculums, taking students to California for field trips, mentoring teachers, and “unfolding, but not molding gifted students.” Before the ink was dry on her retirement arrangements, she was recruited back to be a gifted curriculum and instruction coach, which she did for four years before retiring in 2018.

1970s
Aviation graduate John Merritt ('71) served 25 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, which led to a bachelor’s degree in business and then a master’s degree. Merritt served or trained in Okinawa, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Germany, Virginia, and North Carolina. After retiring in 1996, he served as a USMC consultant on various matters. Today, he volunteers for Habitat for Humanity, Elks Club, the Marine Corps League, and Colorado State University.

Jim and Joyce Hall

Joe Hall ('75) played baseball at New Mexico State University after two years at Cochise. Prior to his retirement, he was a game warden for Arizona Game and Fish for 33 years.

A flooded aviation market led professional pilot graduate Forrest Artz ('76) to earn a degree in accounting and merge his interests in a career in aviation finance. He became a CPA and managing assistant comptroller overseeing the financial operations for Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport and Midway Airport. Ten years later, he became the director of finance for the Memphis International Airport, where he has served as chief financial officer for 13 years. “My aviation background that started at Cochise has been instrumental in building my success in my financial aviation management career.”

Cochise College will name its baseball field for alumnus and 38-year employee Dr. James “Bo” Hall ('71), who retired in June. Hall, originally from Bowie, Arizona, played baseball for the college before becoming a coach, athletic director and executive dean of student services. He and his wife Joyce recently established a fund to provide scholarships to NJCAA-eligible players. A dedication event is being planned for April 2, 2022.
**1980s**  
**Steve Deal** ('85) played basketball and studied business at Cochise. He is currently employed by Trader Joe’s. “I met a lot of great people at Cochise. I was fortunate to have Dr. James Young as a mentor. His door was always open.”

**Dennis Kidd** ('87) played baseball at Cochise and recently retired as a special education teacher in New Mexico.

**Henry “Hank” Tagle** ('88) was picked up by the Chicago White Sox organization in the early 1990s. He later coached at Cochise with **Richard “Bubba” Hall** ('89). Today, he is an endodontist in the Flagstaff area. Hall serves as senior director of facilities and special projects with Volunteers of America Northern Rockies in Wyoming.

**Ricky Scruggs** attended Cochise in the late 1980s, living in the dorms with baseball teammates **Troy Bradford**, **Todd Youngblood**, and **Shane Sebastian**. That year, the team went to the Junior College World Series. Today, Scruggs is a corps officer/pastor with the Salvation Army.

**Richard Soto**, who attended Cochise in the 1980s, is the CEO of Sky Guardian, a commercial drone company based in Bisbee and San Diego. The company is FAA certified to fly commercial missions across the country.

**1990s**  
**Jake Hagar** came to Cochise on a baseball scholarship but ended up being a walk-on for the basketball team. Hagar worked in the oil and gas industry and has now opened Frank’s Butcher Shop in Casper, Wyoming.

**Bill Wright** ('92) is assistant principal and athletic director at Estrella Foothills High School in the Buckeye Union High School District. His brother Brian Wright ('93) has worked in municipal government for 22 years and is the finance director for the City of Eloy.

**Scott Rogers** ('98) played baseball at Cochise and then at Eastern Oregon University. He is production manager for Western Alliance Insurance.

**2000s**  
Former women’s basketball player **Melissa Acosta Rodriguez** ('00) earned a bachelor’s degree in education from the University of Arizona and began teaching, first at Phoenix’s Creighton Elementary, and then in Douglas. A master’s of education in educational administration and supervision helped her land a job as assistant principal at Douglas High School. She later served as principal at Ray Borane Middle School and in July became the principal at Douglas High.

**2010s**  
Intelligence operations alum **Emily Grower** ('13) credits the education she received working with sensitive information for playing a role in her becoming a graduate assistant with the University of Arkansas and eventually coordinating campus substance education and working with struggling students. “Having this degree not only benefited me in my position as an intelligence analyst, but also set me up to continue my education after leaving the Army National Guard. I will always appreciate Cochise College for helping to get me where I am!”

Now retired from professional baseball, **Tyler Fallwell** ('16) was drafted by the Kansas City Royals in 2016 and is now involved in his family’s entertainment company The Breaking Point in Texas.

**Loren Gladwill** ('16) has begun classes at the Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law at the University of Memphis. His wife Victoria also earned CNA and EMT certificates at Cochise.

**IN MEMORIAM**

**Linda Maguire**, who previously managed the campus Barnes & Noble bookstores, passed away October 21, 2021.


**Florence Bohmfalk**, former administrative assistant in athletics, passed away Sept. 24, 2021.

**Anna Field**, science lab coordinator in the 1980s, passed away Sept. 18, 2021.

**Al Coons**, former student and math faculty, passed away Aug. 27, 2021.

Three community members join foundation board

The Cochise College Foundation welcomed Melany Edwards-Barton (’08), Mary Jackson and Jamie Wu to the board in July. Each will share her passion for higher education and support the organization in its work to raise funds to promote student success.

A 2008 graduate of Cochise College, Edwards-Barton is executive director of the Sierra Vista Area Chamber of Commerce. She was an adult student when she enrolled at Cochise, became active in Phi Theta Kappa honor society, and earned a scholarship to complete her bachelor’s degree at Northern Arizona University. She graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor’s in business administration from NAU in 2010. Edwards-Barton is a Gold Star wife, mother of one daughter, and grandmother to three. She has more than 20 years of business leadership experience in non-profits, for profits, and volunteer organizations. In addition, she is a licensed real estate agent and business advisor for Professional Women of Excellence.

Mary Jackson’s parents insisted that she and her siblings finish high school. After that, because of finances, she spent 15 years pursuing a bachelor’s degree at three community colleges in three different states, finishing at Arizona State University. Most of those years, she worked full time and attended school at night. Jackson has worked in public accounting, private enterprise and government, retiring as a CPA from Arizona G&T Cooperatives.

“To me, education is the key to achieving many personal goals and solving many of our social issues,” Jackson said. “I welcome becoming a member of a group that will allow me in some small way to help others to obtain a higher level of education.”

Family nurse practitioner Jamie Wu was raised by parents who value education. As such, she was afforded many opportunities and experiences that others in her community did not have. She is passionate about helping students become aware of how possible higher education is and also serving the community that raised her. Wu, a resident of Douglas, recently completed a doctor of nursing practice degree. She is a nurse injector/global skincare specialist with Douglas Family Care and also a licensed registered nurse.

“I have a vested interest in this community that I call home,” Wu said. “I am hopeful that by dedicating my time to organizations such as this, I might have a hand in creating and offering opportunities to current students who might not have educational opportunities, or know how to seek them out, otherwise.”

Revenue-generating program recognized

The Cochise College-Cochise College Foundation partnership that is transforming a neighborhood and students, and which also generates revenue for the residential construction technology program, recently received honorable mention and a cash prize for the EideBailly Resourcefulness Award.

EideBailly is a CPA firm, and its non-profit advisory group offers the award for non-profits that develop outstanding initiatives to support their communities through creative and sustainable revenue-generating activities. The top prize is $10,000, and honorable mention is $5,000. The college is using the funds to purchase supplies used by RCT students who construct a house over the course of about 10 months.

The partnership calls for the college to hire a licensed contractor to teach students construction skills and oversee the project. The foundation provides the materials. When the house is finished and sold, proceeds are put toward the next project house. The college has completed and sold three houses, and students are working on a fourth, in the Fry Townsite area of Sierra Vista.

Students have constructed three new homes in Fry Townsite, an unincorporated area surrounded by Sierra Vista.
Log the miles you run, walk or cycle during March 2022.

For every 10 miles run or walked, or every 30 miles cycled, earn one entry in a prize drawing.

Register by Dec. 3 to be entered in an early-bird drawing to win an Apple Watch.

To register, search "Pathway to $150k" at runsignup.com. Registration is $40 + tax & processing fee. Register through March 2022.

Proceeds benefit the Senior and Non-Traditional Scholarship and Dual Enrollment Programs.

Thanks to these sponsors of prizes and giveaways:
Sierra Toyota, Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative, Lawley Automotive Group, Native Grill & Wings, Running Belt Max, Calmoseptine Ointment, Tea of a Kind, Pepsi Bottling Co. of Safford, Texas Roadhouse, Olive Garden, Walmart
This issue’s historical photo of Cochise College library staff members was taken at the dedication of the Charles DiPeso library on the Douglas Campus. We’re missing one photo identification, so if you can help, please email us at alumni@cochise.edu.

Pictured in the back row are Veronica Munoz, Katie McGuire, Larry McAlister, Pat Hotchkiss and Jeanne Baker.

The front row includes the individual who has not been identified, Sylvia Smith, Catherine Lincer, Kathleen (Walker) Michaels, and David Velasco.

See anyone you know?
Email alumni@cochise.edu to help us identify the members of the 1970 Cochise College baseball team.