



## Calendar

### FEB. 19

Flex Day - No Classes

### FEB. 21 & 22

Plays Made In a Day presented by the Orange Coast College Repertory Theatre, 7:30 p.m., Drama Lab, Studio 102

### FEB. 24

Spring Pirate Involvement Fair, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Main Quad

### FEB. 25

Open Forum, 10 a.m., College Center, Ballrooms B & C

### FEB. 26

Exit Report, 11 a.m., College Center, Ballrooms B & C

### FEB. 26

Lunar New Year Celebration, Noon - 2 p.m., Main Quad

### FEB. 27

Public Telescope Star Party, 8:15 - 9:15 p.m., OCC Planetarium

### MAR. 2

Industrial Technology Careers Showcase, 3:30 p.m., Technology Center, Main Lobby

### MAR. 3

Spring University Fair, 1 p.m., Student Union



## OCC Announces Chief Dan Stefano as 2025 Alumni Hall of Fame Inductee

Orange Coast College has named Chief Dan Stefano as the college's 2025 inductee into the Alumni Hall of Fame.

With a career spanning more than three decades, from reserve firefighter to Fire Chief, he credits his start at community college with providing him with a solid foundation. His dedication to the community was recognized this year when Chief Stefano was named a recipient of the 2025 California Community College Distinguished Alumni Award by the Community College



League of California. The statewide honor recognizes former community college students who have achieved outstanding success in their chosen fields while demonstrating exceptional service to their communities.

“Orange Coast College played a crucial role in my personal and professional journey, both academically and athletically,” Stefano says. “It served as a vital launching pad for my career in service and my graduate studies at CSULB and USC. My approach has always been guided by a team and family environment, with faith at the core.”

“This recognition is truly about those who have been a valued part of my journey through each chapter along the way. It reflects the shared mission of OCC and all community colleges to open doors, uplift students, and help them discover what’s possible.”

Stefano earned an associate degree in general education from OCC and graduated from the fire academy at Santa Ana College with an associate degree in fire technology. He later graduated from California State University, Long Beach, and the University of Southern California, earning graduate degrees in public policy and administration and executive leadership. He is also a graduate of the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program.

“As an alumnus, Dan continues to be a shining example of leadership and service – a true asset to the community whose commitment uplifts others and reflects the very best of what it means to give back with purpose and heart,” OCC Foundation Board Chair Jeff Hyder says.

His reputation as a leader is shown in action by the way he shows up, leads with integrity, and how he makes others feel they matter. He is the kind of leader who listens first, teaches by example, and quietly serves where he is needed.

In 2020, his leadership was demonstrated during the dual crises of the Covid-19 pandemic and California’s historic wildfires, when he became the first Orange County fire chief in more than 20 years to be elected to lead the California Fire Chiefs Association, representing 800 agencies with trust and calm.

In December, Stefano retired as fire chief for the city of Costa Mesa after a distinguished 30-year fire service career. His hardwork and legacy are what show that he embodies the values of humility, leadership and service that define the community college experience. He has earned distinction as one of the most respected leaders in public safety in California. He has served as

president of the California Fire Chiefs Association, the Orange County Fire Chiefs Association and the League of California Cities Fire Chiefs Department. He is among only 32 individuals in California history to earn the Certified Fire Chief designation.

“Chief Stefano’s story is a testament to the transformational impact of a community college education,” Dr. Angelica L. Suarez, President of Orange Coast College says.

Stefano will be formally inducted into the Alumni Hall of Fame during the college’s commencement ceremony on Friday, May 22.

Before OCC’s commencement ceremony, Chief Stefano will have a plaque bearing his resemblance added to the OCC Alumni Hall of Fame wall on the second floor of the College Center.

## OCC Culinary Program earns Exemplary Status from ACF



The Orange Coast College Culinary Program has been awarded exemplary status by the American Culinary Federation (ACF), the premier professional organization for culinarians in North America, and the industry standard for certification, education, and accreditation.

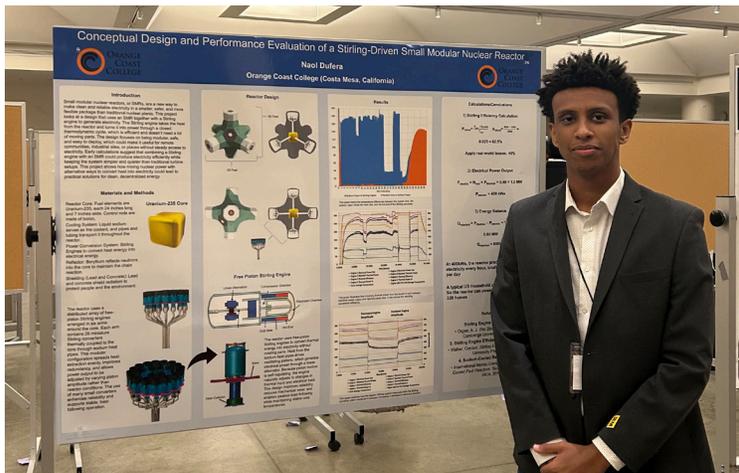
This site visit garnered them the maximum seven years of accreditation before renewal is required.

“This recognition reflects the strength of our curriculum, faculty expertise, facilities, student outcomes, and our continued commitment to excellence and continuous improvement,” Chef Davina Dunner, program coordinator of culinary arts says. “It was a team effort. We have an incredibly talented and dedicated teaching staff here in culinary.”

OCC's Culinary Program is also the only ACF-accredited institution in California holding four exemplary status certificates for both its culinary and baking and pastry certificate programs. It is also the only program in the state offering ACF-accredited associate degrees with exemplary status.

"This distinction places our program in a uniquely strong position both regionally and nationally," Dunner says. "We are proud to represent the college at this level and look forward to building on this success in the years ahead."

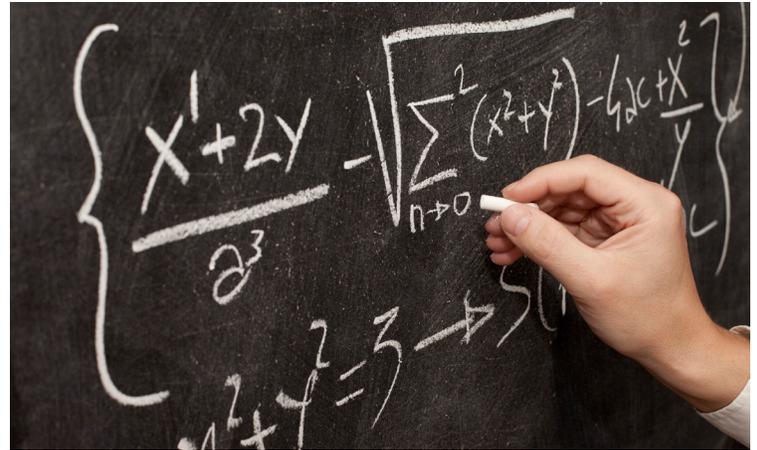
## MESA Student Represents OCC at Harvard for National Collegiate Research Conference



Physics and astronomy major Naol Dufera represented Orange Coast College at the 2026 National Collegiate Research Conference (NCRC) at Harvard University in January. The conference is the nation's largest student-run research conference and welcomes university students from around the world. Dufera, the only community college student in attendance, joined students from Penn State, Caltech, Howard University, Duke, and MIT to share his research from the Giles T. Brown Student Project and Research Symposium: "Conceptual Design and Performance Evaluation of a Stirling-Driven Small Modular Nuclear Reactor."

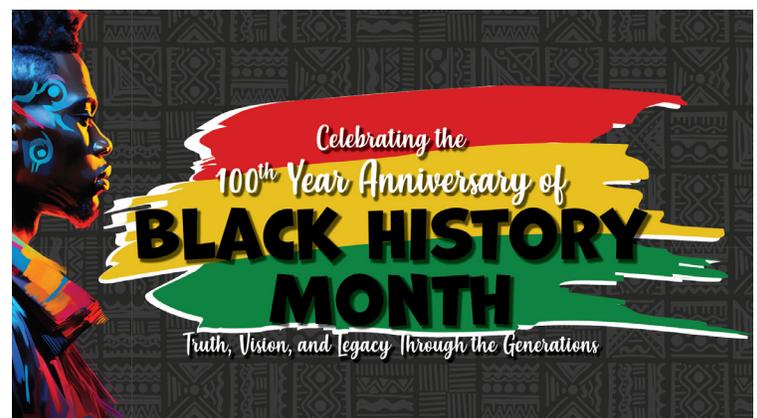
"I'd just like to give a big thank you to everyone who made this opportunity possible. Their support really made it possible for me to attend and grow from the experience," Dufera says. "My next steps are to continue developing and expanding the project, adding more depth to the research and refining it."

## OCC Ranks Among Top in Nationwide Student Math League Event



Orange Coast College students competed in the Student Math League at the American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges (AMATYC) event. This marks the group's first year returning to the nationwide Math competition since before 2020. Under the advisement of professor Vu Phan, the team notably ranked third in the Southwest region and 13th among 117 schools nationwide. The second round of the tournament will be held in the spring.

## OCC Celebrates Black History Month



Orange Coast College celebrates the 100th anniversary of Black History Month throughout February.

The Black History Month Kickoff Celebration in the Main Quad set off a month-long of celebrations Feb. 2. This cultural celebration of dancing, music, food, and inspiration featured Dr. Jewel Jackson, owner and

founder of African Soul International, bringing the joy of African culture, history and music to the OCC community. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. joined the celebration to share their service to community, sister and brotherhood, and honor the rich legacy of HBCUs.

The Black History Month festivities also include the Black History 101 Mobile Museum with Dr. Khalid el-Hakim, featuring a powerful, curated exhibit of original artifacts from our 15,000-piece collection, spanning slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and contemporary culture.

Sarah Collins Rudolph will join us Feb. 25 in the ballrooms for History Among Us: A Conversation with Time as she speaks on being the 5th Little Girl: Soul Survivor of the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing for an important reminder of the importance of telling the story and preserving the legacy.

## OCC to Celebrate Year of the Fire Horse with Lunar New Year Celebration



OCC's Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) team will host a Lunar New Year celebration on Thursday, February 26, from noon to 2 p.m. in the Main Quad. OCC students, staff, faculty and community members are invited to celebrate the beginning of the Year of the Fire Horse and a new year of health, happiness, and prosperity through community and culture. During the event, the campus community

can experience multiple cultural showcases, including Lunar New Year snacks and refreshments, festive photo opportunities and activity booths featuring red envelope decorating, calligraphy and traditional games. Activities begin at noon with a community resource fair featuring local organizations that support the Asian community. The highlight of the celebration, the Lion & Dragon Dance performance, will begin at 12:30 p.m. Lunar New Year is celebrated across the globe to welcome the arrival of spring and the start of a new year based on the Chinese lunisolar calendar. This year, Lunar New Year began on Feb. 17, kicking off more than two weeks of festivities, customs, and delicious feasts. The Fire Horse sign, a rare combination that occurs once every 60 years, blends the energetic qualities of the horse with the dynamic nature of the fire element, symbolizing strength, passion and forward movement.

## OCC is the Number One Top Transfer College in Orange County



Orange Coast College has topped the list of top transfer colleges again this year. OCC is proud of the proven track record of getting community college students to the next level. Students are continuing their educational career at UC's and CSU's – as well as transferring to prestigious private universities like USC and Pepperdine. With these results, OCC is the smart choice for students looking to move on to a four-year university.