



Calendar

MARCH 10 & 11

BANFF Mountain Film Festival World Tour, 7 p.m., Robert B. Moore Theatre, Tickets: Student \$10, General Public \$17

MARCH 14

Planetarium and Aquarium Open House, 7:30 p.m., Drama Lab, Studio 102

MARCH 19

Myanmar Diaries" Documentary Film Series Event & Student Panel, 4 - 6 p.m., Forum, Large lecture hall, Free to attend & open to the public

MARCH 20, 21, 22, 27, 28

Twelfth Night, The Musical, 7:30-10 p.m., Drama Lab/Studio 101, Tickets: Student/Senior \$12, General Public \$20, Free parking

MARCH 23

Speech, Debate & Theater Team: Individual Events Showcase (Public Speaking Events), 3 - 4 p.m., LLSS 146

MARCH 29

Twelfth Night, The Musical, 2:30 p.m., Drama Lab/Studio 101, Tickets: Student/Senior \$12, General Public \$20, Free parking

MARCH 30 THROUGH APRIL 5

2026 Spring Break

APRIL 8

Pirate's Plank Business Pitch Competition, 6:45 p.m., Robert B. Moore Theatre

APRIL 10, 11, 12

OCC Theatre Repertory: student-directed REP productions, 7:30 p.m., Drama Lab/Studio 102, Tickets are free



Accreditation Team Recognizes OCC's Commitment to Student Success

During last week's Exit Report, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) peer review team shared that the team felt Orange Coast College meets accreditation standards in all areas. The team commended the college for its planning and thoughtful use of data to drive continuous improvement in support of student success.

The peer review team heard directly from OCC's students, faculty, classified professionals and administrators about how academic excellence and student support are reflected across the campus. They also observed the strength of the college's academic programs, the depth of its student support services and the collaborative culture that defines the college.

"The visit reaffirmed the intentional work we do every day to ensure that Orange Coast College remains focused on students through innovation, creativity, and academic excellence," OCC President Angelica Suarez said in her weekly President's Message.

Next, the ACCJC peer review team will send its report and recommendations to the commission, which will then take formal action on OCC's accreditation at its June 3-5, 2026 meeting.

The Orange Coast College Speech, Debate & Theater Team Takes First in Spring Championship Tournament

The Orange Coast College Speech, Debate & Theater team earned first place at the regional Pacific Southwest Collegiate Forensics Association (PSCFA) Spring Championship Tournament held Feb. 20 - 22 at Moorpark College.

The dynamic 18-student team led the tournament with an impressive 50 points total, easily earning them first place overall at the community college level. The group brought

home 18 awards and accolades after competing in 43 competitive events across 13 categories at the weekend event.

OCC was one of 26 Southern California colleges and universities at the tournament, including University of California, San Diego; California State University, San Diego; Concordia University; and California State University, Long Beach.

Top honors went to Mia Rinaldi, who won Gold in the Open International Public Debate Association (IPDA) event; Hera Hartman, who took first in the Junior Persuasion event; and Christian Delgado, who won first in the Open After Dinner event.

Next up for the team is the California Community College Forensics Association (CCCFA) State Championship tournament scheduled for March 10 - 15 in Concord, California, followed by the Phi Rho Pi National Championship hosted in Bethesda, Maryland.

OCC Culinary Team Wins Western Regional Competition



Orange Coast College culinary arts students won the 2026 American Culinary Federation's Western Regional Student Team Competition on Feb. 28 at Los Angeles Trade Tech College. The American Culinary Federation is the largest professional chef's organization in North America.

This was the first year that OCC took two teams to the regional competition: one team of students who will be graduating this spring, while the second team was made up of newer students, most of whom have only completed our entry-level culinary courses. Both teams earned silver medals. Medals are point-based and are not indicative of overall placement.

"All 10 students were incredibly dedicated, and we wanted to give each of them the opportunity to compete," says Chef Davina Dunner, OCC program coordinator of culinary arts. "We made an impact."

Team A, made up of newer students, most of whom have only completed our entry-level culinary courses, scored 87.3 points out of 100. Team B, consisted of students who will be graduating this spring, scored 88.8 points and achieved the highest score in the region.

Team B will be moving on to represent the Western Region at the National Championship June 30, in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Theresa De Los Santos Honored as Outstanding First-Year Student Advocate



Theresa De Los Santos, Director of the Orange Coast College MESA Program, the Science and Engineering Tutoring Center (SETC) and the STEM Accelerator, was honored at the 45th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience. The event took place February 15 - 18 in Seattle, Washington.

She was selected as a recipient for the National Resource Center's Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates. De Los Santos is one of only two recipients in the two-year colleges category nationwide to be honored. For several years, De Los Santos has been at the forefront of initiatives aimed at supporting first-year students and those navigating critical academic transitions in STEM disciplines.

Under her leadership, the programs she oversees have established a robust framework designed to facilitate success for students in STEM fields. This includes personalized academic counseling, tutoring, study groups, and peer mentorship programs aimed at equipping students with the necessary tools to thrive in college-level STEM coursework. With dedicated spaces on campus for both the MESA and STEM Accelerator programs, students have streamlined access to academic and social support services, fostering connections with peers in the STEM community. These environments help students build confidence, develop effective study

strategies, and cultivate a sense of belonging right from their first semester. The MESA program and STEM Accelerator work in tandem to support a diverse range of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students. MESA's equity-focused model facilitates pathways for first generation, calculus-based STEM students from community college into four-year universities, while the STEM Accelerator broadens these supports to include low-income STEM students who may not qualify for MESA. Combined with the SETC's robust tutoring and study group offerings, these programs connect students with hands-on learning experiences, field trips to four-year institutions, industry-aligned internship opportunities, university research opportunities, and professional conferences. The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, in collaboration with Penguin Random House Publishing, recognizes individuals on the nation's campuses who are Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates involved in high-impact practices for first-year student success.

OCC Waterfront Campus Hosts Adaptive Sailing Class



In early February, the Orange Coast College School of Sailing & Seamanship partnered with the City of Newport Beach to host an Adaptive Sailing class at Marina Park in Newport Beach. The event focused on making sailing accessible, comfortable, and empowering for sailors of all abilities.

Adaptive sailors - individuals with physical, mental, or sensory disabilities - took to the water aboard J/22 keel-boats and a specially designed Venture 16 built for added stability and accessibility.

Each participant received individualized instruction and adaptive techniques to learn the fundamentals of sailing, build confidence and experience the freedom and teamwork that make time on the water so powerful.

The School of Sailing & Seamanship is proud to continue expanding inclusive access to sailing by hosting many more adaptive sailing days at Marina Park.

Spring Flex Day Promotes a Caring Campus and Sense of Belonging



Orange Coast College held its Spring Flex Day on Thursday, Feb. 19, with a focus on a Caring Campus and a message of belonging. The day included general sessions and workshops, with a midday break to the Robert B. Moore Theatre for a college update and a bit of relief from the day's rain.

President Angelica Suarez led the large general session, sharing an update on the college's accreditation journey under the theme "Charting our course forward" and thanking the campus community and committee members for their combined efforts. She shared that the focus has been on three core inquiries: planning and data use, distance education and regular & substantive interaction and employee evaluations. As the accreditation journey winds down, the campus community is invited to participate in the final open forum and exit report presentation hosted by the accreditation peer review team this week. The president closed her message by emphasizing the importance of creating conditions that support student success. She compared that work to her abuelo's care for the family's fields - understanding the soil to ensure its fruitful harvest.

Next to take the stage was keynote speaker Gaelin Elmore who shared his story and lessons about the importance of belonging and then encouraging attendees to "be the difference." He shared how mentors and community members helped him overcome his circumstances to reach his potential. Using the acronym CARE (compassion, authenticity, responsibility and empowerment) Elmore showed that OCC has the power to foster a sense of belonging in our students.

The college will host its next Flex Day in the fall.

OCC Celebrates Year of the Fire Horse with Lunar New Year Celebration



OCC's Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) team hosted a Lunar New Year festival to celebrate the year of the Fire Horse sign, a rare combination that occurs once every 60 years. The festivities kicked-off with the traditional Lion & Dragon Dance and featured talented local performers throughout the event. The OCC community enjoyed Lunar New Year snacks and refreshments, festive photo opportunities and activity booths featuring red envelope decorating, calligraphy and traditional games. The Fire Horse sign blends the energetic qualities of the horse with the dynamic nature of the fire element, symbolizing strength, passion and forward movement.

Banff Film Festival Returns to OCC March 10 & 11

The Orange Coast College Friends of the Library (FOTL) will host screenings of the Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour on Tuesday, March 10 and Wednesday, March 11 with a different selection of films on each night.

The program begins at 7 p.m. in the Robert B. Moore Theatre, and features an international selection of films showcasing a wide range of outdoor adventures and portraits, including climbing, mountain expeditions, remote cultures, and the world's last great wild places.

The Banff Mountain Film Festival is a flagship program of the Banff Centre in Canada. The festival began more than 35 years ago as a one-day event featuring films about mountain climbing and has grown into a nine-day event with more than 840 screenings held throughout the year.

Advance tickets can be purchased on OCC Tickets for \$17 or \$20 the day of the screening. Tickets for current OCC students with ID are only \$10.



For general information, email cmorgan@occ.cccd.edu or call (714) 432-0202 x21058. Complimentary parking will be available in Lot C near the Robert B. Moore Theatre. All proceeds will benefit OCC Friends of the Library.

OCC Planetarium and Aquarium Spring House to Welcome Community



The OCC Planetarium and Dennis Kelly Aquarium will host a free community Spring Open House from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 14.

The fun-filled day will feature short planetarium presentations, guided aquarium tours and informal educational activities led by faculty and students. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife and other outside vendors have been invited to participate.

During the Open House, the aquarium staff will guide visitors through an immersive experience by meeting all of their critters, and participating in exciting activities and scientific demonstrations. Guests will learn more about local ecological and environmental projects by talking to a host of expert organizations at their booths.

The planetarium will be premiering "Wayfinders: Waves, Winds, and Stars," a live-action full-dome program that explores how ocean waves, winds, and the night sky have guided voyagers for generations. The program highlights the powerful connections between our oceans, the Earth, and the stars above. This show places viewers on the deck of the voyaging canoe Hōkūle'a as they explore traditional Polynesian navigation.

Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in hands-on instructional activities, learn about academic programs, as well as experience the one-of-a-kind planetarium and aquarium facilities right here on the OCC campus.