



53RD ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT
Friday, May 22 | 6:00 pm



Over the last month, I had the honor of reviewing scholarship applications. Reading the scholarship applications reinforces the reason we are in this field of work and grounds us. The applicant's stories are powerful and inspiring. In a perfect world everyone would be granted a scholarship award.

RECENT & UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

- **19th Annual Festival of New Plays** was held May 14–16 at the Mendocino College Little Theatre.
- **The Mendocino College Krenov School Graduation Show** opened May 16 and continues through May 25 at the Highlight Gallery in Mendocino.
- **The 2026 RN Pinning Ceremony** will be held on May 21 at the Mendocino College Center Theatre.
- **The 53rd Annual Commencement Ceremony** will take place on May 22 at 6:00 p.m. at the Stadium Field on the Ukiah Campus.

Continued on following page...

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS




Highlights continued...

The Bloom, a Lake County online news source, recently published an article featuring a graduate from the Mendocino College Fire Academy Class III. On behalf of the entire Mendocino College community, I would also like to recognize the faculty, staff, and regional fire agencies who partner with the College to make this academy possible. Together, we are strengthening our local workforce and ensuring that Mendocino County and the surrounding region are served by highly trained, homegrown firefighters.


[Read the full article here.](#) 



FAFSA IDENTITY VERIFICATION

Beginning in April 2026, the U.S. Department of Education implemented identity verification screening for all FAFSA applicants. This federal fraud-prevention measure ensures that applications are submitted by legitimate, eligible students. 

STUDENT HOUSING PARCEL

The buildings at the Perkins and Main Street site have been removed. The site is being cleared, and bollards will be installed along the street-facing perimeter. This represents a critical step toward submitting a competitive Affordable Student Housing grant application by establishing a shovel-ready parcel. While construction is anticipated in future years as funding becomes available, this preparation marks meaningful progress toward expanding student housing. 




May 2026



April 2026

VETERANS RESOURCE FAIR

Mendocino College hosted a Veterans Resource Fair on April 9 at Pomo Plaza in Ukiah. The event brought together organizations including Nations Finest, VA Health, the American Legion, NCO, Mendocino Forestry, and the Mendocino County EDD.

The fair provided resources and networking opportunities for veterans, dependents, and students exploring career paths and community services. 

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



Pictured: Marilyn Simpson

CONGRATULATIONS RETIREES!

Mendocino College proudly recognizes the contributions and service of our 2025–2026 retirees. Each of these individuals has made a lasting impact on our students, programs, and campus community.

Part-Time Faculty


- Marilyn Simpson, Music Instructor

Classified

- Nancy Heth, EOPS Specialist


Management

- Suzanne Hewitt, Assistant Dean of Health Careers & Director of the RN Program
- Eric Hoefler, Director of MESA & STEM Success
- Anthony Risch, Custodial Supervisor

We extend our sincere gratitude to these dedicated colleagues for their years of service and commitment to student success. Their contributions have helped shape Mendocino College in meaningful ways, and they will be greatly missed. We wish them all the best in their well-earned retirement. 

**RN GRADUATION CEREMONY**


Thu., May 21 | 5:00-7:00 pm | Center Theatre

Mendocino College will celebrate the graduating class of Registered Nursing (RN) students on Thursday, May 21, 2026, from 5:00–7:00 p.m. at the Center Theatre on the Ukiah Campus. Friends and family are welcome to attend and join in recognizing the accomplishments of this year's graduates as they prepare to enter the healthcare field. 

COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

Friday, May 22 | 6:00 pm | Stadium Field

Celebrate the achievements of Mendocino College graduates at the 53rd Annual Commencement Ceremony on Friday, May 22, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. The ceremony will take place at the Stadium Field on the Ukiah Campus.

Students, friends, and family are warmly invited to attend and honor this important milestone. Your presence helps make the day even more memorable for our graduates. For more info, contact: graduation@mendocino.edu. 

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS




NORTH COUNTY CENTER COLLEGE & CAREER DAY

We welcomed **more than 125 participants**—including North Mendocino County middle and high school students, current students, and community members—to this year's College and Career Day.


The event focused on helping students explore educational and career pathways through engagement with Mendocino College programs and local industry partners. It was a welcoming and successful event thanks to the outstanding efforts of the Center team: Maria Zepeda, Erica Henderson, Catherine Norris, Tammy Carlson, and Rose Mehtlan.

We also extend our appreciation to the many academic and student service areas that participated, including Human Services, Agriculture, ASL, Child Development, Communications, English, Music, Dance, ESL, PTA, Construction, Library, Eagles Rise (Justice-Impacted Youth), Financial Aid, EOPS, MESA, HSEP, Native American Resource Center, Basic Needs, ASMC, Counseling and Retention, Dream Center, and Pride Center.

We value our partnerships with Sonoma State, Cal Poly Humboldt, and UC Davis. Industry participation, coordinated by the Career Hub and Filemon Lara-Lopez, added tremendous value. Thank you as well to the M&O team for their support with setup and breakdown. 

LATINO STUDENT RETREAT

On April 24, Mendocino College hosted its 38th Annual Latino Student Retreat, welcoming more than 300 high school students from across Mendocino and Lake counties. The half-day conference included a welcome session, keynote presentation, and breakout workshops. This year's keynote speaker, Ovi Vásquez, shared an inspiring message centered on resilience, motivation, and pursuing one's goals. Two graduating Mendocino College students served as emcees.


Workshops covered topics such as Ballet Folklórico, healthcare careers (Nursing and PTA), science exploration, and financial literacy, including strategies for paying for college. The event concluded with a lunch and resource fair, providing students with information on support services available at Mendocino College. 



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS




MENDOCINO TRANSIT AUTHORITY COLLABORATION

Through the Facilities Department, the College launched a pilot program with Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) to install branded signage at bus stops serving the Ukiah Campus. These signs provide clearer visibility for riders and strengthen awareness of campus access points. This effort builds on our existing partnership, providing free transit on MTA and Lake Transit Authority (LTA) services for all students. 

2026 GRADUATION & TRANSFER FAIR

Faculty and staff are encouraged to help spread the word and invite students to attend the upcoming Graduation & Transfer Fair. Transfer Counselor/Coordinator Mark Osea, in collaboration with the Admissions & Records Office, will host the event this spring at the Ukiah Campus in the Transfer Center/Eagle's Nest on **Thursday, May 21, 3:00–6:00 p.m.**


This event provides students with an opportunity to explore transfer options, confirm their expected graduation date, and receive information about obtaining graduation regalia.

Your encouragement plays an important role in helping students take advantage of these valuable resources as they prepare for their next steps. 



NEXTUP PROGRAM

In recognition of Foster Care Awareness Month in May, the NextUp Program encouraged staff participation through advocacy and visibility efforts.


A webinar viewing session, From Lived Experience to Leadership with Nyla Vivas, MA, was held on May 11. The session highlighted the impact of supportive professionals, provided trauma-informed strategies, and shared perspectives from lived experience and caregiving. 

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

**NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER**

The Native American Student Success and Support Program (NASSSP) hosted the 39th Annual Native American Motivation Day, welcoming hundreds of students in grades 5 through 12 from across Lake and Mendocino counties.

The event provided a culturally affirming space focused on connection, inspiration, and educational pathways. Students engaged with campus life while celebrating their identities and communities. Keynote speaker and performer Richie Ledreagle shared his experiences and performed for attendees.

Motivation Day continues to uplift Native youth by reinforcing that higher education is accessible, achievable, and supported by the community. 

YOUR VOICE.
YOUR VOTE.

ELECTION DAY is JUNE 2

NEW! BALLOT BOX at UKIAH CAMPUS



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

*Machiko Shimada*

2002 -2026

More than two decades of service to students and community.
You brought light, joy, and laughter to all those around you.

It is with heartfelt appreciation for the many lives she touched that we share the passing of a longtime beloved member of the Mendocino College family, **Machiko Shimada**.

Joining Mendocino College as an adult student, Machiko began tutoring in the Learning Center and MESA in September 2002, marking the beginning of more than two decades of service to the college community. After completing her associate degree, she transferred to Sonoma State University, where she earned her bachelor's degree. Mendocino College was then fortunate to welcome her into the Math Department as part-time faculty, in addition to her continued support within the Learning Center and MESA communities. In 2020, the Lake Center was especially fortunate to welcome her as a full-time Center Assistant, a role she continued to serve in through this academic year.

The impact Machiko had on Mendocino College and the surrounding community is difficult to fully capture in words. She brought light, joy, and laughter to all those around her. Always willing to support each and every student, her specialty was encouraging others to believe in themselves.

Through teaching remedial mathematics, she inspired many students to envision degrees and careers they may not otherwise have believed possible.

Her extraordinary ability to uplift others was recognized multiple times throughout her career. In 2017, Machiko was honored as Part-Time Faculty of Excellence, and in 2019, during Women's History Month, she was recognized as the Part-Time Faculty Wonder Woman of the Year. Then again, in 2020, the Full-time Faculty Association recognized Machiko with a Classified Staff Excellence award for her "willingness to go above and beyond for MC students. Her ready smile and knowledge of campus resources help students to feel welcomed and supported." Even these honors only begin to reflect the impact she had on the many lives she changed for the better.

Continued on following page...

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

Machiko Shimada Remembered continued...

Beyond the college, Machiko was also regularly literally saving lives through her countless kitty rescue and rehoming efforts. A longtime volunteer with the Humane Society for Inland Mendocino County, she often spent her lunch breaks returning home to care for the animals she was fostering.

Machiko also brought joy to others through her musical talents. Beginning singing lessons at just three years old, she later became part of the singing group Majide. Majide performed regularly at the Blue Wing in Lakeport and participated in many fundraising efforts across Mendocino and Lake Counties. [Please enjoy her renditions here.](#)

Machiko came to the United States from Japan in the early 1970s and made her home in Lake County, where she raised her family. She was a true “back-to-the-lander”. Not just in spirit, but in action. She and her husband quite literally built their home together, creating something rooted in hard work, determination, and a lot of love. Machiko had cherry trees shipped from Japan to Lake County. A living reminder of the home she left behind in the '70s. Those trees were more than trees; they were a bridge between two worlds. Sadly, during the last big fire in Lake County, Machiko lost her home and those beloved trees. And yet, Machiko met this tragedy and challenge with resilience and grace. Machiko carried on with a positive attitude. She will be so very missed! Machiko’s spirit will live on through her family, including her daughter, son, and two beloved grandsons.

Student Support

Mendocino College offers counseling services to help students process this news and cope with any emotions they may be experiencing. To speak with a counselor, students can call **707-621-6463** or email wellness@mendocino.edu, or use the [online portal](#) to schedule a confidential appointment.

Additionally, if you or someone you know needs crisis services, please call or text **9-8-8**, or visit www.988lifeline.org for immediate mental health or suicide prevention assistance.

Employee Support

We want to ensure that every employee has access to meaningful support during this difficult time. To provide space for individual processing, Carelon Behavioral Health—our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider—offers free grief support. Interested individuals should contact Carelon directly at:

- [Online employee grief support](#)
- Toll-free phone support 877-397-1032

We encourage everyone to take care of themselves and those around them during this time. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out.

The Lake Center will gather to celebrate the joy Machiko brought to so many lives. Additional details will be shared once arrangements have been finalized.


Composed with insight and love by Neydi Rodriguez Zamora, Dariela Lopez, Rebecca Montes, Janet Daugherty, Leslie Banta, and Amanda Xu.



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

**HEALTH & WELLNESS SERVICES**

Counselor/Coordinator Lisa Larimer Burtis participated in the ASCCC Spring Plenary as Legislative Chair for the CCC Mental Health & Wellness Association.

She led efforts to advance the inclusion of “Counseling: Mental Health” in the Disciplines List and authored a resolution calling for a best practices guide for mental health counselors in the CCC system. Both initiatives were supported and will advance to the Board of Governors this summer. 

It's okay to
ask for help.

Mental Health
Awareness Month




REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

During April, the Restorative Justice Program hosted two Dinner and Conversation events on April 9 and April 29, creating space for community-building and dialogue.

The program continued its partnership with Juvenile Hall, successfully scheduling CCS 100 courses for summer and fall. Collaboration with NASSSP also continued through weekly Regalia Workshops, including participation from a Juvenile Hall student.


Additionally, planning efforts supported the Reentry Collaborative Resource Fair held May 12, which connected justice-impacted individuals with campus and community resources. 

FINANCIAL AID

The U.S. Department of Education recently implemented **changes to the 2026–2027 FAFSA file format**, resulting in temporary processing delays while campus systems were updated.

Beginning April 26, the Financial Aid Office was unable to process new or updated FAFSA records for a short period. Processing is expected to resume once system updates are completed and tested. There has also been a delay in receiving California Dream Act Applications.


What this meant for students:

- FAFSA applications received before April 23 were processed, and eligible students received California College Promise Grants.
- Applications submitted after April 24 experienced delays.
- The issue is expected to be resolved by the end of May. 

CARING KITCHEN PROGRAM UPDATE

After careful review, **North Coast Opportunities (NCO)** determined that its Caring Kitchen program did not have the funding necessary to continue beyond this spring.

Caring Kitchen closed on April 30, 2026, with meal preparation and delivery concluding on April 24, completing the final service period.

Over the past several years, Caring Kitchen has utilized our commercial kitchen on the Ukiah Campus to prepare nutritious meals for individuals undergoing cancer treatment, often incorporating produce from our Agriculture Department. It is deeply concerning that funding for programs that provide such vital community support continues to decline. 

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

ceramics

M O N T H L Y




Cover: Grace Potter
Spotlight: East Fork Skills
Artist's Voice: Joanna Poag
Studio Shoutout: HTX Clay




NORTH COUNTY CENTER UPDATES

On March 10, 2026, **Senator Mike McGuire, U.S. Representative Jared Huffman**, and regional leaders visited the North County Center to celebrate a \$20 million investment in a new career training facility.


President Karas highlighted the 19,000-square-foot Phase II expansion, which will support programs in fire technology, health sciences, construction, and energy technology. The project is currently projected to open in spring 2029. 

COAST CENTER UPDATES

Ceramics instructor **Grace Potter** was featured in *Ceramics Monthly* in January. The national publication highlighted her studio practice and teaching approach, and her work was selected for the magazine's cover.

Her recognition reflects both her artistic accomplishments and her contributions to the Mendocino College community. 

LAKE CENTER UPDATES

The Lake Center continues its partnership with Kelseyville High School to offer welding courses in a newly equipped facility. Instructor **Michael Zeni** provides hands-on instruction in a supportive learning environment for students of all skill levels. This collaboration improves access to career training in rural areas while supporting regional workforce needs. 



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

BALLOT INFORMATION

MEASURE A

MENDOCINO COLLEGE CAREER TRAINING AND AFFORDABLE EDUCATION

Measure A will appear on the June 2, 2026 ballot for voters in the **Mendocino-Lake Community College District**.

Measure A is a proposed local bond measure to fund repairs and upgrades to Mendocino College facilities and expand access to affordable education and career training.

WHO WOULD BENEFIT?

- Students in career training programs (allied health, public safety, trades),
- Students preparing to transfer to four-year universities,
- Dual enrollment high school students,
- General education students, community, and local workforce.



WHAT WOULD IT FUND?

- **Repairs** to aging classrooms, labs, roofs, and infrastructure;
- **Removal** of mold, asbestos, and lead paint;
- **Maintenance** of clean drinking water systems;
- Updated **training facilities and equipment**.



HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

\$24 per \$100,000 of assessed value annually. Example: \$300,000 assessed value = \$72/year



Why is funding needed?

Most existing funding cannot be used for major repairs or construction.

How is spending monitored?

Independent oversight, annual audits, and public reporting are required.

WHY IS IT NEEDED?



Many facilities are over 40 years old and were not designed for current education and workforce training needs.

Upgrades are needed to maintain safe, functional classrooms and labs and to support programs that serve local students and community workforce needs, including healthcare, public safety, and skilled trades.

LEARN MORE

Additional information about Measure A, including details on oversight and project funding, is available online at: www.mendocino.edu/affordable-local-education



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

INFORMACIÓN ELECTORAL

MEDIDA A

CAPACITACIÓN PROFESIONAL Y
EDUCACIÓN ASEQUIBLE DE MENDOCINO COLLEGE

La Medida A aparecerá en la boleta del 2 de junio de 2026 para los votantes del **Distrito de Colegios Comunitarios de Mendocino-Lake**.

Es una propuesta de bono local para financiar reparaciones y mejoras en las instalaciones de Mendocino College y ampliar el acceso a educación asequible y capacitación profesional.

¿QUIÉNES SE BENEFICIARÍAN?

- Estudiantes en programas de capacitación profesional (salud, seguridad pública y oficios),
- Estudiantes que se preparan para transferirse a universidades de cuatro años,
- Estudiantes de preparatoria en programas de inscripción dual, estudiantes de educación general, la comunidad y la fuerza laboral local.



¿QUÉ FINANCIARÍA?

- Reparaciones de salones, laboratorios, techos e infraestructura envejecidos;
- Eliminación de moho, asbesto y pintura con plomo; mantenimiento de sistemas de agua potable limpia;
- Y actualización de instalaciones y equipo de capacitación.



¿CUÁNTO COSTARÁ?

\$24 por cada \$100,000 de valor tasado al año. Ejemplo: un valor tasado de \$300,000 = \$72 al año.



¿Por qué se necesita financiamiento?

La mayor parte de los fondos existentes no puede utilizarse para reparaciones mayores o construcción.

¿Cómo se supervisa el gasto?

Se requiere supervisión independiente, auditorías anuales y reportes públicos.

¿POR QUÉ ES NECESARIO?

Muchas instalaciones tienen más de 40 años y no fueron diseñadas para las necesidades actuales de educación y capacitación laboral.

Se necesitan mejoras para mantener salones y laboratorios seguros y funcionales, y para apoyar programas que sirven a estudiantes locales y a las necesidades de la fuerza laboral de la comunidad, incluyendo salud, seguridad pública y oficios especializados.

MÁS
INFORMACIÓN

Información adicional sobre la Medida A, incluidos detalles sobre supervisión y financiamiento de proyectos, está disponible en línea en:

www.mendocino.edu/affordable-local-education



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

**COMMON COURSE NUMBERING****NEW****EFFECTIVE FALL 2026****ART 207**Survey of Art from Prehistory
to the Medieval Era**ARTH C1100****ART 208**Survey of Art from the Renaissance
to Contemporary**ARTH C1200****ECO 201**

Principles of Microeconomics

ECON C2001**ECO 200**

Principles of Macroeconomics

ECON C2002**ENG 201**Critical Thinking & Writing
through Literature**ENGL C1003****HST 202**

United States History to 1877

HIST C1001**HST 203**

United States History since 1865

HIST C1002**What does this mean?**

When looking for a class in the list on the left, it will now be found under the list on the right. The course content remains the same. The new course numbers will make transferring even easier for students!

**Same course number.
Every community college.**


www.mendocino.edu/ccn

**COMMON
COURSE
NUMBERING**

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATES

Welcome Spring 2026 New Hires!

Recent Staffing Changes

Maria Zepeda will be moving to Student Support Specialist, effective 6/1/26.

CLASSIFIED

- **Esmeralda Barajas** – Allied Health Programs Support Technician; Effective 3/1/2026; Ukiah Campus
- **Erica Henderson** – Dual Enrollment Coordinator; Effective 3/16/2026; North County Center
- **Christian Vazquez** – Financial Aid Assistant; Effective 6/1/2026; Ukiah Campus

MANAGEMENT TEAM

- **Joseph Braasch** – Director of MESA and STEM Outreach and Support; Effective 3/1/2026; Ukiah Campus

Check Out Open Positions

- [Employment Opportunities](#)


Training Opportunities

- [Training with Keenan SafeColleges](#)
- [Vision Resource Center](#)

Access Collective Bargaining Agreements

- [Collective Bargaining Agreements](#)

Retirement Links

- [CalPERS - Classified Employees & Managers](#)
- [CalSTRS - Certificated Employees & Educational Administrators](#)
- [403\(b\) Supplemental Retirement](#) 

MENDOMERCH

OFFICIAL MENDOCINO COLLEGE GEAR



2026 ALUMNI GEAR AVAILABLE **USE SPRING2026 FOR 10% OFF** ★★★★★

EVENTS

Details can be viewed on the [Events page](#) or the [Athletics page](#). The monthly [student newsletter, The Eagle](#), provides a listing of upcoming events and campus news, too.

Guitar Night | May 19

Graduation & Transfer Fair | May 21

2026 RN Pinning Ceremony | May 21

Commencement | May 22

Classified Appreciation Barbecue | Jun. 1

Summer Semester Begins | Jun. 8

MLACE Meeting | Jun. 11

Summer Session Ends | Jul. 30

Doug Browe: A Lifetime in Clay | Aug. 14 – Oct. 15

Fall Semester Begins | Aug. 17 