



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

AUGUST
2026

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



We are beginning our 54th year, marking more than half a century of educating local students. We are also entering a new academic year with record-breaking enrollment and the largest student body in our history. Those milestones remind

us that Mendocino College is not standing still. Our mission remains forward-looking, responsive, and rooted in the needs of the people we serve.

I encourage community members to engage with the college. Come to a game and support our student athletes in eight sports; attend one of our vibrant dance, theater, or music performances; visit the art gallery; attend one of our many cultural events; and more. View our [events calendar](#).

I had the pleasure of attending community events and celebrations during the summer. I attended the Coyote Valley Big Time and the Tule Boat Festival and was inspired by the dancers, traditional songs, and beautiful pieces of art. 

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

MEASURE A UPDATE

A majority of district voters (52%) supported Measure A; however, the measure required a super-majority of 55% to pass. In 4 of the 7 trustees' areas, the measure passed at/above the 55% threshold.

While this is not the direction many of us hoped to see, I want to begin with gratitude. We are deeply appreciative of everyone in our community who took the time to participate in the democratic process. Every vote reflects civic engagement, and every conversation over the past several months has helped illuminate what our communities need, value, and hope for from Mendocino College.

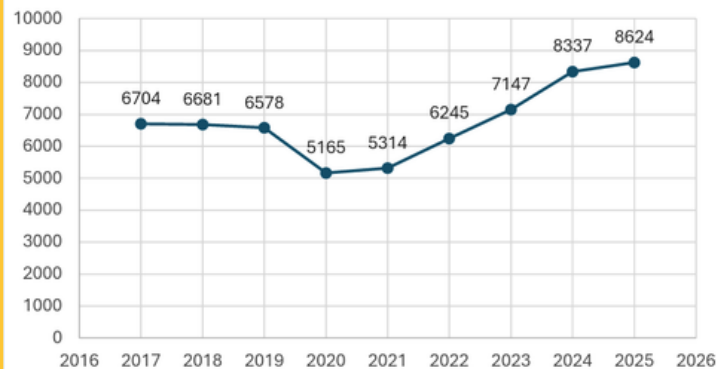
Our commitment to serving this region does not change. Mendocino College is here in service of our students, our local workforce, and the communities of Mendocino and Lake Counties. We will continue to lean into the programs our region needs most, including allied health, fire, emergency response, construction, skilled trades, transfer pathways, and other critical areas of education and training.

Measure A gave us the opportunity to map out a larger future for ourselves and for the community we serve. That work was not wasted. It helped clarify our priorities, deepen our community relationships, and strengthen our shared understanding of the role Mendocino College plays in local healthcare, public safety, economic development, and educational opportunity.

There will be challenges ahead, and we will need to be thoughtful about how we prioritize limited resources. Regionally, to our north, College of the Redwoods is investing in new facilities through their local \$139M bond, and to our south, Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) has completed their recent \$410M bond projects. In November 2026, voters in the Sonoma CCD (SRJC) will vote on an \$810M bond. But we will continue moving forward together, with creativity, determination, and the same commitment to students and community that has sustained this college for more than 50 years.

– *Tim Karas, President* 

Unduplicated Headcount

**ENROLLMENT**

As we completed the 25/26 academic year, it was another record breaker. The number of unduplicated headcount (students) continues to rise. We served 22% more students in 2025/26 than in the 2017/18 academic year. Community colleges are not funded based on headcount, but full-time equivalent students (FTES).

Another piece of excellent news is that the Coast Center posted 250FTES for the FY25/26 academic year. Recovering to the 250FTES level was a priority for the district. The Coast Center base funding will return to its grandfathered center status level. All locations are now at/above their funding status levels. 



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

**HEADSTART DAYCARE
AT LAKE CENTER**

As part of our mission to serve the community, Mendocino College has approved a Memorandum of Understanding with North Coast Opportunities (NCO). NCO will construct and independently operate a HeadStart program on approximately 1.5 acres of the District's property adjacent to the Mendocino College Lake Center. The daycare center will be comprised of an approximately 4,259 square foot modular building, a 9,111 square foot fenced play yard, and parking to accommodate twenty (20) spaces. This facility will expand access to quality daycare to Lake County residents. 

**STUDENT HOUSING
PROJECT - CLAY STREET**

On July 15, 2026, the Mendocino College Foundation completed the purchase of a parcel of land at 276 E. Clay Street in Ukiah. This parcel complements with the parcel at 101 Main Street to provide a comprehensive opportunity for multi-phase student housing with parking in Ukiah. This is an investment in the future for Mendocino College and our community. The parcel is across from the new County Courthouse, and road improvements will connect Clay Street to Orchard Ave. 



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

FORMER MLCCD TRUSTEE**JOAN MARIE MOORE ERIKSEN REMEMBERED**

Former MLCCD Trustee Joan Eriksen passed away on July 16, 2026. Trustee Eriksen served on the Board for over 20 years. Her dedication and service are evident in the vibrancy of our college. Below is a copy of the obituary published in the Ukiah Daily Journal.

OBITUARY: Joan Marie Moore Eriksen died peacefully on July 16, 2026. She was 95 years old. Joan was born at her grandmother's maternity home in Napa, CA, on October 7, 1930, to Jack Richard Moore and Gladys Granatelli Moore. She spent her early years among extended family in Napa and Vallejo. Then, she moved frequently for a few years as her father, like many young men in the Depression, sought work wherever it was available.

In 1938, Joan moved to Ukiah when her father was hired as the head butcher at the Mendocino State Hospital. She began the third grade at Ukiah Grammar School, making a circle of friends she kept through high school and beyond. Joan graduated from Ukiah High School with the class of 1948, proud to be a life member of the California Scholastic Federation, Block U, and only the second girl to be elected Student Body President. Joan worked as a secretary, first at Ukiah High School for Principal William Chessall and later at Cable TV.

After marrying and starting her family, Joan decided to realize her dream of a college education. Semester after semester, she attended night classes offered in Ukiah until she earned her AA from Santa Rosa JC in 1973 and her BA from Sonoma State in 1983. Her own experience of the value of a local option for higher education underlay Joan's commitment to Mendocino Community College, where she **served on the Board of Trustees for more than 20 years.**

Joan was active in many civic groups including the AAUW, the Ukiah High Alumni Association, the Ukiah Democratic Club, and the PTA. Joan enjoyed traveling, playing bridge and other card games, and reading.



Joan was preceded in death by her beloved parents, her aunt Beverly Tilley and her husband Ted Eriksen Jr. She is survived by her daughters Felicia Eriksen of Ukiah and Stacia (Stephen) Peterson of Santa Rosa, her son Christopher Eriksen of Ukiah, her grandson Logan (Noelle) Peterson of Santa Rosa and great grandson Noah; her brother-in-law Floyd (Lois) Eriksen, nieces Liz and Meg, and nephew Tim, all of Ukiah and several cousins in Santa Rosa.

Her funeral took place at 10 am on Friday, July 31, at Holy Trinity Episcopal church, where Joan had been an active parishioner since March 1953. Father Ed Howell was the celebrant. Burial in her family plot at the Russian River Cemetery followed the service, and a lovely luncheon reception was provided. Eversole Mortuary was in charge of arrangements. 

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

**FINISH LINE SCHOLARS
PROGRAM APPLICATION
DEADLINE APPROACHING**

Students who are within one year of completing a certificate, degree, or transfer program may be eligible for **up to \$4,000** through the **Finish Line Scholars Program**.

The **priority application deadline is August 31 at 11:59 p.m. (PST)**. Applications received after the deadline will be considered on a rolling basis while funding remains available.

Faculty and staff are encouraged to share this opportunity with eligible students.

Students may [apply for the Finish Line Scholarship on the Mendocino College website here.](#) 

**HOW MENDOCINO COLLEGE HELPED ONE
STUDENT REBUILD HIS FUTURE**

My name is **Lyle Vincent**, and my educational journey has been shaped by resilience, recovery, and determination.

On April 3, 2014, I suffered a broken spine in a logging accident that completely changed my life. During my recovery, I made the decision to return to school and rebuild my future. I began attending Mendocino College during the Spring 2015 semester, where I found support, purpose, and motivation to keep moving forward despite the challenges I faced.

Over the years, I worked hard not only on my education, but also on myself personally. I overcame a fentanyl addiction and have now been clean for over three years. That recovery journey taught me perseverance, accountability, and the importance of helping others who may be struggling.

I graduated from Mendocino College in 2024 and continued my education at Sonoma State University in 2025. In 2026, I graduated with my bachelor's degree and will begin my PsyD program in Clinical Transpersonal Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco on Mission Street in August 2026.

My long-term goal is to become the head of the psychology department at Mendocino College and work as a therapist helping others overcome trauma, addiction, and life challenges. **I hope my story can show other students that setbacks do not define your future. With support, persistence, and belief in yourself, it is possible to rebuild your life and achieve your goals.** 



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

SUMMER SCHOLARS SPEAKER SERIES BUILDS CAREER CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE DISTRICT

This year's Summer Scholars Speaker Series connected students with career pathways across the district, resulting in **more than 230 work-based learning connections** at Mendocino College's campuses and centers.

Students heard from professionals in fields including EMT/Paramedic, Computer Science, Construction, Physical Therapy Assistant, Administration of Justice, Agriculture, and Vocational Nursing. Presenters shared insights into their careers, educational pathways, and local employment opportunities, helping students better understand the many Career Education options available in their own communities.

The program continues to expand its impact, serving more than 300 high school and dual enrollment students to date. Looking ahead, the team has already scheduled 10 Career Exploration events with local high schools for the upcoming academic year.

The college extends its gratitude to the faculty, staff, and community professionals who volunteered their time and shared their experiences, helping students explore educational and career opportunities throughout the region.

Thank you to our staff and guest speakers!

Jake Kyle, Theresa Gowan, Isabel Siderakis, Nick Johnson, Leslie Kline, Sara Boegner, Jake Gord, Filemon Lara Lopez, Jimmy Bailon, Anthony 'Tone Dog' Gonzales, Stephanie Razo, Tomas Sanchez, and Pamela Heston-Becho.

Community partners included: CHP Officer/PIO Marin (Ukiah); CHP Officer Strickland (Ukiah); Mendocino County Probation Officer Perez; Division Manager Brady Bechtol, Mendocino County Probation; Lake County Probation Chief Wendy Mondfrans; Mendocino County Deputy District Attorney Luke Oakley; Lakeport Police Chief Dale Stobe; Mendocino County Public Defender's Investigator Angelica Mendoza; and Lake County Sheriff Luke Bingham. 



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



HONORING THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE MENDOCINO COLLEGE STRONG

At Mendocino College, longevity is more than a statistic. It is a reflection of a community built on dedication, purpose, and a shared commitment to student success. This year, we are proud to recognize employees celebrating milestone service anniversaries, honoring the lasting impact they have made on our students, colleagues, and communities.

One of the things that makes Mendocino College special is that people choose to stay. Many of our faculty, staff, and administrators spend decades serving the college, building programs, supporting students, and helping shape the institution's future. Their years of service represent countless moments of teaching, mentoring, problem solving, innovation, and care.

Together, this year's service award recipients **represent 665 years of service to Mendocino College.**

Celebrating 10 Years of Service

Employees celebrating a decade of service have already helped countless students achieve their educational and career goals. Their contributions have strengthened classrooms, offices, programs, and services across the district.

Classified Professionals

- Isabel Lopez
- Maricela Nieto
- Tony Novelli
- Susan Sopp
- Todd Sorenson
- David Wolf
- Chenfei Xu

Management Team

- Amanda Xu

Full-Time Faculty

- Stephen Decker
- Brianna Zuber

Part-Time Faculty

- Jennifer Clark
- Ana Rojas
- Kirk Thomsen
- Meresa Taber

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REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

*Service Awards continued...***Celebrating 15 Years of Service**

Fifteen years represents a remarkable commitment to education and community. These employees have witnessed change, growth, and transformation while helping guide students every step of the way.

Full-Time Faculty

- Leslie Banta
- Nicholas Petti
- Rodney Grisanti

Part-Time Faculty

- Kathleen Cox
- Rebel Rickansrud-Young
- Maria Monti
- Shushan Vetzmadian

Celebrating 20 Years of Service

Twenty years of dedication reflects a deep and enduring investment in Mendocino College and the students we serve.

Classified Professionals

- David Bushway
- Leticia Trejo

Management Team

- Rebecca Montes Donovan

Full-Time Faculty

- Jaime Cechin
- Julie Finnegan
- Rachel Donham

Part-Time Faculty

- Steven Hellman
- Billy Offill

Celebrating 25 Years of Service

A quarter century of service is an extraordinary achievement. These individuals have left a lasting mark on the college through their leadership, expertise, and unwavering dedication.

Classified Professionals

- Kevin Burtness
- Juvenal Vasquez

Management Team

- Anastasia Simpson-Logg

Full-Time Faculty

- Jody Gehrman

Part-Time Faculty

- Cassandra Johnson

A Tradition of Commitment

In higher education, employee retention is one of the clearest indicators of institutional culture. When employees build long careers at a college, it speaks to a workplace where people find meaning in their work and believe in the mission they serve. The dedication of this year's honorees reflects a broader story about Mendocino College. Across our campuses and centers, long-serving employees create continuity, preserve institutional knowledge, and build the relationships that help students thrive. Their commitment strengthens our programs, enriches our communities, and ensures that future generations of students continue to receive a high-quality, supportive educational experience.

Please join us in congratulating our 2026 Service Award recipients and thanking them for their years of service, professionalism, and commitment to Mendocino College. Their work has helped shape who we are today, and their contributions continue to inspire the future of our institution. 



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

**HISPANIC/LATINX
ALUMNI SUCCESS STORIES**

As part of the Mendocino College Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) Alumni Spotlight series, HSI staff are proud to feature alumnus **Giancarlo Zazueta**.

As a high school student, Giancarlo worked hard to prepare for a four-year university, enrolling in honors, AP, and college preparatory courses. Although he was accepted to several CSU campuses, financial considerations led him to begin his higher education journey at Mendocino College.

His first semester proved challenging, and he withdrew from three of his four courses. However, his experience in the **Automotive Technology** program kept him engaged and helped him discover a path forward. The skills he gained in the program enabled him to restore a 1984 Toyota Celica Supra, a project that would later help finance his education after transferring.

Giancarlo credits a combination of personal discipline, support from academic counselors, and his experience on the **Mendocino College Men's Soccer** team with helping him regain momentum. After completing his transfer requirements, he was accepted to five CSU campuses and chose to attend San Diego State University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in public administration.

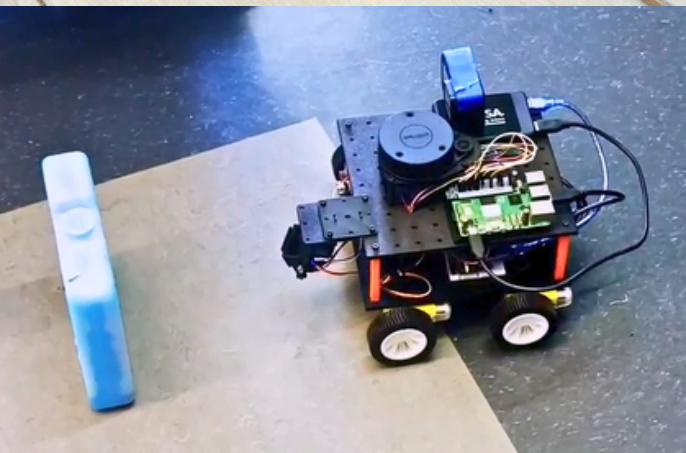
While attending SDSU, Giancarlo worked and sold his restored project car, allowing him to complete his education without student debt. He also gained valuable experience as an intern for Assembly Member David Alvarez, where he supported policy research and constituent services. The experience strengthened his commitment to public service and serving communities with backgrounds similar to his own.

Looking ahead, Giancarlo hopes to earn a master's degree in public policy and eventually hold elected office. Reflecting on his journey, he offers this advice to current students:

"Do your best and do not succumb to any outside pressures or expectations. Understand what drives and motivates you, then apply that to figure out what kind of future you want for yourself. That will help you understand the difference between a good opportunity and a good opportunity for you." 



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

**ROBOTICS CLUB & MESA
EXPLORE SPACE THROUGH STEM**

This summer, students from the Mendocino College Robotics Club and MESA participated in a hands-on STEM project through the **California Space Grant Consortium, NASA, and UC San Diego.**

Working in two teams, students designed and built lunar rovers using Raspberry Pi, Arduino, and 3D-printed parts. One rover was designed to search for ice on the Moon, while the other was built to collect soil samples for analysis. They put in long hours here on campus, working evenings and into the night to complete these projects in the short time span of two months.

Students gained valuable experience in robotics, programming, engineering, problem-solving, and teamwork.

“This is the first year we started the Mendocino College Robotics Club, and I had a great experience being a member. It taught me the fundamentals I’d need for future robotics projects, such as how things should be wired, coded, and mechanically sound. I also learned to be resourceful with the tools we had, as well as how to collaborate with a group of passionate individuals. We would butt heads now and then over how things should be done, but that taught me how to compromise or delegate tasks to whoever excelled at them or wanted to learn.” - **Juan Meza**

“The Robotics Club is an amazing place where people from all ranges of experience in the field can come together and build something.” - **Talon Marton**

In September, members will take a field trip to visit a NASA site and continue exploring opportunities in space science and engineering. **Students interested in joining the Robotics Club or participating in other science, engineering, and math projects can learn more information about available opportunities in the MESA Center (room 4120).**

Thank you to everyone who supported our students and made this experience possible! 

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

988: AN IMPORTANT EXTENSION OF STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

As colleges continue to address rising student mental health needs, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline serves as an important complement to campus-based services.

Recently, Health & Wellness Services interviewed **Mario Castillo, Community Outreach Education Coordinator for Buckelew Programs**, which operates one of California's regional 988 call centers serving Marin, Sonoma, Lake, and Mendocino counties. Castillo emphasized that one of the greatest misconceptions about 988 is that it is only for individuals experiencing a life-threatening crisis.

"In reality, most people who contact 988 are feeling overwhelmed, stressed, lonely, or concerned about a loved one," Castillo shared. **"You don't have to wait until things become unbearable to reach out."**

Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 988 provides free, confidential support from trained counselors and offers services in more than 150 languages. Students can call or text on their own behalf or seek guidance when they are concerned about a friend, roommate, classmate, or family member.

Castillo noted that college resources remain a critical source of support, but mental health challenges do not always occur during business hours. Together, campus services and 988 create a stronger safety net, ensuring students have access to support whenever they need it.

As we continue to foster student well-being and belonging, awareness of resources like 988 is an important part of building a culture where seeking help is viewed not as a weakness, but as a strength.

If you or someone you know needs support, call or text 988 anytime, 24/7.

Mendocino College Health & Wellness Services continues to partner with community organizations and statewide initiatives to expand awareness of mental health resources and strengthen support for student success.



No Judgment. Just Help.

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



STUDENT-CREATED MURAL UNVEILED IN LOWERY STUDENT CENTER

A new student-created mural is now on display in the dining area near Schat's Café in the Lowery Student Center. Measuring 8 feet by 16 feet, the mural was created by the first cohort of students enrolled in Mendocino College's new Mural Painting course (ART 224).

Co-taught by Art faculty members **Lisa Rosenstreich** and **Jazzminh Moore**, the course introduces students to the history, design, and collaborative process of creating public art. **Students Kelly Foutz, Angel Garcia, Patience Gruey, Jessica Hernandez, Thalia Luciani, Sarah Reith, and Brigid Roche** worked together to develop a mural inspired by what Mendocino College means to them.

The finished work highlights themes of learning, creativity, personal growth, community, and the college's connection to the natural environment. Featuring local landscapes, wildlife, and campus imagery, the mural celebrates student creativity and serves as a welcoming new landmark in the Student Center.

As the inaugural mural created through the college's new Mural Painting course, the project showcases the power of collaboration and public art to enrich the campus experience. 



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

WILLITS CENTER FOR THE
ARTS presents
**MENDOCINO COLLEGE
CERAMICS FACULTY**



**CERAMICS FACULTY FEATURED
IN SEPTEMBER ART EXHIBIT**

Mendocino College's ceramics faculty will be showcased in a special exhibition at the **Willits Center for the Arts** throughout September. The exhibit features a diverse collection of work, ranging from functional pottery to contemporary sculpture, highlighting the creativity and technical skill of ceramic artists teaching across the college district.

The exhibition includes work by faculty members **Jacque Adams, Sarah Logan, Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba, Heather Law, Grace Potter, Ryan Schnirel, and Wesley Wright**. Together, their pieces explore themes of community, the natural environment, storytelling, sustainability, and personal expression through the ceramic medium.

The exhibit opens with a **public reception on Saturday, September 5, from 6 to 8 p.m. and will remain on display through September 27** at the Willits Center for the Arts, located at 71 E. Commercial Street in Willits.

For additional information, visit www.willitscenterforthearts.org. 

HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATES

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](#) 

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.

Mindfulness Art | Every Monday (Coast)

Student Support Circle | Every Tuesday (starting 9/01)

TAG! You're In Tuesdays | Every Tuesday

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

Fall Semester Eagles Welcome | Aug. 17 - Aug. 27

Ukiah Symphony Orchestra | Sept. 12 & 13

UCCA: Hot Club of San Francisco | Sept. 20

Ceramics Sale Fall 2026 | Sept. 25 & 26

Blood Drive | Sep. 30

College & University Day | Oct. 6 