

CURRENTS

A PREMIER PUBLICATION OF SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE

All in the Family

Father and Daughter Graduate
Class of 2024

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FOCUSED ON EQUITY: ACCESS, ACHIEVEMENT, AND COMMUNITY

Dream Big, Start Here.

SVC | Skagit Valley College



Dr. Christopher Villa
President

Enriching our Community

As we navigate the currents of another remarkable year at Skagit Valley College (SVC), I am honored to share with you the stories of achievement, perseverance, and generosity that have defined our journey together. It is with great pride that I share the milestones we have reached and the impact we have made on the lives of our students and community.

In the pages of this edition, I invite you to join me in celebrating the incredible accomplishments of our students, faculty, and staff.

Through the lens of the SVC Foundation, we witness the profound difference your support makes in the lives of our students. Your generosity has enabled us to allocate more than \$1.6 million towards scholarships, student emergency and childcare, program support, and faculty awards, empowering our students to reach new heights of success.

This issue of Currents highlights the spirit of SVC. From empowering Latinx students to becoming teachers to the heartwarming exchange between father-daughter graduates Paul and Issabel Johnson, every story embodies the essence of our shared commitment to learning and growth.

Join me in applauding the achievements of our alumni, like Zachary Barborinas, whose journey from SVC to the skies exemplifies the transformative power of success through education. Celebrate with the music department as they journey to Carnegie Hall.

As we immerse ourselves in the world of arts, culture, and academia within these pages, let us remember the profound impact we have on each other's lives and the enduring legacy we create through education. Together, we navigate the currents of knowledge, inspiration, and excellence, shaping a future bright with promise and potential.

With gratitude,

Dr. Christopher Villa
President of Skagit Valley College

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Generational Success:

A father-daughter graduation story from Skagit Valley College

Paul and Issabel Johnson, father and daughter, graduated from Skagit Valley College's Whidbey Island campus this spring. Paul earned his Bachelor of Applied Science in Management (BASM), and Issabel earned her associate's degree through the Running Start program. Their joint academic endeavor reflects a commitment to learning and overcoming challenges together.

Congratulations to both of you! How does this accomplishment make you feel and what does it mean to you?

Paul: I am very proud that we were able to achieve this together. It's probably not common, making it an even prouder moment for me.

Paul, can you tell us a little bit about your decision to pursue a Bachelor of Applied Science in Management at Skagit Valley College (SVC)?

Paul: I completed my associate's degree at SVC and decided to continue my education here. My program is entirely online, which has been an excellent fit for me. SVC was perfect for Issabel to participate in the Running Start program. We live in Coupeville and she attended the Whidbey Island campus.

What are some of the biggest adjustments you made going back to school as an adult learner?

Paul: It is challenging. When I first started, I cleared my calendar for the first quarter, just to feel it out and get into the swing of it. Once I started working again, I realized time management would be very important. As you get older, you don't absorb information as quickly, so things took a bit longer for me. Time has always been my adversary.

How did SVC support you in achieving your educational goals?

Paul: Even though my courses were entirely online, I was part of a cohort program. This meant that I got to know and receive support from fellow students and faculty despite being online. The director and most of the faculty remain consistent throughout the program. If I needed resources like the library or any assistance, there was always someone available to help. I chose SVC because of its nearby campus. The local connection was very important to me.

What advice would you give to other adults considering going back to school, especially those working or with families?

Paul: If you feel a degree is going to help you improve your situation, understand that there's going to be a time requirement. It is a balancing act that requires some sacrifice.

Issabel, what initially sparked your interest in pursuing Running Start or pursuing college while in high school?

Issabel: It was my parents. My dad wanted to go back and finish his degree, and my mom, who worked at the college, recommended the program. I wanted to get ahead and take a gap year, so I wanted to complete my associate's before that.

Did having your dad also enroll provide any unique support or motivation while you were in Running Start?

Issabel: I liked that we took some similar classes. He's very competitive, so it motivated me to try and one-up him in my classes and get better grades to have some bragging rights.

What are your post-graduation plans?

Issabel: After I get my associate's, I'm going for a transfer degree. We're moving to Australia, and I plan to take a few months to travel. I really want to go into forensics or psychology, so I will study psychology and then specialize in forensic psychology. I was accepted into Bond University on the Gold Coast, one of my top picks.

What advice would you give to students considering alternative educational paths like Running Start?

Issabel: High school students considering Running Start should understand that it's worthwhile to overcome the social aspect of not attending high school classes with friends as often. Despite this change, I'm still graduating alongside those same peers. Personally, as an athlete, I still see my friends regularly through sports. Genuine friends will make time for you outside of school. Overcoming the fear of missing that constant interaction was definitely worth it.



From Skagit Valley to Carnegie Hall:

A musical journey

In a triumphant return to one of the world's most iconic stages, the Skagit Valley College (SVC) Choir will perform at Carnegie Hall in April 2025. This journey marks the continuation of a prestigious tradition that began in 2007 when the choir first performed at the esteemed venue under the recommendation of the director of choral studies at the University of Washington.

A History of Excellence

Since their initial performance in 2007, the choir again graced the stage of Carnegie Hall in 2011 and 2016, furthering their horizons with a performance in Portugal in 2019. In their upcoming performance, 15 SVC Choir students will feature the Fauré Requiem, conducted by the legendary English choral conductor John Rutter. "John Rutter expects a very high quality of preparation before we show up for his first rehearsal," said Diane Johnson, SVC Music Department Chair. "We work very hard at home to please him!"

The Carnegie Hall Magic

According to Johnson, stepping onto the stage at Carnegie Hall is more than just a performance; it's an unforgettable experience that leaves a lasting impact. "You are walking in the footsteps of every great musician who has graced the hall since its origin in 1891," said Johnson. "You can feel the spirit of all those people when you enter the stage. It is an indescribable feeling I love sharing with my students."

For many students, this trip represents a series of "firsts": their first flight, first trip to New York City, first time on a stage of such renown. The journey offers several opportunities for growth and discovery. "There are so many experiences to have," enthused Johnson. "I love watching students' faces and seeing their joy in learning and experiencing new things!"

The Road to New York

The journey to Carnegie Hall is a musical endeavor and a community effort. Extensive fundraising efforts are crucial to making this dream a reality. The choir will engage in various fundraising activities, including selling candy, holding garage sales, sing-a-thons, auction dinners, performance events, singing Valentines, and the popular Frankenstomp Halloween costume swing dance.

The Power of Shared Experience

The music department is an active and enthusiastic place that supports students at all levels and works to bring people together to a higher level of music-making through shared experience. "Singing in a choir is a shared experience," notes Johnson. "It is me, singing my heart next to you, singing your heart, and reaching our audience, touching their hearts with what we are willing to share."

The upcoming trip to Carnegie Hall is more than a performance; it is a celebration of community, dedication, and the transformative power of music. As the SVC Choir prepares to take the stage once more, they carry their hopes, dreams, and the support of our community. Each note they sing will resonate not only within the hallowed halls of Carnegie but also in the hearts of all who helped make this journey possible.



Support the SVC Choir's 2025 trip to Carnegie Hall, or give directly
skagitfoundation.org/givenow

Meet SVC Alum, Zachary Barborinas: A distinguished aviation professional...

... tracing his path from Skagit Valley College (SVC) to his current role as a seasoned professional pilot and business owner. In this Q&A, Barborinas shares how SVC shaped his career, talks about challenges he's tackled, and shares his goals for the future.

Zachary, can you share a bit about your journey from SVC to where you are now?

I attended Skagit for two years and then transferred to the University of Washington's engineering program. I finished my bachelor's in aeronautical and aerospace engineering and realized I wanted to see the world.

After graduation, I worked at a flight school, fueling planes and getting free instruction. I did my job well and eventually moved to Los Angeles. Post 9/11 in 2002, I had a chance to fly corporate jets and became a captain in three years.

I moved back to Seattle to manage a private aircraft for a family. Around that time, I got engaged – it was perfect timing. I have worked for the same people for 18 years, flying bigger planes globally. Recently, I started a business with a partner, Zone 5 Aviation, that focuses on business aircraft transactions and consulting. We serve as skilled advisors to a limited client group in their purchase or sale of corporate aircraft.

Did you always envision yourself becoming a pilot?

I wasn't certain at first; a college friend sparked my interest. Today, he's my business partner. Initially, we were pursuing similar paths, and we both had the dream of "flying high and flying fast." We discovered the joy of flying is in smaller, low-flying planes. There is something special about the down-to-earth experience of flying closer to the ground.

What is your favorite part of what you do?

The dynamic nature of my job—where we're going, the challenges, and the planning. The regulatory environment is complex, keeping track of everything and all the places we fly is interesting. Plus, the airplane is really fun to fly.

How did SVC help you to pursue your career?

It was a great steppingstone for what I needed—a four-year degree. In aviation at the time, a four-year degree was necessary. SVC helped me be adaptable when I faced challenges. Adaptability is something every college student needs and is very important in life too. I pivoted at UW—Skagit was a great starting point for me before I changed my path.

What advice would you give to current SVC students who aspire to follow a similar path?

Don't be afraid of hard work. Approach tasks with dedication and a positive attitude, proving your reliability and accountability. Networking is essential. Meeting people at the airport and asking about job opportunities helped me get a lot of free time in airplanes and instruction.

“Skagit was a great starting point for me.”

Were there any professors or mentors who had an impact on you while you were at SVC?

Jerome Chandler was a phenomenal teacher. His personality and ability to connect with students was remarkable.

Looking ahead, what's on the horizon for you? Do you have any future goals you hope to achieve?

My main goal is to expand my business, Zone 5 Aviation, as I have transitioned away from full-time flying. While flying can seem glamorous, it keeps me away from home. My priority is to spend as much time as possible with my kids.

You are actively involved in the Skagit community, why is service important to you?

It comes from my family. My parents always gave back, and I was always with them, helping out. Service to others is an important value, and I think it's a dying thing. I currently serve as board president of the Skagit Regional Health Foundation and have been involved in other organizations over the years. There is nothing more important than community.



Skagit Valley College Receives Generous Donation

From PACCAR Technical Center to enhance diesel technology program

In a significant boost to its diesel power technology program, Skagit Valley College (SVC) received a high-value donation from the PACCAR Technical Center (PTC). The highlight of this contribution is a premium-level Kenworth model W990 semi-truck, renowned as the “long hood classic.” This modern vehicle, donated on February 29, 2024, promises to revolutionize the hands-on learning experiences for students at SVC, given that it is a decade newer than any other truck currently in the program.

“The new truck not only enhances our fleet but also provides an unparalleled educational resource for our students,” said Derrick Troy, a representative from PTC, emphasizing the importance of this donation. “It symbolizes our ongoing commitment to fostering practical skills and knowledge in future diesel technicians.”

This generous donation is part of a longstanding and mutually beneficial partnership between SVC and PTC, a relationship that has flourished for more than 30 years. The collaboration goes beyond donations; it includes offering students valuable

internships during their studies and securing employment opportunities post-graduation. This practical engagement ensures that SVC graduates are well-prepared to enter the workforce with relevant, hands-on experience.

“Our relationship works out well for both parties,” said Bernie Andringa, SVC Diesel Power Technology Program instructor. “A sincere thank you to both Kenworth and the folks at the PACCAR Technical Center for their wonderful donation. This partnership is instrumental in providing SVC students with the tools and experiences they need to succeed in the diesel technology field.”

The success of this partnership is evident in the numbers. More than 20 SVC graduates are currently employed at PTC, contributing their skills and expertise to the company’s innovative projects. Many more students aspire to follow in their footsteps, inspired by the seamless integration of academic learning and real-world application that this partnership facilitates.

About PACCAR Technical Center

PACCAR’s Technical Centers are at the forefront of the company’s engineering, simulation, and validation efforts. These state-of-the-art facilities play a crucial role in accelerating product development and ensuring PACCAR’s commitment to delivering industry-leading products. The centers are instrumental in evaluating and advancing new vehicle technologies, working closely with educational institutions like SVC to stay ahead in the field.

By collaborating with educational institutions, PACCAR’s Technical Centers aim to identify and implement cutting-edge designs that enhance the performance and fuel efficiency of their Kenworth, Peterbilt, and DAF truck brands. This synergy between industry and academia not only fosters innovation but also prepares the next generation of engineers and technicians to meet the evolving demands of the transportation industry.



Learn more about our Diesel Technology program

skagit.edu/diesel

Skagit Valley College Hosts Washington State Court of Appeals

On May 29, 2024, Skagit Valley College (SVC) had the privilege of hosting the Washington State Court of Appeals, Division I, for oral arguments. Held in SVC's Tarro Theater on the Mount Vernon campus, the event was open to the public and featured a Q&A session, enhancing transparency and civics education. Proceedings were also livestreamed on TVW.

Acting Chief Judge Cecily C. Hazelrigg praised the opportunity to return to SVC, emphasizing the court's dedication to civics education. Judges Linda W.Y. Coburn and Ian S. Birk joined her in hearing three cases:

*Robinett Investment Co., LLC v.
WA Department of Transportation*

*Thomas E. Peak v.
WA Department of Transportation*

*VS Developing, LLC v.
BRMK Priest Point, LLC*

For SVC students, this event offered a rare, firsthand look at the appellate process, bridging classroom learning with real-world judicial proceedings.

Division I, based in Seattle, serves the northwest region, including King, Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, San Juan, and Island counties. This event not only engaged the community but also significantly enriched the educational experience of SVC students.



More information on the Court of Appeals is available on the Washington State Courts website (courts.wa.gov).

Skagit Valley College's Maestros Para el Pueblo Program Empowering Latinx students to become educators



MAESTROS PARA EL PUEBLO

Skagit Valley College (SVC) is proud to spotlight the Maestros Para el Pueblo (MPEP) program. SVC, in partnership with Burlington-Edison School District, Mount Vernon School District, and Western Washington University (WWU) aims to empower bilingual and Latinx students to pursue careers in education within K-12 school districts in the Skagit Valley community. This initiative supports students in achieving their higher education goals and becoming certified teachers.

MPEP acts as a crucial bridge for students and their families, connecting them with key contacts at the college and district level. These contacts include admission navigators, counselors, advisors, instructors, leadership teams, and financial aid personnel, all dedicated to assisting students in navigating their educational journeys.

The program's mission is to eliminate barriers to college success by providing financial resources, clear pathways to degrees, and a robust network of support across partner institutions through one-on-one guidance. While MPEP primarily serves bilingual and Latinx students, it also extends its support to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students who aspire to become educators.

Kati Ortiz, the Manager of Maestros Para el Pueblo, is a first-generation college graduate and SVC alumna. Ortiz has a background in working with local nonprofits and supporting students from early education through higher education.

"As a student who attended a local high school, I felt the impact of just one teacher encouraging me to go to college," Ortiz shared while reflecting on her journey. "I love serving and advocating for my community and watching it thrive."

History of Maestros Para el Pueblo

The MPEP program was significantly shaped by Juan Espinoza, a retired counselor from MVHS. Espinoza coined its name during a 2013 meeting aimed at addressing the local need for diverse teachers. Inspired by a similar initiative in the Yakima School District, Espinoza engaged a group of ten MVSD, BESD, SVC, and WWU professionals, garnering support for the cause.

Thanks to state grants and collaborations with MVSD, BESD, WWU and SVC, a position was established at SVC to implement the MPEP program. The initiative aims to see former local students return as educators, thereby benefiting the community they once belonged to as students.

Who Is eligible for MPEP?

- High school juniors and seniors
- SVC students intending to transfer to WWU
- Employees of the Mount Vernon and Burlington Edison School Districts
- Community members interested in pursuing a career in education



Learn more
skagit.edu/maestros


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Congratulations, Class of 2024!

- 
- 425** Associate's Transfer Degrees
 - 407** Professional and Technical Degrees and Certificates
 - 107** Running Start students receiving a college degree and graduating from high school
 - 25** Bachelor of Applied Science Degrees
 - 37** President's Medalists
 - 6** International students graduating from two different countries (Japan and South Korea)

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