

slcc

Denece G. Huftalin

**LEADING WITH KINDNESS:
THE INSPIRING JOURNEY OF
PRESIDENT HUFTALIN**

panoramic

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SLCC

HOP INTO COLLEGE

The second annual Hop into College event showcased lowrider cars while exploring the history, artistry, identity, and cultural connections of the lowriding community.

“Hop into College is a way to welcome the community into our home and remind them that they belong here and SLCC is accessible to anyone and everyone,” says Idolina Quijada, West Valley Center campus manager. The next Hop into College event will be held August 2, 2024.

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The esports program at SLCC began in fall 2020 and is already ranked nationally



**SALT LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
SUMMER/FALL 2024**

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ON THE COVER

Photo of President Deneece Huftalin
by Brett Colvin



Deneece Huftalin at her inauguration as president of SLCC in 2015

I remember walking across the stage for my graduation from Salt Lake Community College spring 2015. President Deneece Huftalin, her first commencement as president of the College, greeted me with a hug and said how proud she was of me. She remembered me, by name. Even though I was one of 3,700 students to graduate that day, she remembered me. I had been the editor-in-chief of the student newspaper, *The Globe*, and when I came on as the editor for *SLCC Magazine*, she remembered me once more and was proud to have me back telling stories again.

President Huftalin will be deeply missed, but the legacy she leaves behind, from pioneering the PACE program to the establishment of multiple campuses across the valley, will endure and be honored (see page 18). Both traditional students and non-traditional students, like I was, can find a place here to succeed and flourish.

Programs and hands-on experiences such as *The Globe* are really what made my college experience transformative. I gained real-world experience working on the student paper, and it is what brought me here to my job as editor of this magazine. You can read about other programs at SLCC such as *Folio*, SLCC's literary and arts magazine (page 24). For 25

years, *Folio* has been giving students the opportunity to see their work in print. Many students talk about how it gave them confidence to believe in themselves.

Also, students have been able to participate in making documentary films, such as on the Great Salt Lake (page 11), and have been engaged on campus through sports, activities, clubs, and events. One of my favorite quotes in this magazine is from Coach Jeff Sosa of SLCC's esports team (page 26), "I would argue that the importance of performance arts, extracurricular activities, and sports in education is that they create engagement, especially on a college level."

I agree with him. As I look back on my college experience, what shaped it were things outside the classroom. My life has been transformed by SLCC, the people, faculty, and presidents like President Huftalin, who remember me by name and want me to succeed. I wish her the very best as she leaves and takes the leap into new territory. I am thankful for her service here and her genuine support of students like me.

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A National Leader with Global Reach

Open Education Resources is putting SLCC on the map

The Open Educational Resources (OER) initiative at Salt Lake Community College has gained national recognition for its efforts to increase access to education by reducing the cost of textbooks. OER offers no- or low-cost textbook alternatives that faculty use in their courses. The College's OER program has saved an estimated \$28 million for more than 328,892 students since spring 2014.

The OER program has been successful due to its collaborative partnerships and focus on student achievement, making it a prime example of innovation in education.

Through partnerships with platforms like Pressbooks, SLCC publications have received over 44,000 views from students in India and the Philippines just in the last three months of 2023. An article by SLCC Geoscience Professor Adam Dastrup titled, *The Rock Cycle – Physical Geography and Natural Disasters*, is very popular through Pressbooks and has been viewed over 12,000 times.

“The OER geography textbooks I’ve created offer profound reminders about how dynamic, expansive, and integral geography is to culture, geopolitics, economics, history, human innovation, environment, and our responses to planetary challenges. OER affords students a multimedia platform for understanding the ‘power of place’ as they explore the expanses and minutiae of Earth, of which humans are only a small part,” says Dastrup.

SLCC is an industry leader in the Open Education space

The College is highly regarded for its best practices and innovative approach to OER creation and early adoption of technologies that expand their use. OER improves learning with current, relatable content and enables open pedagogy, empowering students to co-create content. OER also promotes a more inclusive and equitable learning environment, as materials are available from the beginning of the course and beyond, making education more accessible for all learners.

Emily Orton, a student at SLCC, says the program is a lifeline for students. “SLCC offers such an incredible number of OER courses. With inflation at record highs, students are looking for ways to make every dollar they spend at school go further. The OER program allows students to take classes without worrying about hidden textbook costs,” she says.

SLCC’s OER team works with educators to promote student success by providing logistical support, implementing transformational open practices, and integrating OER into teaching. “Moving courses from expensive textbooks to freely available resources has been among the most important work I have done in my academic career. For potential students, the cost of even a single textbook can make the difference between starting college and becoming discouraged,” says Jeff Davis, associate professor of Business Management.

For more information about OER, check out their website at slcc.edu/open





Gregory F. Peterson

After National Search, SLCC Welcomes Its New President



“I have to admit when I started this process, I was intrigued by Salt Lake Community College, but over the past three days [of interviews], I have fallen in love with it,” said Gregory F. Peterson, who was announced as the College’s ninth president on April 26. In a fully packed room at the Student Center on the Taylorsville Redwood Campus, cheers and applause erupted when Amanda Covington, chair of the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE), announced that Peterson had been selected from among the three finalists.

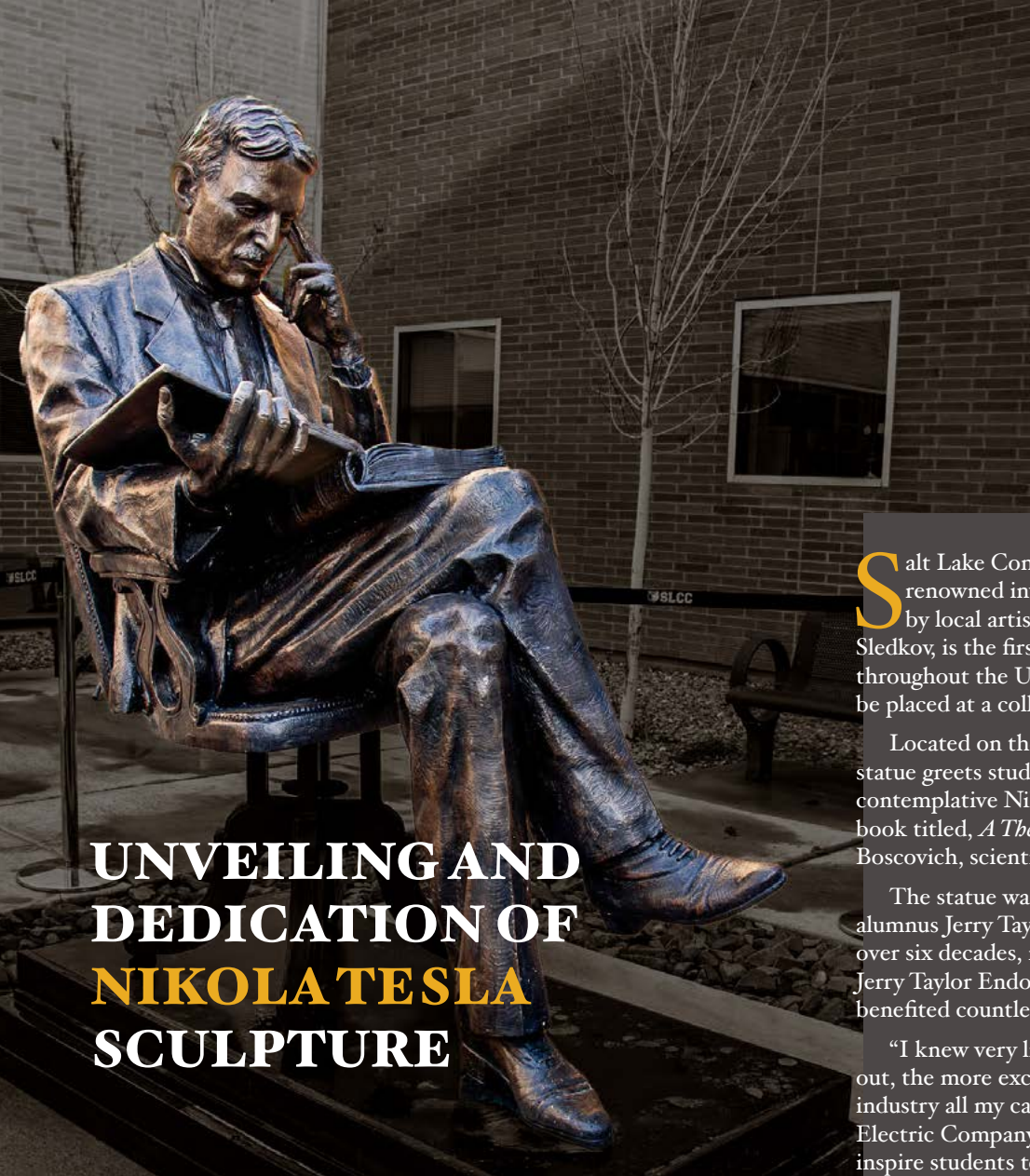
The SLCC Board of Trustees named an 11-member search committee in December 2023 to conduct a national search for the next president. The committee was comprised of representatives from USHE and SLCC trustees, faculty, staff, students, administration, and alumni as well as a community representative.

“We have all been deeply invested in evaluating and thoughtfully considering each qualified candidate to determine if they have the leadership style and acumen to lead Utah’s largest two-year, open-access school and Utah’s most diverse higher education institution,” said Brady Southwick, who is chair of the SLCC’s Board of Trustees and co chair of the presidential search committee with Sharon Eubank, a USHE board member.

Peterson, himself a first-generation community college student, earned a doctorate in educational administration from the University of Texas at Austin, a master’s in postsecondary education from Portland State University, and a bachelor’s in English from Brigham Young University. Most recently, he served as president at Chandler-Gilbert Community College in Arizona.

Throughout his career, Peterson has led key efforts in student learning and success, including developing transfer partnerships and college promise programs at multiple institutions. He also launched the first community College Artificial Intelligence program in the nation, and he has worked closely with industry and community partners to strengthen workforce pipelines for students. Peterson is also engaged in many local and national organizations, including serving on the Governing Board of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

“I’m humbled by the trust that you’ve given me in this space and that I can be part of the great things that are happening here,” said Peterson to the SLCC crowd. “I’m really excited for this not to be about me anymore and for it to be about us.”



UNVEILING AND DEDICATION OF NIKOLA TESLA SCULPTURE

Salt Lake Community College dedicated a new statue of renowned inventor, Nikola Tesla. The statue, crafted by local artist Stan Watts and Russian sculptor Andrey Sledkov, is the first of many by the artists that will be placed throughout the United States and Europe, and the only one to be placed at a college institution.

Located on the Taylorsville Redwood Campus, the statue greets students as they enter the building with a contemplative Nikola Tesla sitting in a chair and reading a book titled, *A Theory of Natural Philosophy* by Roger Joseph Boscovich, scientist and philosopher.

The statue was made possible through the generosity of alumnus Jerry Taylor. Taylor has been involved with SLCC for over six decades, most recently through the creation of the Jerry Taylor Endowed Scholarship, which over the years has benefited countless students.

“I knew very little about Mr. Tesla and the more I found out, the more excited I got because I was in the electrical industry all my career,” said Taylor, who founded Taylor Electric Company here in Utah. He hopes that this statue will inspire students to learn more about Nikola Tesla.

“In celebration of Tesla’s vision and influence on today’s technology, we thought it was so important that it be right at the entrance of our Science and Industry Building to help our students see what’s possible in the world of engineering,” said President Denece Huftalin during the unveiling.

Bob Whittaker, Executive Director of Development, and James Walton, the College’s Gallery and Art Collection specialist, worked with SLCC’s Art Committee to bring this piece to the College’s growing permanent art collection.

“I think it’s in a great location here, where all our science students are going to walk past it every day,” said Walton. “I hope that this will encourage people to learn more about Tesla and be an impetus for people to get curious about his legacy.”





ON THE FAST TRACK:

SLCC'S NEW CROSS COUNTRY TEAM RACES TO SUCCESS

For Salt Lake Community College cross country coach Isaac Wood, running is in his blood. Wood grew up around the Track and Field community, as his father was also a coach and would take the family on vacations to track meets. He also remembers going to SLCC basketball games with his father. Standing at 6'6" you'd think basketball would be Wood's dream job, but he loves coaching runners.

Wood has built his coaching career among some of the best collegiate programs in the nation, from Brigham Young University to Florida State. He joined SLCC in 2022 and immediately started recruiting athletes just a few months before the start of the 2022-23 season. In their first year, the women's team placed third at the NJCAA Cross Country Championships, while the men placed eighth. Since then, the program has seen steady growth, with over 60 athletes on the roster this year.

The team also had a successful showing at the national championships last fall, with the women winning by a significant margin and the men placing second. One of the men's cross country team members, JaQuavious Harris, won an individual

NJCAA championship. Harris also broke a stadium record at Weber State's indoor facility that was last set in 2004 and received the National Track Athlete of the Year award for the NJCAA Indoor Track and Field 2024 season.

Both the men's and women's teams were honored for their remarkable accomplishments during Utah's 2024 legislative session. Wood's commitment to the athletes and community was also recognized when he was named Coach of the Year by the Utah Sports Commission.

Wood credits the local talent pipeline for fueling the team's success. "It's easy when you live in Utah because there's just so much distance running talent here," says Wood. "One thing that was cool for us was of the seven girls that laced up at Nationals in cross country, six of them were from Utah. This is a credit to the overall distance running depth coming out of Utah's high schools."

For a program that is only in its second year of competition, SLCC's men's and women's cross country teams have already made their mark. Go Bruins!

SALT LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE MARKS 75 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

The College's celebrations included:

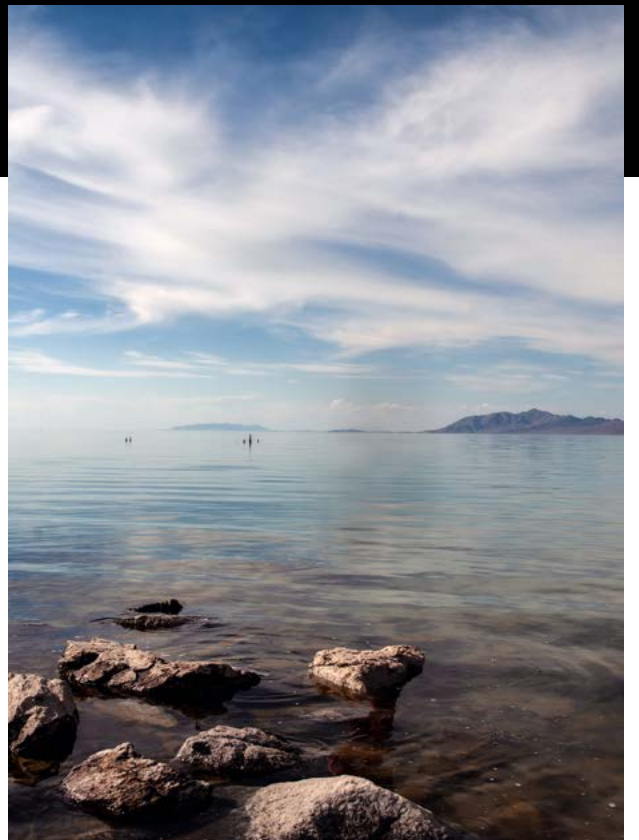
- **January 2023:** Brutus the Bruin visited the state capitol, where the Utah Senate and House read a proclamation to celebrate the 75th anniversary of SLCC.
- **February 26–Present:** Then & Now Exhibit invited viewers to step into the lives of former students and see what it was like when they first started at SLCC.
- **August 25, 2023:** The annual Bruin Bash ushered in a new academic year and celebrated SLCC's anniversary with free food, activities, and a drone show.
- **September 14, 2023:** The official anniversary of the College was celebrated with an outdoor gathering and the opening of a time capsule at the Taylorsville Redwood Campus.
- **October 12, 2023:** The Fashion Institute celebrated its new location at South City Campus with a tribute to fashion trends over the last 75 years.





vistas

SAVING THE GRE



AT SALT LAKE

Salt Lake Community College's namesake, the Great Salt Lake, is currently one of the largest saltwater and terminal lakes in the world, but that could change. The lake has been drying up. Students, researchers, staff, and faculty at SLCC are working hard to bring awareness to that fact and helping to save the Great Salt Lake.

"The Great Salt Lake is at a tipping point," says Maura Hahnenberger, PhD, an atmospheric scientist and a professor who teaches Meteorology and Earth Sciences at SLCC. "We hit a record low [water level] in 2021, and then we had another record low in 2022. Then we got this reprieve with a record setting winter that brought our lake levels up, but we're still well below ideal."

Hahnenberger should know. Her research is dedicated to saving the Great Salt Lake and deals with something she's very familiar with—dust. Her work focuses on understanding the sources, transport, and impacts of dust. With drought conditions exposing much of the lake bed, dust has become a growing environmental and health concern. Hahnenberger has been collaborating with other researchers through a project called Dust across a Desert-Urban-Summit Transect (DUST²), a National Science Foundation funded initiative studying the full dust cycle.

"This project started when a group of interested researchers came together in 2018 to start writing a proposal. All of us have been working on dust as an issue, separately looking at different parts of the dust problem. We had collaborated in the past because if you're looking at one part of the dust issue, you have to bring in experts on other parts. But we've never had a cohesive project all together, where we're bringing in what we call the whole dust cycle," says Hahnenberger.

Hahnenberger's interdisciplinary work provides valuable insights into Utah's dust challenges. By modeling dust transport and collaborating with other experts, she is helping identify the most effective solutions to improve air quality and protect public health. She acknowledges that Utah is a naturally

dusty place but emphasizes the Great Salt Lake is a new source of dust. Researchers have examined the chemical composition of the dust and found elevated levels of arsenic that are well above EPA thresholds. While more research is needed on the potential health impacts, Hahnenberger says there is great concern this dust is close to Utah's most populous areas.

Hahnenberger says that even though she doesn't study ecosystems, "as a lover of the Great Salt Lake, I spend a big chunk of my time talking about the importance of the lake's ecosystem." In many of her lectures, she discusses the lake's salinity and how hard it is for organisms like brine shrimp to live. Brine shrimp are the basis of the Great Salt Lake's ecosystem, which supports millions of migratory birds.

"I feel like my concern for the Great Salt Lake actually has more to do with the ecosystem than it does with the dust because we're already seeing the dust and potentially, we could have more. But the ecosystem, if it collapses, it could all be gone forever," Hahnenberger says.

Collaborating to Tell Stories of the Great Salt Lake

Another group working to conserve the lake is the Great Salt Lake Collaborative (GSLC). The GSLC is comprised of members from SLCC's Geosciences department and Community Writing Center (CWC), news media, and education and civic organizations.

The group's goal is to inform and engage the public about the crisis facing the Great Salt Lake. One way this is done is through in-depth reporting on the lake's decreasing water levels and possible solutions combined with a visually stunning "StoryMap" created by SLCC Geosciences professor Adam Dastrup. The StoryMap combines multimedia elements to explain the importance of wetlands. In recognition of this work, the Society of Professional Journalists awarded Dastrup a first place prize in their Top of the Rockies Multimedia Story contest.

INDIGENOUS VOICES: RECLAIMING SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE GREAT SALT LAKE

The Great Salt Lake has long been an important part of the landscape and culture for tribes who have lived in the region for thousands of years. A group of student filmmakers are working to elevate indigenous voices and perspectives on the lake through a documentary project.

Former Salt Lake Community College student McCaulee Blackburn (they/them) and their colleagues are producing a feature-length film that centers on the stories and expertise of tribal leaders. They hope to compare current water resource governance to how indigenous nations would manage the lake if granted sovereignty.

The film project began to take shape when Blackburn created a 30-minute documentary titled, *Diverted: Indigenous Stewardship and Saving the Great Salt Lake*, as part of a class project. The project included interviews with those with indigenous roots, and the goal was to capture traditional ecological knowledge and visions for restoration.

Blackburn is currently working to obtain funding for their film, which will highlight growing calls for co-management of natural resources between tribes and state government. "True cooperation and recognition of indigenous sovereignty may be key to overcoming the ecological crisis facing the Great Salt Lake and ensuring a sustainable future for all peoples," Blackburn says.

TANNER FORUM ON SOCIAL ETHICS

Renowned Water Expert Speaks on Water Challenges in the West

Serving as a timely reminder of the ethical questions raised by recent droughts and water shortages in the west, Salt Lake Community College's Tanner Forum on Social Ethics welcomed distinguished author Dr. Robert Glennon, a leading authority on water policy. His presentation offered an exploration of the challenges faced by the region.

"We're entering the era of reallocation where we have this giant milkshake glass, and everyone has a straw in it. We absolutely have to say no more straws. It is the tragedy of the commons. If you're going to put in a straw then you're going to have to persuade someone else to take his or her straw out," said Glennon.

During the forum, Glennon touched on the interconnected challenges faced by various stakeholders including farmers, urban areas, and indigenous communities. He highlighted the inherent conflict between urban and agricultural water needs and the ethical considerations of prioritizing protection for certain areas over others, but that conservation is still the best solution.

"Conservation, reuse, desalination, price signals, reallocation, that's all with us. Those are powerful tools, and what we need now is to focus on those tools and to take all of our energy and show that we have the moral courage and the political will to act," Glennon concluded.

Glennon is the author of two books, including the New York Times bestseller, *Unquenchable*.

The College's CWC supports the collaborative by collecting the public's stories and experiences with the lake and publishing them in *Desecrate/Consecrate: A Great Salt Lake Community Anthology*. The book, which debuted in October 2022, features over 200 submissions of writing, photography, and artwork that focus on people's relationship with the Great Salt Lake as well as the lake's ecosystem and cultural history.

"I suggested that the CWC's capacity for being part of the collaboration would be helping storytellers tell their stories about the lake and creating a possible publication for it," says Kati Lewis, director of the CWC. "We saw different communities

coming together to share their memories, stories, fears, and hopes for the lake. Its survival and restoration are crucial to Utah. The lake is our legacy, and the lake is our future. What happens to the lake will deeply impact our environment and culture."

At 431 pages, the printed anthology became a physical manifestation of the collaborative's goal to amplify diverse storytelling around the lake. The book features work viewed through scientific, historical, and personal lenses. Poems memorialize lost bird species or meditate on changing shorelines while photos capture industrial impacts alongside natural beauty.





Continued Partnerships and Projects

GSLC organizers say the work to save the Great Salt Lake continues. The CWC is currently working on its next community anthology titled, *Lake as Legacy/Lake as Future*. The publication will use speculative fiction – written, visual, multimedia, performance – that responds to the themes of “lake as legacy” or “lake as future.”

Dastrup also continues working with the group to inform others of the crucial need to save the Great Salt Lake. He recently debuted an interactive StoryMap focused on bird migration patterns through the lake.

“The Great Salt Lake is one of the largest migratory stops for birds in the world, so if we lose the lake, it’s going to have a dramatic impact on bird migration across the entire planet,” he says. “This is just one more example of how biodiversity loss will occur because of loss of the lake.”

If water levels continue dropping and as climate impacts intensify, the need to advocate for the Great Salt Lake seems more pressing than ever. This collaboration between different organizations and researchers shows how diverse groups and art forms can help elevate more voices.



For more information visit slcc.edu/cwc/great-salt-lake-anthology/index.aspx





SLCC's Conservation Efforts

33% WATER CONSUMPTION REDUCTION

20,000 Gallons SAVED PER YEAR AT THE TAYLORSVILLE REDWOOD CAMPUS

25-40% SAVED PER YEAR ACROSS ALL CAMPUSES

90% SECONDARY WATER USE



Over the past two years, Salt Lake Community College has reduced its irrigation water consumption by 33%. At the Taylorsville Redwood Campus, that equates to almost 20,000,000 gallons saved each year. At its other campuses, SLCC has reduced its water use anywhere from 25 to 40%.

The Taylorsville Redwood and Herriman campuses utilize 90% secondary water as its source for watering, which reduces cost and dependency on culinary water. The College has also focused on implementing xeriscaping, which converts thirsty lawns into drought-tolerant areas with shade trees, rock gardens, and sitting areas.

“We anticipate the savings will be the same this summer, and we are continuing to do xeriscape projects that will reduce water usage,” says Daniel Lloyd, SLCC grounds manager.



magnified

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









WATER-SAVING TIPS FOR YOUR GARDEN

SLCC's Community Garden program was established on March 2, 2010 by students, staff, and faculty who saw a need and opportunity at the Taylorsville Redwood Campus. Since then, the initiative has thrived and grown to include gardens at the South City, Jordan, and Miller campuses.





Emily Hansen, coordinator for SLCC's Community Gardens, offers the following tips to reduce water waste:

-  **Use** drip irrigation to deliver water to the root zones and reduce evaporation.
-  **Irrigate** plants in the cool hours of the night or early morning.
-  **Mulch** around your plants to reduce moisture loss from soil.
-  **Know** your soil texture. Clay and loam soils hold more water and require less frequent irrigation, while water drains faster from sandy soils, requiring more frequent irrigation.
-  **Improve** your soil texture and overall soil health by adding organic material, such as compost, to improve water holding capacity.
-  **Avoid** bare soil. Plant in clusters rather than rows and don't over-prune leaves that shade the soil. More densely planted gardens maintain a cooler and more humid microclimate. As long as plants aren't competing for light or nutrients, planting closer together is best to conserve soil moisture.
-  **Use** shade cloth over your garden beds during the hottest days. Even plants that require full sun can benefit from a shade cloth in hot Utah summers.
-  **Reduce** water runoff. Form the soil into trough-like structures around the base of plants to keep water from flowing away from the root zone. Watering for shorter periods of time also helps water to be more readily absorbed by the soil.
-  **Adjust** irrigation for the plant's needs. Your irrigation needs will look different for your vegetable garden versus your lawn versus your trees and shrubs.
-  **Be** intentional about your landscape choices outside of your vegetable garden. There are a lot of drought-tolerant ornamental plants, shrubs, and trees that do very well in Utah's dry climate.



Learn more about SLCC Community Gardens

PRESIDENT

HUFTALIN

BELOVED & RESPECTED

The touchstone for all her decisions was the students.

Long before Denece Huftalin became president of Salt Lake Community College, she used to bring home report cards from middle school stamped with A's, but not infrequently, a check mark next to "disruptive influence" for her behavior. "That's because they didn't have a place for 'good trouble' back then," quips her husband, Tim Huftalin, referring to former congressman and civil rights activist John Lewis' quote—"Get in good trouble, necessary trouble..."

Huftalin often used quotes, such as another one from the congressman: "You must be bold, brave, and courageous and find a way, to get in the way," which describes her tenure at SLCC as much as anything else. During her first year as president, Huftalin began a new tradition. To kick off each academic year, she would select a quote to prompt reflection and drive meaning for SLCC, especially for students. The quotes were often linked to what was going on in the world, for example the COVID-19 pandemic.

"My hope was that if students can see themselves in these words, then it will make them feel more included, and less alone, in whatever challenges they face," says Huftalin. "And to remind them of their own self agency to create change."

Ten quotes representing Huftalin's tenure are engraved on large stones, mostly located at the Taylorsville

Redwood Campus in the Respectus—an area gifted to her at her inauguration by the SLCC Staff Association. The quotes capture Huftalin's spirit and acumen for building community at SLCC.

Bringing More Equity and Opportunity

Since becoming president in 2014, Huftalin's approach has always been rooted in the belief that excellent higher education should be available to all. She has spoken up and advocated for this at the College, at the state level, and nationally—serving on numerous advisory boards and committees as a proponent for first-generation and low-income students, women, and Dreamers, among others.

"With the prevalence of inequality, I've asked myself throughout my career, 'How can my efforts be a part of bringing more equity and opportunity into our students' lives?'" says Huftalin.

It was while working in one of her first jobs at Stanford's admissions office in 1984 that Huftalin realized she wanted to work in higher education. She went on to earn her master's degree in Educational Administration from UCLA and her PhD in Educational Leadership and Policy from the University of Utah.

"I love being in a room with students when you see them shift mentally and intellectually. They light up and begin to see something differently, and that is a cool space to be in," says Huftalin.



“Leap, and the
net will appear.”

John Burroughs



Upon retirement, Huftalin will have been the longest serving female president within the Utah System of Higher Education.

STUDENT-CENTRIC LEADERSHIP

Her career at SLCC started in 1992 when she saw an opening for a director of Academic and Career Advising. She had just moved back to Utah from Illinois where she had worked for two colleges. “I didn’t know anything about SLCC and had no idea how big and comprehensive it had become,” says Huftalin, who saw it as a steppingstone to potentially move to the University of Utah. “But as SLCC’s organizational structure grew, I kept getting more and more exciting opportunities to move up.”

Huftalin’s student-centric leadership style stems from a student services rather than an academic background—an atypical path to the president’s office. Prior to serving as president, she served as SLCC’s vice president for Student Services (2002-2013) and dean of students (1998-2002).



*“In a gentle way, you
can shake the world.”*

Mahatma Gandhi

*“The world needs dreamers,
and the world needs doers,
but most of all the world needs
dreamers who do.”*

Sarah Ban Breathnach



Dave Richardson, former SLCC vice president for Academic Affairs (2004-2007), recalls working with Huftalin when she oversaw student services. “Denece saw students from a holistic perspective that included the integration of multiple factors in their development to provide the best possible experience for them.” He recalls the monthly meetings she initiated with him to discuss student needs from both an academic and student affairs perspective.

“Denece always takes a broad perspective, and she never isolates herself in her role,” recalls Richardson, whose SLCC career spanned three other presidents. “She got along with everybody.”

FROM INTERIM TO PRESIDENT

Initially, Huftalin did not want to be SLCC’s president. “At the time, I had a mostly stereotypical view of the presidency: a lot of governmental politics and fundraising with mostly an external focus, and I was really

interested in students and the internal focus.” She did, however, agree to serve as interim president in fall 2013 while the College began a national search in early 2014.

Turns out, she was really good at it. “When I saw her in action, replacing her did not make sense. She had the confidence, temperament, energy, and desire,” recalls Gail Miller, who was part of the search committee. “We did a national search, and she was by far the most outstanding candidate.”

Surprising herself, as the interim president Huftalin found the dynamics and challenges of the job invigorating, but at the time, an interim president could not be considered for the permanent role. Miller, along with Jesselie Anderson of the Utah Board of Regents, started advocating for Huftalin to be able to throw her hat into the ring and compete for the position.

When Huftalin was announced as the new president in September 2014, Miller recalls a packed room full of students leaping up to give her a standing ovation. “There could not have been a better validation that she was the right person for the job.”

STUDENTS ALWAYS COME FIRST

Up to this point, Huftalin had spent most of her career building community for students. She figured those skills could now help her build community across the entire College.

During Huftalin’s first year as president, she led a collaborative effort to establish a new strategic vision to carry the College through the next 10 years to 2023—SLCC’s 75th anniversary. The vision was to become a model for other community colleges nationwide.

*“There is no greater agony
than bearing an untold story
inside you.”*

Maya Angelou

“There have been a lot of programs and efforts unique to us that have served as models for other institutions,” says Huftalin. She points out numerous examples, including the College’s Open Education Resources (OER) across the entire general education curriculum, a robust prison education program, and a unique collaboration between SLCC and the U of U in developing the Herriman Campus.

Another program close to her heart is the Partnerships for Accessing College Education (PACE) program, a high school outreach initiative that improves access to higher education for low-income and first-generation students. Huftalin’s fundraising efforts have helped significantly grow this program, which for students results in a six-semester scholarship at SLCC.

While serving two terms on the College’s Board of Trustees, Miller witnessed Huftalin’s deep commitment to students as she juggled many new responsibilities. “It didn’t matter what else was happening, students and their needs were always number one. She related to them, and they related to her—that really was her calling.”

This devotion to students did not go unnoticed by former U of U President Ruth Watkins, who began working closely with Huftalin in 2018 to improve the transfer process for students. In a unique collaboration, they began steps to join campus in Herriman—where students could earn an associate’s degree from SLCC and then continue their studies at the U of U, all at the same location.

While presidents of different institutions may have approached each other competitively, Huftalin and Watkins recognized this would be a detriment to students. “We prioritized working collaboratively, in partnership, toward shared aims that would benefit students,” says Watkins. Adding, “Deneece’s most enduring feature is how she puts the student first. Always.”

“Leap and the Net Will Appear”

On the hardest, longest days of her job—and she admits some days were downright exhausting and that someone was always mad or disappointed—it is the students and their stories that kept her centered and inspired. “To this day, she still comes home and tells me stories about amazing students and faculty,” says her husband, Tim.

She is known for her willingness to listen. “You have to adjust your thinking based on what you are hearing,” says Huftalin. This practice has garnered her deep respect among many different groups. Alvaro (Junior) Martinez, a former SLCC student body president, recalls a tense time when a group posted offensive flyers on campus. “We were upset and expressed that we were not feeling support from staff.”

President Huftalin arranged for her and her senior leadership team to meet with these students. “She was willing to engage and listen—basically be vulnerable—even though it was a difficult conversation,” recalls Martinez, who wants to model her leadership style in his own career in finance. “She wins

people over by showing respect not using coercion, and it’s motivating.”

In speaking up for higher education and SLCC students, Huftalin has earned a lot of respect, sometimes in contentious spaces. “Deneece has always shown an impressive understanding of the details and the politics involved when pushing for what SLCC needed—and she has always been fair and reasonable,” says Republican Senator Evan Vickers, who has served on the Utah Legislature’s Higher Education Committee the entire time Huftalin has been president. “She has been a stabilizing force in higher education here. We are going to miss her wisdom and institutional knowledge.”

After a 31-year career at SLCC, Huftalin admits the last quote she picked for the school year and the Respectus—“Leap and the net will appear”—might have been as much for her as for SLCC’s students. “We all have to be okay with taking a risk and redefining ourselves, even if we don’t have the answers.” And then she pivots back specifically to students, “They need to know that there is a great big net here for them, that they are in a safe space, and can be who they are.”

“When we hold up a light to see others more clearly, we inevitably illuminate ourselves.”

Alice Walker



TIMELINE: HUFTALIN'S 10-YEAR PRESIDENCY

Under President Denece G. Huftalin's visionary guidance as president since 2014, the College has experienced a period of remarkable growth and transformation.

2014

Huftalin is appointed interim president by USHE on Jan. 1.

Huftalin becomes SLCC's eighth president on Sept. 11.

Huftalin attends the White House College Opportunity Summit, hosted by President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, along with other invited higher education leaders.



2015

SLCC's West Valley Center opens to meet the higher education needs of residents.

Huftalin is one of 50 selected presidents from private and public institutions to participate in the Harvard Seminar for New Presidents.



2016

SLCC Promise program debuts, which covers students' tuition and fees when federal grants fall short.

Huftalin is one of five presidents who presents to Congress on how federal policy can enhance the work of community colleges.

Huftalin receives the Distinguished Alumna Award from the University of Utah.



2017

Huftalin receives the Salt Lake Chamber's ATHENA Leadership Award.

SLCC restores its Prison Education Program at the Utah State Correctional Facility.



2018

SLCC's new 121,000-square-foot Westpointe Workforce Training and Education Center opens.

Huftalin receives the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) regional and national President Award.

2019

SLCC's Dream Center opens to support students who are undocumented.

2020

Huftalin navigates COVID-19 pandemic, shifting classes from in-person to mostly online.

Huftalin serves on the board of directors for the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.



2022

SLCC announces the new Gail Miller School of Business, one of the few business schools nationwide to be named after a woman.

The College officially focuses on being an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution (eHSI), aiming to earn HSI federal designation in the near future.

SLCC rebrands its skill-based training and technical programs into Salt Lake Tech.



2023

The College celebrates its 75th anniversary.

SLCC opens its Herriman campus in a unique collaboration with the U of U, where students can earn an associate's and bachelor's degree at the same location.

Huftalin joins the Excelencia in Education's Presidents for Latino Student Success network.



2024

Huftalin receives the Utah Foundation Insight Award for her outstanding service and dedication to students.

Huftalin retires after serving more than 10 years as SLCC's president.

The College's student center is renamed the Dr. Deneece Huftalin Student Center in her honor.



CELEBRATING

25

folio

YEARS OF CREATIVITY

This year marks the 25th anniversary of *Folio*, SLCC's literary and art magazine produced by students at Salt Lake Community College. *Folio* provides a platform for students, faculty, staff, and alumni to express their creative talents.

fo-li-o
/'fōlēō/
noun

Folio began in 1999 as a collection of academic essays from English courses. Originally an English department project that published essays from students taking English 1010 and 2010 classes, by 2003 *Folio* evolved into a complete literary and art magazine open to the entire SLCC community. Since then, *Folio* has printed thousands of poems, short stories, essays, photographs, videos, and works of art created by SLCC's talented students, staff, faculty, and alumni.

"Over the years the quality of students' work has been just extraordinary, and I think people don't always think of community colleges producing high-quality work, but the student work in *Folio* is just amazing stuff," says Clint Gardner, director of the Student Writing and Reading Center (SWRC) where *Folio* was initially housed. He has been involved in *Folio* since its beginning.

With each new year, a unique theme is chosen to guide writers as they create their submissions. Some of the titles and

themes include Awakening, Memoria, and Resonance. There have also been special editions such as a 9/11 remembrance and Ubuntu, which celebrates Black History Month and is published in conjunction with SLCC's African American Read-In event.

Heather Graham, lab and outreach coordinator at the South City Campus SWRC, says her involvement with *Folio* began as an undergraduate when her English professor, Ron Christiansen, encouraged her to submit a short story that she wrote in class. Getting accepted, she said, boosted her confidence in her writing. She soon took on roles such as the literary editor and design editor.

"*Folio* is a place to help a student find their voice in writing and be able to take that voice to other spaces. It built so much confidence in myself and in my voice, in being able to be in front of people. And to just be creative, in different ways of using creativity to tell my story or to help tell other stories," says Graham.

According to Graham, *Folio* also plays a vital role in empowering marginalized voices. Its history of celebrating diverse experiences helps amplify stories that don't always get heard. "Community college students are typically nontraditional, first-gen, marginalized groups and *Folio* is a space that gives them the chance to tell part of their story. Hopefully, *Folio* will help them carry on telling their story in other spaces and be heard and be part of the fabric of their culture."

After graduating, Graham's passion for empowering voices led her to other departments at SLCC, such as the Community Writing Center, and she became the editor-in-chief of the student newspaper, *The Globe*. She credits *Folio* with giving her the skills and confidence to take on leadership positions promoting creative expression.

Katherine Allred, another former literary editor of *Folio*, says the publication helped develop her own writing and valuable skills in collaboration, leadership, and problem solving.

"I think one of the things that I loved most about *Folio* was the student outreach piece," says Allred. "Getting to see just all the wonderful submissions, whether it was the arts or the literary pieces, everything was so incredibly varied and diverse. It was just so fun to see such a broad array of perspectives and experiences."

Currently, the magazine is produced as part of the English 1830 Literary Magazine Studies class and is taught by professor and *Folio* advisor Daniel Baird. Students in the class gain hands-on experience with all aspects of magazine production, from selecting submissions and layout design to marketing and distribution.

According to Baird, working on *Folio* also gives students invaluable, real-world publishing skills and the opportunity to collaborate on creative projects. "What's most fun though, is watching the students get excited about their own pieces and their own artwork," Baird says.

To celebrate its silver anniversary, the upcoming Fall 2024 issue will feature reflections from past *Folio* editors, advisors, and contributors. It will also highlight *Folio*'s evolution over the decades and its impact on the SLCC community. Baird is encouraging SLCC alumni who were a part of *Folio* in the past to submit pieces reflecting on their experiences working with or being published in the magazine.. "We want to hear alumni perspectives on *Folio*'s impact and how it's changed over time." Baird says.

The next issue of *Folio* will be published in December 2024. The publication will be debuted at an official launch party, and those attending will have to opportunity to view previous *Folio* issues.



Scan here for more information on *Folio*.





SLCC Esports Gains Recognition as Junior Varsity Sport

This is not your typical sport. Instead of the sound of rubber sneakers skidding across a basketball court or soccer balls being kicked, there is a rush and fury of tapping on the keyboard and thumbs fidgeting on a game console. This is the sport of competitive video gaming.

Esports, short for electronic sports, refers to video gaming organized and played at a professional level. It involves teams or individuals competing against each other in popular video games such as *Halo*, *Mario Kart*, and *Super Smash Bros*. Just like traditional sports, esports require skill, strategy, teamwork, and quick reflexes.

“It’s fully recognized just like any other sport. We went from a program that was barely on the map to nationally ranked in less than a year,” says coach and esports director Jeff Sosa, who was hired in the fall 2022 to help relaunch.

Many college athletic programs are expanding beyond traditional sports to include competitive video gaming. The esports program at SLCC began in fall 2020 but has picked up steam this last year under Sosa, and now competes with other colleges through the NJCAA’s Esports and Generation.

“Our SLCC student athletes in esports see the same benefits in their education and are treated just like other athletes on campus,” says Sosa. Athletic scholarships are also available to members of SLCC’s esports team.

The esports team hosts tryouts just like any other sport, evaluating players’ skills in games like *Overwatch* and *Valorant*. Those selected for the varsity and junior varsity squads practice regularly to hone their abilities. “It takes a lot of practice to be good,” says Sosa.

Each semester, there are matches and playoffs, where teams and individuals compete. This past fall, SLCC ranked nationally in several esports playoffs through the NJCAA. Last year one of the *Hearthstone* players, Andrew Swallie (who goes by the game name of Anillusion), took first place nationally. Another team, *Valorant*, took second place, while the *League of Legends* took third place and the *Overwatch* team took fourth.

“We compete through the NJCAA and do not have a cap on how many teams we can create, so as long as students are interested, then we have a place for them,” says Sosa. They accept all levels of players and can sign up students for a competition that matches their level of experience.



“Esports has been shown to lead in overall improvements in grades, academic attendance, and graduation in both secondary and post-secondary schools, just like any other extracurricular activity.”

The importance of extracurricular activities

The esports program is designed to provide students with a platform to pursue their gaming passions while fostering skills for success in careers in an increasingly digital world. Contrary to common misconceptions, esports is not solely about playing video games.

“Esports has been shown to lead in overall improvements in grades, academic attendance, and graduation, in both secondary and post-secondary schools just like any other extracurricular activity,” says Sosa.

The growth of SLCC esports mirrors the rising interest in competitive gaming across high schools and colleges. Sosa notes that around half of college students identify as gamers. Events like a recent high school regional tournament, which drew nearly 300 participants to SLCC’s campus, also help recruit new members. “It just really shows that this is a sport that people are very motivated to do, but they just need to be given the right resources to succeed.”

Students like Christopher Bromley, whose player name is Cheat Activated, compete in one of the biggest names in the gaming industry known as *Halo Infinite*. He’s also competed in other games like *Call of Duty*, *Apex Legends*, *Mortal Kombat*, and *Gran Turismo*.

“I strive every day to be better, not only for myself but for my teammates and coaches as well,” said Bromley, whose own father was also into esports and won a World Championship for a PC video game called *Descent 3* in 1999. “Ever since I won second place in my first tournament at 7 years old, I knew that I wanted to win a world or national championship in esports just like him.”

Sosa says esports also encourages students to create friendships with others who have similar interests. “I would argue the importance of performing arts and extracurricular activities and sports in education is what creates engagement, especially on a college level.”

The pioneering esports program shows diverse interests have a place in higher education. It proves that behind every screen, there are skilled students finding community and competition through their passion.

“I think what really separates the SLCC esports program from a lot of other college esports programs is how the students feel and know that SLCC is behind them one hundred percent of the way, by offering scholarships, a computer lab and a coach to help guide us into the right directions for success,” Bromley says.



For more information about the esports program, visit here

CLINT GARDNER

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE:

English, University of Utah, 1987

MASTER'S DEGREE:

English, College of William and Mary, 1989

YEARS WORKING AT SLCC:

I started teaching as an adjunct faculty member in 1989.

CLASSES YOU TAUGHT AND WHAT YOU DO NOW AT SLCC:

In Writing Studies, I have taught three English college composition courses, Technical Writing, and Mentoring Writers. I've also taught several literature courses. I've been the director of the Student Writing & Reading Center (SWRC) since 1990.

THE BIGGEST CHANGE AT SLCC OVER THE YEARS:

The biggest change that I've witnessed is in the diversity and size of our student body. The increase in the number of students has been accompanied by diversification of our student body, with many more students from a wide variety of backgrounds.

GREATEST PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE:

My greatest challenge was developing the Student Writing & Reading Center. Initially, it was just me and one other tutor who worked with students. With the help of many SLCC colleagues, I was able to secure staffing and funding to grow the vital services we offer. I also loved developing our peer-tutoring program, which has been thriving for over 30 years now.

GREATEST PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT:

I am most proud to have received the annual National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing's Ron Maxwell Award for distinguished leadership in promoting collaborative learning practices.

WHY WORKING AT SLCC MATTERS:

Over the years I've seen so many SLCC students who failed to thrive at other institutions blossom and grow here. I think this is because of the individualized attention that our faculty and staff can provide to students. I know that is one key factor in the success of the SWRC; we mostly work one-on-one with students and take them seriously as learners.

ADVICE FOR FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND OTHERS:

Whether you are faculty or staff, don't forget how far encouragement and assistance can go for students. I am always interested to hear from students how much difference a faculty or staff member made in their educational journey. As for students, don't be shy! Talk to your professors! Talk to staff here at the College! You'll be surprised what you gain.



EXPERIENTIAL



SLCC: A HAVEN IN TROUBLED TIMES

Around the world, numerous regions grapple with wars, political unrest, and social upheavals that force millions to leave their homes in search of safety and stability. Amidst these challenges, Salt Lake Community College offers refuge and resources to those escaping conflict and adversity.

According to The United Nations Refugee Agency, almost 110 million people worldwide have been displaced from their homes and countries due to conflict, violence, human rights violations, or persecution. These issues often further exacerbate the plight of vulnerable populations, leaving them with no choice but to flee their homes in search of safety. As these crises unfold, the world witnesses a growing refugee population in need of support, understanding, and compassion.

Recognizing the pressing need to address the challenges faced by refugees, SLCC has become a sanctuary for those seeking to rebuild

their lives. Through its various programs, resources, and initiatives, the College offers a welcoming environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds can access education, employment opportunities, and essential support services.

SLCC also supports refugees by participating in the Utah Refugee Center, a partnership with Utah State University and the Utah Department of Workforce Services. The Center serves two purposes: to foster opportunities for refugees to access family-sustaining employment and to support refugee communities' efforts to find appropriate solutions toward integration.

A refugee himself, Kamal Bewar, PhD, began his journey at SLCC in 2015 working in the office of Financial Aid, where he not only assisted students with understanding how to pay for college but also acted as a translator for Arabic-speaking students and a mentor to the refugee community.

In his spare time, Dr. Bewar would volunteer at the Refugee Center once a week, talking to people about educational opportunities and providing resources to the community and prospective SLCC students. With a deep commitment to serving students, mentors like Dr. Bewar have created a safe space for students and provided a voice and a guiding light.

"In the tapestry of my academic journey, Dr. Kamal is the thread that weaves guidance, encouragement, and wisdom," said Babi Abdalla, SLCC TRiO Advisor and former student of Dr. Bewar's. "His unwavering support is a beacon, lighting the path to my success as a student, and his belief in my potential is the fuel that propels me forward. In the book of my education, Dr. Kamal is not just a chapter; he is the narrative that transforms challenges into triumphs, making every academic endeavor a story of growth and achievement for me."

In addition to his volunteer work at the Refugee Center, Dr. Bewar is the advisor for SLCC's Global Connections Club, where he promotes student success by encouraging refugee students to get involved on campus socially and educationally.

For more information visit:



COMMUNITY

Salt Lake Community College

COMMENCEMENT 2024



Salt Lake Community College recognized more than 3,100 students during its spring 2024 Commencement Ceremony, awarding more than 3,700 degrees and certificates. The ceremony was held May 3, 2024 at the Maverik Center in West Valley City.


3,169
Total Graduates

Graduates from 35 different countries

164
Veteran

699
Hispanic

16
age of youngest
graduate

67
age of oldest
graduate



GRADUATION BY THE NUMBERS



3,704
Awards



840
High Honors
(cumulative GPA 3.8 or higher)



1,429
First Generation
Students



877
Honors
(cumulative GPA 3.5 – 3.79)

INSPIRE

MARISSA GLOVER

Elementary Education

General Studies

“Breaking barriers has been one of my most significant accomplishments. I started my higher education career after a 12-year break from school, and though it was not easy, it was worth it. My time at SLCC shows my unwavering commitment to my personal growth and self-improvement, and I hope that I can serve as an example for my children that one must persevere in the face of adversity. I am proof that anyone can come back from an education break and excel while changing their life for the better in the process.”

Scan here to see
our 2024 Grads of
Excellence video.



PROVOST’S GRADUATES OF EXCELLENCE

Provost’s Graduates of Excellence is a prestigious distinction that recognizes hard work, commitment, and selflessness. One student is selected from each school and from General Studies. Many students apply to receive this honor. These students have excellent GPAs and typically receive scholarships and awards for their academic achievements. They have demonstrated leadership skills and a dedication to serving others, in addition to other notable achievements related to the creative arts, athletic excellence, or involvement in SLCC and beyond the classroom.

CHARITO KENT

Aviation Maintenance Technology
 School of Applied Technologies and
 Technical Specialties

“SLCC has allowed me to grow professionally and personally. I remember underestimating myself but there are times when you must prioritize what is important. The thought of graduating and earning a degree is my inspiration. It is hard, but I can do it. I am finishing college to fulfill my dream and hope to get a better job. And also, to be an example to my children so that they finish college as well.”



ELLIANYS PUPO RESTREPO

Graphic Communications
 School of Arts, Communication and Media

“The Bruin Dream Scholarship has allowed me to pursue my education and empowered me to continue working toward a bachelor’s degree. Thanks to the scholarship, I was able to focus on my academics, achieve a high GPA, and get accepted at a four-year institution. The Dream Center has played a key role in my academic career, providing me with community support and influencing my success here at SLCC. My gratitude toward the Center is so immense that I became a peer mentor to give back and pass it forward to others.”



LEXUS LINDEMAN

Computer Science

Gail Miller School of Business

“My time at SLCC has not only been challenging but rewarding. I started going here with the mindset of, ‘All I need is to pass and get an associate’s degree.’ But now I am leaving with the goal to get my master’s degree. I would like to say I did everything right and never failed, but in reality I did fail, but it was through those failures that I was able to learn and succeed now. I am proud of what I have done despite the hurdles I’ve had to jump to be here.”

SHAWNTELL RICORD

Occupational Therapy Assistant Program

School of Health Sciences

“Due to my hard work and dedication, my time at SLCC has been nothing short of rewarding. I used to be so caught up with having perfect grades and being the perfect student, but everything changed when I was involved in a car accident. I realized that it is the small things that matter, and it was such an experience that shaped me to become a more grateful and joyful SLCC community member.”



ALYSSA KOROLOGOS

Psychology

School of Humanities and Social Science

“Getting to this place has been a challenge. I almost did not graduate from high school; however, after years of an educational break, I took a leap of faith to pursue my passion for psychology at SLCC. My goal is to become a therapist and help others understand that one’s past does not define one’s future. I firmly believe I can create my own success and have all the tools needed to obtain it.”



JACQUELIN HUTCH

Medical Laboratory Science

School of Science, Mathematics and Engineering

“I was born into a close-knit community in the Peruvian mountains, surrounded by beautiful landscapes, resilience, and determination. Realizing the limited opportunities I had within the picturesque mountains that surrounded me, I decided to seek a brighter future in America and left my family and mountains behind. I am the first member of my family to attend college, and I carry with me a profound sense of responsibility and commitment to positively impacting the diverse campus community of which I am part.”



“You have to trust that you can go through hard times and things can turn out okay.”

ERIN JACKSON OLYMPIAN

When Olympic speedskater and Salt Lake Community College alumna Erin Jackson first started competitive inline skating, she used to throw up before races because of anxiety. That was before she lost her mother, who passed away when Jackson was in high school. That heartbreak ultimately shifted her pregame nerves, and she no longer gets stressed before competitions.

“Everything is temporary, and if you have a bad race, hey, we’re all still here and alive—it is not the end of the world,” says Jackson, who always looks for the learning opportunities in failure. “You have to trust that you can go through hard times and things can turn out okay.”

This resilient mindset helped Jackson win a gold medal at the 2022 Olympic Winter Games in Beijing, establishing her as the world’s fastest female speedskater in the 500 meters and the first Black woman to win an individual gold at a Winter Olympics. She also represented the United States at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea, mere months after switching from inline skating to speedskating.

Jackson, who grew up in Ocala, Florida, loves to push herself. Her penchant for challenges has taken her not only to the Olympics but also to the wilds of New Zealand, where last year she was a contestant on *Special Forces: World’s Toughest Test*. *Special Forces* is a quasi-military training reality television series that pits contestants against harsh environments. “I found I was tougher than I thought, and I was surprised that I was willing to attempt all the things that scared me,” says Jackson.

While competing around the world as an elite athlete, Jackson also attends SLCC. She earned an associate’s degree in Computer Science in 2020 and is working on several other degrees at the College. She also holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Florida’s College of Engineering, where she graduated *cum laude* in 2015.

“I guess I’m destined to be a life-long nerd,” says Jackson, admitting that she loves learning. Ultimately, she wants to work in biomechanics, possibly perfecting prosthetics for Paralympic athletes and others.



“WE CHANGE THE WORLD – ONE STUDENT AT A TIME.”

KATHARINE B. GARFF

Katharine B. Garff has dedicated her life to education and community service but is quick to share credit for her accomplishments with others. “We are fortunate in Utah to have dedicated people, organizations, and institutions that believe in the power of education,” she says. “Their energy and passion have led to many successes.”

Garff, a graduate of the University of Utah, and her husband, Bob, founded the Robert H. and Katherine B. Garff Success in Education Foundation in 2004, which she continues to direct. The foundation’s offerings include its Keys to Success initiative, connecting high school students with college or careers, and its popular Road to Success program, designed to promote literacy among K-5 students by incentivizing daily reading. “We change the world—one student at a time,” Garff says.

Outside of her philanthropic work and volunteer assignments, Garff is the chair of Ken Garff Automotive, a position she took over when her husband passed away in 2020. She had previously served as one of the company’s board members for many years and was instrumental in driving its impressive growth.

Garff’s accomplishments are a testament to the impact a person can make with persistent hard work, which is at the heart of her favorite piece of advice to the students she encounters through her foundation. “Persevere,” she says. “The journey may be hard, but your education is worth it. Don’t give up.”



“IF THERE WAS EVER A NEED FOR AN INSTITUTION LIKE SLCC, IT’S NOW.”

PATRICIA JONES-HORTON

A well-known figure in local business and politics, Patricia Jones-Horton is a role model for female leaders across Utah. As CEO of the Women’s Leadership Institute, Jones-Horton believes women often underestimate their potential. “Esteem comes from within and can be used in one’s spheres of influence to change the world,” she says.

Jones-Horton believes curiosity is the key to growth and likes to learn by asking simple questions, a practice she attributes to her training as a qualitative researcher. She is convinced that Salt Lake Community College is a wonderful place for curious people to thrive and is a great asset for Utah. “If there was ever a need for an institution like SLCC, it’s now,” she says. “It is a marketplace of ideas from people representing all walks of life.”

Co-founder and former president of Dan Jones & Associates, a prominent public opinion and market research firm, Jones-Horton spent 35 years at the company where she honed her skills in understanding people and their needs. In 2006, she plunged into Utah politics by running for the state legislature. As the first female legislator to hold leadership positions in both the Utah House and Senate, she worked on several committees, including the Public Education, Higher Education, and Economic Development committees.

As Jones-Horton continues to drive change through the Women’s Leadership Institute, she advises graduating students to follow their own interests and worry less about where they will land. “Success comes from taking risks, and you take learning with you wherever you go, so enjoy the present and strive to be the best version of yourself every day,” she says.

HONORARY DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS

Since 1955, the Salt Lake Community College Board of Trustees has been awarding Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees to outstanding individuals. Awardees have achieved distinction, made extraordinary contributions to their professional fields, and made a meaningful impact in their communities and/or to higher education.



“WHEN I THINK OF INCLUSIVITY, I THINK OF SLCC.”

LIANNA KINARD

Associate’s Degree, General Studies, 2004

Chief Marketing Officer, The Buckner Company

When Lianna Kinard began her journey at Salt Lake Community College, she had recently relocated from Mililani, Hawaii, to Utah, where she worked full time to support her education. SLCC provided an excellent starting point, and she remembers feeling a sense of belonging on campus.

In one of her classes, Kinard met a student from Japan who had recently moved to Utah. “Where in the world does a girl from Hawaii end up sitting next to a girl from Japan in a classroom,” says Kinard, who valued SLCC’s small class sizes. “When I think of inclusivity, I think of SLCC.”

Kinard’s start at the College ultimately led to a Bachelor of Arts in Marketing from the University of Utah’s David Eccles School of Business and a

Master of Liberal Arts in General Management from Harvard University. Today, she serves as the chief marketing officer for The Buckner Company, a premier insurance brokerage firm headquartered in Salt Lake City.

Lianna is known for her community service and involvement in many local organizations. She has served as a mentor, board member, and chair of the David Eccles School of Business Alumni Network and currently serves on the Board of Trustees for Hale Centre Theatre. She is also chair of the American Heart Association Board and a member of the Forbes Communication Council.



JIM RUSSELL

Electrician Apprenticeship Program, 1984

Associate Vice President, Facilities, University of Utah

For Jim Russell, completing SLCC’s Electrician Apprenticeship program was the first step in building a highly successful career in the construction industry. Eventually, he became the director of the Utah Division of Facilities and Construction Management, and this past March, he accepted a position with the University of Utah overseeing its facilities division.

SLCC’s electrician program was a good place to start for Russell. “I love to learn and understand things, and I’m a hands-on learner. Working in the field while I was going to school worked well for me.”

Over the years Russell has reconnected with SLCC professionally. He oversaw the renovation of the South City Campus, which he attended as a student when the facility was known as South High School, and he was instrumental in building several structures on the College’s Taylorsville Redwood Campus. He also served as an adjunct instructor in SLCC’s electrician program from 2008 to 2012.

Russell is emphatic that a bachelor’s degree is not the only path to a well-paying, fulfilling career. “I really love the mission and concept behind technical colleges and the value they bring to the state by encouraging people to go into the trades.”

“WORKING IN THE FIELD WHILE I WAS GOING TO SCHOOL WORKED WELL FOR ME.”

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

Salt Lake Community College’s prestigious Distinguished Alumni Award honors SLCC graduates and former students for professional or academic excellence and exemplary service in their communities. It’s the highest award the College bestows upon alumni. Traditionally, one female alumna and one male alumnus are selected as honorees each year.

“We are here to help students earn their degree ... but we are also here to show them what makes our disciplines worthy of study and empower them to exercise their curiosity and agency.”

MELISSA HARDY, PhD

Associate Professor

Department of Biology



Curiosity, Melissa Hardy asserts, is our birthright as human beings. “We arrive in this world eager to learn and experience the world around us, but subpar educational experiences can dampen or kill that natural state of inquisitiveness and replace it with boredom and apathy,” she says.

As Salt Lake Community College’s Distinguished Faculty Lecturer for 2025, Hardy’s lecture, *Biocurious: The Power of Curiosity in an Age of Assessment*, will be an antidote to the recent trend in higher education to standardize curriculum, which often prioritizes the needs of institutions over the needs of students. Her lecture will focus on reigniting the natural curiosity of students.

“We are here to help students earn their degree or certificate or credits, but we are also

here to show them what makes our disciplines worthy of study and empower them to exercise their curiosity and agency,” says Hardy.

The topics covered in her lecture will span from discussions on parasitic worms to insights regarding the student experience at SLCC. Hardy will also discuss the need to integrate meaningful and transformative experiences, such as hands-on research projects, into curricula, so students can see their learning come to life outside the classroom.

With a Master of Arts in Biology from San Francisco State University and a PhD in Neurobiology and Anatomy from the University of Utah, Hardy joined SLCC’s faculty in 2011 and has created and taught courses in general biology, ecology, animal biology, and marine biology.

DISTINGUISHED FACULTY LECTURER, 2025

The Distinguished Faculty Lecturer is a recognition of quality work by one of Salt Lake Community College’s full-time faculty and a charge to develop that work over an academic year into a public presentation. A committee chosen by the Associate Provost for Learning Advancement selects the faculty lecturer each year. Hardy’s lecture will take place in the spring of 2025.



**MATT
AFFOLTER**

Adjunct Instructor

Department of Geology

At an early age, Matt Affolter noticed he had a passion for teaching. Having always enjoyed helping his classmates learn the subjects they were struggling with, in 2011 he became an Earth Science teacher at Fort Herriman Middle School. Four years later, he joined Salt Lake Community College as an adjunct instructor, and today he shares his knowledge of geology with hundreds of high school and college students annually.

“Geology is extremely underrated in our society,” says Affolter, who is trying to change the narrative on the field with every class he teaches. “We all use this planet’s resources, and geology can teach people to become better stewards.” He also

trains his students to stay current on environmental issues. “I want my students to be well informed so they can make decisions that can help better our planet; it’s that simple.”

Affolter earned a bachelor’s degree in Geology from the University of California Los Angeles and a master’s degree in Geology from the University of Montana. He also holds a master’s degree in Education from the University of Utah. In addition to serving as an instructor at SLCC, he teaches Earth Science, Geology, Paleontology, and Natural Disasters courses at Cottonwood High School.

Empowering students to become effective learners is the principal goal of Salt Lake Community College associate professor of Chemistry Ryan Holcomb. “Learning chemistry requires self-discipline and determination,” he says. “Students who develop this will find success in all of their academic work.”

From his first day teaching at SLCC, Holcomb has been mindful that many students are underprepared for college. “I feel a deep responsibility to keep all of my students in class and help them meet their goals,” he says. One way he does this is by teaching a special “Unit 0” in all his classes. “Unit 0 helps most students but

especially disadvantaged students who may have not learned these strategies in high school.”

Holcomb earned a bachelor’s degree in Chemistry from the University of Texas-Austin and a PhD in Organic Chemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Prior to starting his teaching career in 2008, he worked as a research scientist in the pharmaceutical industry and uses this experience to connect classroom concepts with solutions for real-world problems. “Chemistry is at the core of many things, and I love it when my students use knowledge of the microscopic world to understand the macro, or larger, world around them.”



**RYAN
HOLCOMB,
PhD**

Associate Professor

Department of Chemistry



STACEY VANDAHM, PhD

Associate Professor

Department of English, Linguistics & Writing Studies

Stacey VanDahm’s teaching approach is rooted in her belief that literature is a powerful tool to develop compassion for others. “Teaching empathy is what literature does,” she says. “It makes the human experience more accessible and relatable.”

VanDahm prioritizes in-class discussions where she reframes, draws out more reticent students, reiterates key points, and handles interruptions as they happen. She also uses peer feedback to provide students with opportunities to examine how their fellow classmates approach reading, thinking, and writing. This practice exposes students to differing personal

and political views and requires them to reflect and respond constructively. “I believe my classroom must be a place where they are challenged but feel safe to explore.”

An associate professor of English at Salt Lake Community College since 2017, VanDahm has also taught at the University of California-Santa Barbara and Philadelphia University. She also taught in Russia with the Peace Corps. VanDahm holds a bachelor’s in English Literature from Pepperdine University, and master’s and doctorate degrees in Comparative Literature from the University of California-Santa Barbara.

**TEACHING
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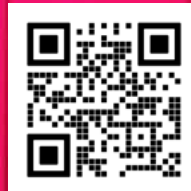
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