

BERKELEY CITY COLLEGE

June 9, 2026

Denise Richardson, Ed.D., President

Commencement Celebrating Class of 2026



Hundreds of families, friends, and loved ones gathered at the UC Berkeley Memorial Glade on Thursday, May 21 to celebrate Berkeley City College graduates. This year, over 650 graduates earned over 1,300 certificates and degrees.

Some students were given special honors, including Ahyan Malik, this year's recipient of the President's Medallion and the Phi Theta Kappa Founder's Medal. Ayhan also served as a PCCD student trustee and is a recipient of the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship. He will be transferring to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, majoring in Electrical Engineering & Computer Science.

"Two years ago, I came into this college with a dream and a belief that I would succeed. Now, I find myself standing at the end of this journey, in the middle of a much larger world, realizing that success is not just about titles, awards, or proving people wrong," said Malik. "What matters is that we set ourselves to a high standard, and then keep raising that standard through work we find meaning in."

Co-valedictorians Navaneet Baniya and Umaima Raisa also addressed their classmates with words of wisdom. Navaneet is

a Jack Kent Cooke scholar transferring to Stanford and Umaima Raisa, ASBCC President, will be transferring to UC Berkeley.

"Education is not something to take for granted. It is a privilege, and it is a powerful tool for change. It gives people hope and opportunity," said Raisa. "And for so many of us sitting here, education became the reason we kept going even during the hardest moments of our lives."

"Berkeley City College did not magically transform us into capable people. It gave us a sense of direction," said Baniya. "It prepared us for the outside world. It simply revealed to us who we already were."

Many of the graduates will be transferring to UCs and CSUs, to HBCUs such as Xavier and Howard, others to MIT, Brown, and Stanford! We celebrate the apprentices entering the workforce in healthcare, education, and multimedia arts and welcome those who wish to return to continue their education. Our BCC community looks forward to following their journey, wherever it goes!

We thank the BCC Commencement Committee, especially Chair Dean Raniyah Johnson, for their work organizing another successful commencement.



Building the Future Educator Workforce: BCC Celebrates OakTown Leaders Graduates



Berkeley City College hosted a graduation ceremony for nearly 90 Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) dual enrollment students completing their early education youth pre-apprenticeship through the OakTown Leaders teacher preparation program.

Graduates participated in an earn and learn model that allows students to gain college credit while in high school, creating a clear and structured pathway into careers in education and related fields. Students earned eligibility for industry certifications in child development while gaining hands-on workforce experience. Graduates may choose to enter the workforce directly out of high school or continue their educational journey through college and university pathways leading to bachelors, masters, doctoral and other advanced degrees. Students are prepared to pursue careers in teaching,

child development, social services, psychology, and other professions supporting children and families.

In just three years, the program has grown from 9 apprenticeship completers in 2024 to just under 90 students in 2026, representing a major systems shift in how students access college, career, and workforce opportunities. This growth reflects a strong regional partnership network that includes apprenticeship sponsor Early Care and Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS), industry partners including Partnership for Children and Youth (PCY), OUSD, the YMCA of the East Bay, Girls Inc. Of Alameda County, the Alameda County Office of Education, and Berkeley City College. A critical component of the program is the employer mentors who guide students throughout their on-the-job training experience.

“We focus heavily on persistence by aligning coursework with employment and providing structured support throughout the pathway,” said Dr. Joya Chavarin, BCC Program designer and lead faculty member. “This includes designated counseling, support with course sequencing, embedded academic supports, and ongoing coordination with employers. Students can progress from entry level coursework into certificates, associate degrees, and eventually transfer pathways, all while remaining employed. The goal is not just entry into the field, but sustained advancement.”

BCC Recognized by Downtown Berkeley Association Awards

Berkeley City College was recognized with the Downtown Berkeley Association’s It’s Our Downtown award for Design Excellence & Community Engagement for its BCC West Campus. President Denise Richardson was on hand at the DBA’s Annual Meeting on May 28 to receive the award along with community partners, including Berkeley Mayor and BCC Alumnus Adena Ishii.

Berkeley City College thanks the DBA for its longtime support and partnership, especially CEO John Caner. Caner recently sat down with President Richardson for our podcast [BCC Spotlight](#) where he discussed his 17 years of service with the DBA and Downtown Committee, the changes in Berkeley under his tenure, and ways that public education contributes to a bustling downtown. Caner will be retiring at the end of 2026 and we wish him the best in his next chapter, and look forward to continued partnership with the DBA.



Berkeley Rotary Club Speaker Series Features Berkeley City College

President Denise Richardson was invited by the Berkeley Rotary Club to take part in their May Speaker series. President Richardson's Presentation "Berkeley City College Update: New Building, New Energy, New Possibilities" highlighted the college's progress on its Strategic Plan, including steadily increasing enrollment trends, increased rate of program completion, and elimination of achievement gaps. She also previewed the opening of Berkeley City College West and provided updates on the Peralta Transformation Plan. Along the way, President Richardson highlighted stories of student achievement, including the first graduates from BCC's Rising Scholars program, transfer success stories, and positive apprenticeship outcomes.



Video of the presentation is available on the [Berkeley Rotary Club website](#). We thank the Berkeley Rotary Chapter for its continued interest and support of Berkeley City College!

BCC SEA Coordinator Carolina Martinez Selected to CCCO Advisory Committee

Berkeley City College Student Equity and Achievement Coordinator Carolina Martinez has been selected to serve on the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Undocumented Student Success Advisory Committee. According to an announcement from the CCCO, the Advisory Committee will play a critical role in helping guide and inform ongoing professional development efforts for liaisons across the system. Through collaboration and shared expertise, the committee will help identify priorities, elevate field perspectives, and support the continued strengthening of resources and engagement opportunities statewide.

"I am honored to have been invited to participate in this statewide effort and grateful for the opportunity to contribute to work focused on supporting undocumented student success across the California Community College system," said Martinez.



This Concludes Berkeley City College's Board Report