



**VALLEY LIFE: LAVENDER**  
**LACCD'S LGBTQIA+ STUDENTS**  
**WERE HONORED THIS MONDAY.**



**SPORTS: BASEBALL**  
**VALLEY COLLEGE BASEBALL HONE**  
**THEIR SKILLS ON CAMPUS.**

# Rule breaking ASU candidate was reinstated

A former presidential candidate was disqualified and then let back into the race after he was found to be violating the rules stated in the Election Code.



FLYER- A campaign flyer for then ASU presidential nominee Vardan Tonakanyan on a Refreshment Center Kiosk in front of The Monarch Cafe. Monday, April 26, 2021. Los Angeles, Calif.

ANGELA THOMPSON  
STAFF WRITER

Former ASU presidential candidate Vardan Tonakanyan was disqualified from the spring 2021 election after he had violated campaign rules, but was allowed to continue after the decision was downgraded to a five-day suspension.

“All candidates are responsible for following all instructions and rules established by the Election Committee,” Section 6.D of the ASU Election Code states.

Tonakanyan had posted flyers on campus promoting his campaign, despite candidates being asked to campaign strictly online due to the closure of campus, according to ASU Advisor

Monica Flores. Tonakanyan signed a form on April 2 stating that he understood the rules and regulations of the Election Code.

The flyers were discovered by another candidate on April 21 and brought to the attention of the Election Committee and the chair and commissioner of political affairs, Luoi Sabha. The Election Committee declared Tonakanyan disqualified from the electoral process.

“I think he just isn’t paying attention to the rules and regulations,” said Sabha.

Current ASU President Farouk Ajibola stated that the Election Code was gone over with all of the candidates and, although some of the code was redacted due to the pandemic, he believes the other candidates had no issues because it was

clearly explained. These were the same guidelines Ajibola ran under last year as well, therefore he is very familiar with them. Ajibola is part of the Election Committee that decided on Tonakanyan’s disqualification from the electoral process and stated, “He [Tonakanyan] campaigned on campus which violated the Election Code.”

However, Tonakanyan appealed the decision to the vice president of student services, Florentino Manzano, and was able to get the disqualification reduced to a five-day suspension, beginning on April 23. Voting began April 25 and ended on April 30, therefore three out of five of his suspension days were voting days.

Manzano claimed that there was not enough evidence

in his opinion to disqualify Tonakanyan from the race and according to him, Tonakanyan responded “I don’t even know what the accusation is about and I have no knowledge or know of any flyers that were posted.”

The only evidence of the violation presented to Manzano, was a picture of a flyer posted on campus in an email from opposing presidential candidate Sandra Sanchez, who later won the position in the spring 2021 ASU election.

Manzano contacted Tonakanyan again, who then admitted that he had gone on to campus to post the flyers, but was not aware that this was a campaign violation. The Valley Star reached out to Tonakanyan, who admitted to posting the flyers on April 13. Manzano believes

that Tonakanyan was unaware of the allegations against him, even though he made an appeal.

However since he was not directly asked to remove flyers from campus, Tonakanyan was technically still able to campaign throughout his suspension by keeping them posted. Some people, including Sanchez and Ajibola, see it as a violation and disapprove of Manzano’s decisions.

Flores informed the Valley Star that Tonakanyan “was not asked to remove the flyers, therefore it would not be a violation” of his suspension and he will not be penalized. Manzano added that he did not include removal of the flyers into Tonakanyan’s suspension because asking a student to go back onto campus could be considered unsafe.

“I don’t think the gravity of this infraction raised to the level of disqualification,” said Manzano. “You know the fact that somebody posted earlier a flyer did not warrant, to me and my assessment, of a disqualification, but just a suspension.”

It may be unclear if Manzano believed the complaint Tonakanyan was being accused of was having flyers up before April 2 or if the flyers were posted on the ASU building, which Manzano did not see enough evidence for. Sanchez did not file her claim until April 22 and her main concern was that the flyer was posted by the ASU building, which candidates are not allowed to campaign near, according to the Election Code.

The email Sanchez received from Flores about Manzano’s decision to overturn the decision of the Elections Committee mentioned that part of it was based around his flyers “being placed prior to April 2, 2021.” However, no one seems to know where the date April 2 was brought up in the accusations.

The Elections Committee made their decision based on the fact that the candidate violated the Election Code after signing a document, agreeing

to the terms and conditions. The decision, according to the chair of the Elections Committee, was unanimous. Both Ajibola and Sabha agree something must be done.

Sabha and ASU Treasurer Erica Fletcher have announced they are working on fixing the Election Code so that something like this does not happen again.

“These are weird times and things come up and when there’s not a super clear code and a set of guidelines to follow, things can get really muddled so I think it’s a great idea and I think it’s a good time to revise,” said Katy Workman, commissioner of fine arts on creating on a new Election Code.

“It seems like the theme of 2020 and 2021 is unprecedented and this is just a good instance for us to strengthen our Election Code,” responded Sabha to Workman’s comment. “The ASU is important and we do a lot for the students here so we have to take it seriously, we can’t just let anybody try to get in, that’s why there’s an election process and why people campaign and they make statements and there’s a code to follow.”

*Soren Blomquist Eggerling contributed to this report.*

## ASU ELECTION

In the spring 2021 ASU election, 248 out of 15,244 students cast their ballots. With 74 percent of the vote, Sandra Sanchez was elected to be the next ASU president over opponent Vardan Tonakanyan by a tally of 179 to 62.

# High schoolers reluctant to return to campus

Many Los Angeles County high school students prefer remote learning over in-person classes, while others are eager to return to campus.

ANTHONY LOPEZ  
STAFF WRITER

As schools begin to offer more classes in person, many high school students are hesitant to return to campus and are choosing to continue remotely instead.

According to the Los Angeles Times, 7 percent of high school students have returned to campuses in the Los Angeles Unified School District, where extensive safety measures have failed to lure the majority of students back to the classroom in the final weeks of school.

Los Angeles County is now in the yellow tier, which means more places are starting to open up including stadiums, hair salons, gyms and restaurants. In this case, schools are now able to reopen for in-person instruction, as a result of LA County’s second week in the yellow beginning May 11.

In LAUSD, middle and high school students are on campus for a full day in a schedule that alternates two-day weeks with three-day weeks. This new method for in-person learning

is called “Zoom in a room,” a format for high schools in Los Angeles and San Francisco. The way this method works is that students report to an assigned room, where a teacher is present right in front of the classroom, and log on to Zoom as they would at home. Seating will be socially distanced as well.

**“[In-person learning] helps me focus more to be in a more school-like environment, not in the comfort of my own home.”**

- *Maxwell Garcia, Grant High School junior*

The majority of the district’s more than 600,000 students have not had in-person classes on campus since March 13, 2020 — most of that time due to pandemic-forced school closures, but most recently by choice.

“I think the re-opening of campuses is a very stupid and

highly illogical idea,” said a male Grant High School student who requested anonymity. “It’s practically pointless.”

High schoolers are not the only ones worried about the campuses opening up again, parents are also concerned. According to a survey conducted by the LA Times, LAUSD parents indicated that about 17 percent of high school students would come back to campus.

Although most students disapprove of going back to in-person learning, others have different opinions in regards to their education. According to Maxwell Garcia, a 17-year-old junior at Grant High School, going back in person would not only benefit him, but also his education.

“It helps me focus more to be in a more school-like environment, not in the comfort of my own home,” said Garcia. “In-person learning is beneficial to me because it is a lot easier to have the teacher right in front of you and for them to see if you need help or anything.”

According to data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural



HIGH SCHOOL- Ulysses S. Grant High School student strolls onto campus as students return to school for the first time in more than a year. Students and staff attending in-person classes answer daily health check questions and are sent a Daily Pass. Once complete, they present their Daily Pass to the school staff and receive a temperature screening. Tuesday, May 11, 2021. Los Angeles, Calif.

Organization, “By mid-May 2020, more than 1.2 billion students at all levels of education worldwide had stopped having face-to-face classes.”

A year later, campuses are reopening again. It remains to

be seen how students will return by the end of the school year.

“The reopening of campuses and the return of in-person learning benefits those who struggle with online learning,” said an anonymous sophomore

female Grant student. “At first I was a little hesitant to continue my education on campus, but now I am glad to be back.”

# Emily Grodin found her voice and demands to be heard

The Valley College student shares how nonverbal autism has impacted her life in the memoir she co-wrote; “I Have Been Buried Under Years of Dust.”



VALLEY STAR | STEPHEN CASTANEDA  
STUDENT- Valley College student and Encino native Emily Grodin types on her MacBook laptop. Her main form of communication is writing.

CASSANDRA NAVA  
ONLINE EDITOR

For 25 years, Emily Grodin's voice was buried under a condition that forced her into a life of silence.

Grodin began typing as her primary form of communication in 2016. Now nearly five years later, the Encino native published a book. She was diagnosed with nonverbal autism at 2 years old, restricting her ability to share her thoughts, feelings or opinions with peers and teachers. Her

newfound ability to communicate gave her a new lease on life.

“It is everything to me,” said the 29 year old when asked about what writing means to her. “It is my ticket into the world.”

The Valley College student uses assisted typing, or facilitated communication, to share her thoughts. With the help of a communication partner, Grodin types on her iPad that says her words aloud. This technological help allows her to participate in a world that she was forced to view from the sidelines. Valerie Gilpeer, Grodin's mother, said when her daughter began typing, the

brilliance she always suspected poured out.

“Unfortunately that's how we measure people; we measure people's intelligence by how articulate they are, and what they have to offer us,” said Gilpeer. “So you can imagine the reception she was getting all those years when people didn't know how much she had to say.”

Grodin and her mother recently co-wrote “I Have Been Buried Under Years of Dust,” a memoir that details the history of Grodin's life through each of their perspectives. Gilpeer provides background information on her daughter's life with autism. Peppered with Grodin's poignant writing throughout the book, readers can begin to understand how she felt during her years of silence. With rave reviews from NPR, The Washington Post, Kirkus and Amazon, Grodin's story is more than just inspiring. Her strength lies in her attention to detail and ability to capture emotion.

According to Gilpeer, “I Have Been Buried Under Years of Dust” was released four years and eight months to the day her daughter first started typing. Grodin's lyrical prose allowed her to sum up a vivid description of her life, as the title of the memoir stems from an abbreviated version of the original, “I have been buried under years of dust and now I have so much to say.”

Due to her inability to speak, Grodin soaked up the life around her by listening. Her love of learning and being a “news junkie” — as her mother referred to — led to an internship with her local Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel of the 45th district.

Asking Gabriel hard hitting questions about local community issues led her to be labeled as a journalist. She harnessed that passion into her education and currently studies journalism at Valley, where she has fine-tuned her passions and discovered her direction. Grodin relies on her writing not only to speak, but to inform and be an advocate for others.

**“If life won't be what I need, I'll fight to make it right for me.”**

*-Emily Grodin*

With hopes to write a poetry book in the future, Grodin shares her writings on social media. When scrolling through her Instagram account, viewers see photos of a young woman's travels and adventures, but scattered throughout the cheerful grid lies photos of her piercing words. In her writing, Grodin addresses the internal struggles she faces with autism, but focuses on the positive aspects.

Her poem “The Good Fight,” featured in the spring 2021 issue of Spectrum Life Magazine, shows her incredible resilience.

“I will still fight if I have to still scream if need be,” wrote Grodin. “If life won't be what I need, I'll fight to make it right for me.”



VALLEY STAR | STEPHEN CASTANEDA  
MEMOIR- Emily Grodin's life with autism inspired her mother, Valerie Gilpeer to co-write a memoir titled “I Have Been Buried Under Years of Dust.” The book follows both of their perspectives and features Grodin's poetry.

## LACCD hosted virtual Lavender Graduation Ceremony

The Lavender Graduation Ceremony promoted inclusivity and united LGBTQIA+ members across the Los Angeles Community College District.



GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION | VICKIE GUZMAN  
GRADUATION- The district hosted its third annual Lavender Graduation Ceremony virtually on May 17, 2021.

MARCOS FRANCO  
NEWS EDITOR

The Los Angeles Community College District hosted its third annual Lavender Graduation Celebration last Monday to honor LGBTQIA+ students across its nine campuses.

This year's commemoration hosted hundreds of attendees, featuring guest speakers from the district as well as a

recorded message from Mayor Eric Garcetti — complete in a lavender tie for the occasion. The number of attendees increased by approximately 100 more than last year's ceremony. The event also included musical performances from LGBTQIA+ groups West Coast Singers and the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles; both of which contained faculty from the LACCD.

The purpose of the Lavender Graduation extends beyond the

standard celebration of academic achievement. Not only does the event honor students for their accomplishments during their time as a part of the district, but it also helps them connect with other LGBTQIA+ members in the community. Through mentorship and support from those involved, students are able to leave their college with a positive last experience that they can carry with them past graduation.

“What students will take

away from this celebration is having graduated and achieved their academic goals with people who celebrate their identity,” said Trustee David Vela, Chair of the LGBTQIA+ Chancellor's Advisory Committee. “The district acknowledges and welcomes them so they will leave with more confidence to take on the world.”

The Lavender Graduation was created by Ronni Sanlo in 1995, the director of lesbian and gay programs at the University of Michigan at the time. After marriage and two children, Sano came out as lesbian at the age of 31 which caused her to lose custody of her kids and subsequently prevented her from attending their college graduation ceremony. Encouraged by the Dean of Students at the University of Michigan, Sanlo formed the first Lavender Graduation which had three attendees. Over the past 26 years, the tradition has expanded to more than 500 colleges, universities and high schools nationwide.

The lavender color comes from a combination of two emblems that were initially used to identify queer prisoners during the Nazi Germany era. Gay men were marked with an inverted pink triangle on their jumpsuits in concentration camps while lesbian women wore a black triangle. This badge was used to cast shame towards homosexuality, showcasing people as political prisoners because their lifestyle conflicted with the views of government. The color has since become a symbol of pride, representing the

progress that has been made by the LGBTQIA+ community who continues to fight for equality.

In modern day struggles, the former presidential administration removed the planned sexual orientation question from the U.S. Census which was used to account for LGBTQIA+ Americans. The administration also reintroduced the “don't ask, don't tell” policy, an approach to discourage trans military members from serving openly.

**“It gives me a lot of hope and optimism that our students will go on to become whatever they want and create their own path.”**

*-David Vela, chair of the LGBTQIA+ Chancellor's Advisory Committee*

The Lavender Graduation was created to embrace identities that were once forced to be concealed and advocate for change and equality. The event is a cultural celebration where people from all walks of life are welcome and accepted.

“For me personally as the first openly-gay Trustee, it gives me a sense of purpose to not only represent people of color but to also represent the LGBTQIA+ community by being a voice on the board,” said Vela. “It gives me a lot of hope and optimism that our students will go on to become whatever they want and create their own path.”

The Lavender Graduation is one of many steps the LACCD is taking to create a community and environment for people of color and LGBTQIA+ students to thrive. The district plans to implement queer studies departments across its campuses which would be similar to the ethnic studies departments already existent at all nine campuses.

LACCD Dean for Student Success Deborah Harrington, understands the historic obstacles faced by the LGBTQIA+ community, being gay herself. The dean praised the celebration for being a powerful affirmation for students' identities.

“If students experienced difficult times during their college years — times when they felt shamed or demeaned because of who they are — I hope this moment replaces those experiences and let's them know how proud our colleges are of their achievements,” said Harrington. “I hope they understand how much we owe them for helping us build a better, more resilient and loving learning community.”

## Get ahead or catch up; summer courses await Monarchs

Valley College offers more than 100 summer courses — either entirely online, on campuses or hybrid — for students to enroll in this intersession.

BENJAMIN ROYER  
STAFF WRITER

With students at Valley preparing for the last four weeks of instruction leading up to finals, accelerated summer courses are now available for enrollment in order to grab a head start towards fall.

Students can access the summer schedule via the LACCD student portal, where they can select their courses through the “Manage Classes” tab. A variety of courses are offered during the summer which can allow students to reach their educational goals quicker. The summer session is split into two 5-week periods with the first half starting on June 14 and the second

on July 19. Students are able to take and receive credit for classes at any of the LACCD colleges.

Summer courses can allow students to get a difficult class out of the way in a fraction of the time; being a five week semester compared to the regular 16 weeks. Taking one class instead of the three or four in the regular semester, allows more focus on the lone course at hand.

“By taking summer classes students can accelerate their progress towards their goal whether it is transfer or to earn a degree,” said Valley counselor Joyce Romero. “Since we have two sessions of summer it allows students to get additional classes and units needed.”

Students are able to browse for a specific course on Valley's summer schedule that lists all classes offered during

the ten week period including multiple Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) classes.

Stats 101 for example, fills the Mathematical Concepts and Quantitative Reasoning requirement on the IGETC and English 101 fills a requirement for English Composition as well. Both courses are great options for eager students.

While summer classes are accelerated, there are positives to the quicker-paced courses. One of which being that for one month of work, students get the same amount of credits for the courses as a full semester would garner. The five-week session can also make up for classes dropped during the regular semester.

“Summer courses open possibilities for fall enrollment if students need a prerequisite

course,” says Romero. “They can take it in summer so they can get the required target course in fall.”

Up to three courses in the summer session can put students ahead, allow them to catch up, or let the part-timers find time to take a course.

Valley offers resources to find the right courses for students to take.

Through the Cranium Cafe, students can find appointments to meet with counselors to help them update their Student Education Plan (SEP), drawing a clear path from summer to fall. If needed, counselors can help them access financial aid over the summer session.

Since Valley anticipates a return to campus for the fall semester, taking a summer course could make the transition smoother and allow for a less stressful fall.



GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION | VICKIE GUZMAN  
CLASSES- Valley College students can now enroll in summer courses that begin on June 14. The session is split into two 5-week periods.



WYOMING NATIONAL GUARD | TYLER SCHIELE  
REPUBLICAN- Post Commander Dale Miller and Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney take part in the centennial celebration in Lusk for American Legion Post No. 1 on June 29, 2019.

# Don't give Cheney your grief

In a week that saw Rep. Liz Cheney become the left's newest star witness in their case against the modern-GOP, many need to realize she is not on their side.

MATTHEW ROYER  
STAFF WRITER

She does not want our troops to come home, she does not believe in gay marriage, she defended "birthers" and she helped build the "MAGA" movement; Rep. Liz Cheney is not a friend of the left.

In a week that saw Cheney (R-WY) ousted from House Republican leadership, those on the left-side of the political spectrum gifted the congresswoman with a media cycle that seems to never end. Minutes after a vote that removed Cheney from her position as chair of the House Republican Conference — the No. 3 Republican position in the House of Representatives — Cheney could be seen on NBC being interviewed by TODAY's Savannah Guthrie.

In the interview the Wyoming Republican was asked questions such as, "Would you run for President?" as she played dumb in wondering why her party has left her behind.

"For reasons that I don't understand, leaders in my party have decided to embrace the former president who launched that attack," said Cheney to TODAY. "I think you've watched, over the course of the last several months, the former president get more aggressive, more vocal, pushing the lie, and I think that's a really important thing for people to understand."

It is worrying to see from

an outside perspective. A political party becoming one with "Trumpism," instead of allowing perspectives like the one led by the former vice president's daughter in Cheney, sends a shock to the American political system that has been tough to swallow for many who have stuck with the conservative movement through the past few years.

However, the perspective led by Cheney is not one that should be followed by most Americans, as her beliefs have more in common with former president Donald J. Trump than moderate conservative voices like Rep. Peter Mejer (R-MD). The congresswoman may provide a calming presence compared to her Republican counterparts such as Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) or Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-CO), but she spews the same hateful rhetoric that led to the presidency of Trump. Cheney has created a facade in which Democrats and those on the left-side of the aisle have fallen for, focusing on shaping a new appearance for the Wyoming Republican, instead of the faults of her politics that have led to the hurt of so many.

In fact, Cheney is best-known for opposing gay marriage, betraying her own sister Mary Cheney. When she ran for Senate in 2016 and made her views clearly known to the public, Mary's wife — Heather Poe — released a statement on

Facebook against Liz's hateful views.

"Liz has been a guest in our home, has spent time and shared holidays with our children, and when Mary and I got married in 2012 – she didn't hesitate to tell us how happy she was for us," read Poe's statement. "To have her now say she doesn't support our right to marry is offensive to say the least."

The congresswoman simply responded, "This is just an issue in which we disagree," according to USA Today.

Liz still leads the defense of her father's actions up to and during the Iraq War, going so far as to oppose the actions of President Joe Biden when it comes to his plan to remove all troops from Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of 9/11, according to Wyofile, an independent Wyoming-based journalism website.

When it comes to today's GOP, there are no winners, but those on the left need to remember that just because one disagrees with how their party is run, does not mean they are now on the side of the left, no matter how hard one tries to mask their image.

Republicans may think that Cheney is a danger to their party, but in reality, she is a danger to the nation. Giving her a platform does more good than harm, the left must realize this before it is too late.

# Death row for the death penalty

America is one of the few first world countries that continues the barbaric practice of sacrificing citizens on the altar of justice through the cruel practice of execution.

SOLOMON O. SMITH  
POLITICAL NEWS EDITOR

America is neither responsible nor careful enough to administer the death penalty, and people of color continue to suffer under this cruel practice.

A recent New York Times article released information that another Black man, Ledell Lee in Arkansas, was wrongly executed on April 19, 2017. The article, received with little fanfare, reported that the Innocence Project and American Civil Liberties Union lawyers found DNA from another man on the weapon involved in the murder case. For years, Lee's lawyers tried to get the DNA tested — before his execution— but were denied. Lee had been in prison awaiting his death for 22 years.

"My dying words will always be, as it has been, 'I am an innocent man,'" said Lee in an interview with the BBC. He was executed the next day.

The DNA evidence was not the only part of the case that was dubious. The speed that it was pushed through the system, the lack of response from the state to requests by the defense, and the general attitude of state actors led to the wrong man spending 22 years in prison, and dying for a crime he did not commit. Asa Hutchinson, the governor of Arkansas, responded by defending this tragedy, and the process.

"The fact is that the jury found him guilty based upon the information that they had," said Hutchinson on May 4 during a press briefing.

The fact is Lee's case is not the exception, but the rule. Pervis Payne's case in Tennessee has all the familiar trappings of a reckless state ready to kill a Black citizen. According to the Innocence Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to exonerating innocent people wrongly imprisoned, Payne's lawyers

filed a Petition to Determine Ineligibility to be Executed because he is mentally disabled with an I.Q. of about 68.

"He is a Black man with an uncontested intellectual disability who was accused of murdering a white woman in a county with a long history of biased criminal justice, and the State is unable to account for key missing evidence that could help prove his innocence," reads the petition.

African Americans make up about 17 percent of the U.S. population but account for 41.6 percent of death row, according to Death Penalty Info. African Americans often receive harsher sentences for crimes than their white counter parts and are quickly pushed through the court process in an effort to save money, a point of gospel for many right-wing supporters of the death penalty. Cost should not be the motivating factor for whether a human being is murdered by their own state. It is an abhorrent, reductive argument devoid of moral reasoning.

Plainly put, America should not execute citizens because it is wrong so often and states care so little about how the death penalty is used. Institutional changes in wealth gaps, treatment of the poor and racial egalitarianism are the real issues and wanton death rarely proves an effective solution to crime.

## DEATH PENALTY

According to the Death Penalty Information Center, African Americans make up approximately 42 percent of death row inmates as of Oct. 1, 2020. It was also found that Blacks were more likely to be executed if the victim was white than vice versa.



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## GOT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

Letters to the editor can be submitted online at [www.thevalleystarnews.com](http://www.thevalleystarnews.com). Letters must be limited to 300 words and may be edited for content. Full name and contact information must be supplied in order for letters to be printed. Send by Thursday for the following week's issue.

# Community colleges cannot afford a vaccine mandate

Keeping teachers safe at their place of work is a priority, but doing so may cost some their jobs.

ISAAC DEKTOR  
STAFF WRITER

California's community colleges will not be requiring students to be vaccinated before returning to the classroom this fall, a decision that is necessary to avoid further deficits and budget cuts.

Some may be hesitant to receive the novel vaccinations, and the district cannot afford to drive away potential students. Keeping enrollment up at a time when LACCD is struggling to attract students to attend its colleges is vital to the survival of each individual school.

With enrollment numbers down district wide, the issue of safe reopening collides uncomfortably with an ongoing economic problem for community colleges.

While some see a vaccination mandate as a necessity in order to safely reopen campuses, others worry that such a rule may deter some students when deciding whether to attend college.

Chauncey Maddren, Valley College's academic senate president, believes that educators would have more success in making vaccinations viable to students.

"Rather than a mandate, we could do better with a program of promotion, education and availability," Maddren said.

In terms of enrollment, some colleges in the district ex-

cel more than others. According to the LACCD website, Mission College's enrollment over the last five school terms peaked this year and East LA has 830 more students than in 2015-2016. Throughout the district, the overall trend is of decline.

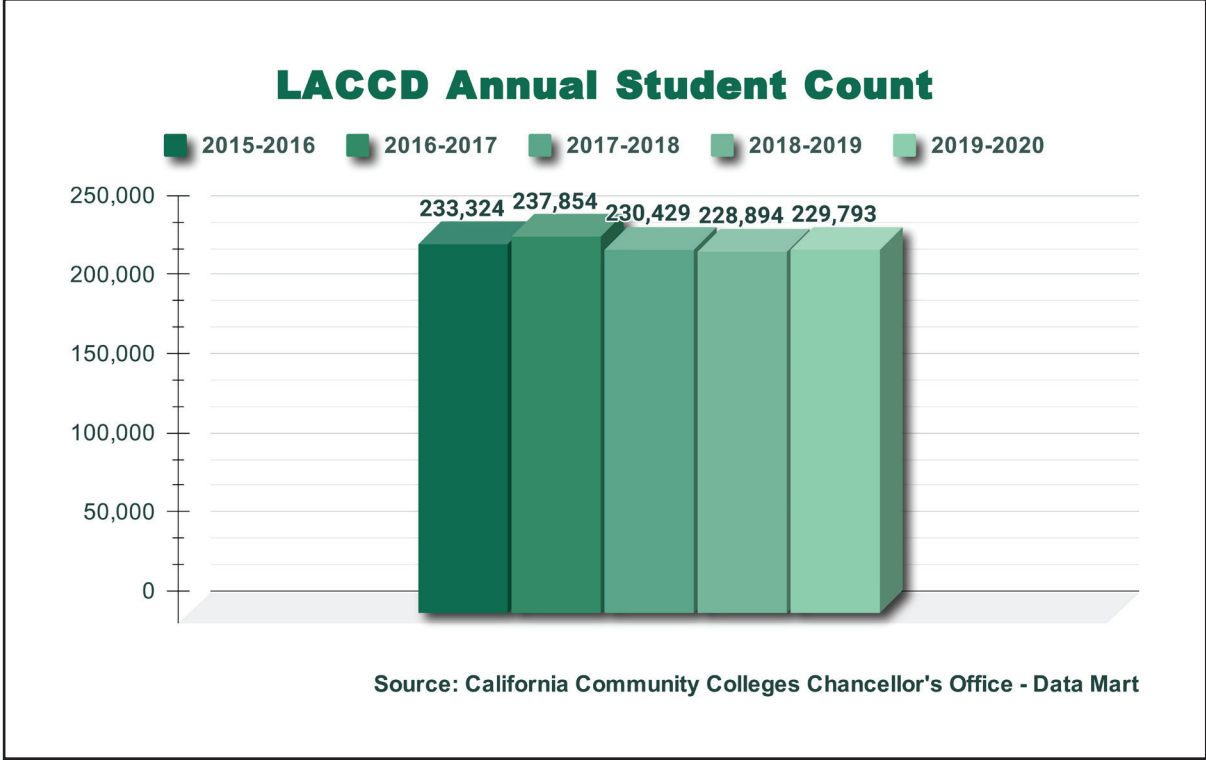
Given the circumstances, the district faces a difficult situation. However, statewide herd immunity — the protection of California's population from COVID-19 through vaccinations — may not necessitate a mandate. The vaccination rate is already high without legislation that requires adult students to receive vaccinations before attending classes. According to the Los Angeles Times, over 47 percent of the population of California have already received at least one dose.

While it is still unclear what it will take to reach herd immunity, for polio the threshold was roughly 80 percent according to the World Health Organization.

The decision to require vaccinations for students attending California's public universities while not having the same legislation for community colleges reinforces the economic issues at play.

Colleges are often considered prestigious based on the proportion of students they reject each year. Community colleges receive both admiration and admonition for not having this characteristic.

According to U.S. News, the average acceptance rate of Cal



GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION | VICKIE GUZMAN

ENROLLMENT- Data shows a decrease in enrollment in previous years, but a small uptick recently.

State LA is 48 percent, meaning that the university receives many more applicants than it can accept.

Having too many eager students who wish to attend state and private universities puts those colleges in an advantageous position to dictate the terms under which students must conform if they wish to attend in-person classes.

Cal State Universities can afford a vaccine mandate be-

cause they have a surplus of applicants while community colleges are left to twirl a sign on a street corner that reads "education without vaccination!"

If enrollment continues to go down then budget cuts will occur as they did this year at San Francisco City College after enrollment dropped 18 percent in a year.

According to the SF Bay Area Gazette, the San Francisco college laid off 200 employees,

teachers and administrators, as the college reported a \$33 million budget deficit this year.

COVID-19 poses a serious threat to the health and safety of teachers and unvaccinated students accentuate that threat. However, the uncomfortable reality is that driving away students and bringing enrollment down will cause the jobs within each college to contract and disappear.



BASE HIT - Thames Keller, at bat, gets ready for a base run with catcher Connor Kelley. This first training session was limited by those who had gone through and passed the rigorous safety measures that all athletes on campus had to pass in order to train with others on the field at the Valley campus. Some players were relegated to the sidelines because they had not yet passed through the safety measures required by the college and the Los Angeles Community College District.

# For the Love of Game

Valley College has made its first steps toward a regular season by opening a limited spring training session for athletes. Although players have been off the field for over a year, many are looking forward to returning to the field. For some, this will be their first time training with thier team mates. The season is nearly over, but the coaches and players still want to prepare for when the next season.

Photos and text by Solomon O. Smith

WARMING UP- Brandon Cuervo shakes off the dust at second base while working on catching an attempted out from left field. Players came voluntarily even though they would not likely be playing this season.





**FLEXIBLE** - Steven Hernandez, a left-handed pitcher, throws a strike from the mound. He is a freshman and, like many of his teammates, is looking forward to an open season next year.



**VERSATILE**- Loren Frank throws the ball back to home plate from third base. He is considered a strong player and, like many on the team, plays several positions including third base, first base and pitcher.



**CLOSE WATCH** - Head baseball coach Dave Mallas throws a few balls in to the players while directing the practice plays. Mallas, in addition to overseeing the baseball team, is also acting sports director, supervises the Adaptive Physical Education Center, teaches kinesiology and is a father to two children.

# Practice is in Full Swing

**WATCHFUL EYE** - Coach Mallas suveys the field from the Valley dugout. He and his coaching staff are helping players get back into shape after a long time away from the field. The Los Angeles County District has been extremely cautious in returning any sports back to pre-pandemic levels in both outdoor and indoor sports.



**LONELY MITT** -A baseball mitt sits on the padded fence of the dugout. Valley College has one of the most expansive baseball facilities in the Los Angeles Community College District.



**FAST RETURN**- Bobby Velasco, in eye-catching red catchers gear, works on returning the ball from different throwing positions at home plate.



**FOR THE FENCES** -Steven Knezivich, at bat with the American flag gloves, goes for the fences in a practice play on the Valley College baseball field.



**FOLLOW THROUGH** - Xavier Dubon follows through on his pitch from the mound. The baseball team was able to practice different plays, which gave pitchers the opportunity to workout.



**BATTING CAGE** - Rudy Abarca at batting practice on his own. He was not cleared to train with the other players, but masked up and trained socially distanced in the batting cages.



**THE BASICS**- Coach Brian Pozes talks to a player about how to approach the ball on the outfield. Many of the coaches are also meeting some of the players and seeing them play for the first time, or seeing them train in person for the first time, and were using the time to train them as much as possible.

# The future of ESports is tangible at Valley

The COVID-19 pandemic may be the perfect time to implement esports at Valley College since many students spend much of their school time on computers.



GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION | GENE WICKHAM  
PROFESSIONAL GAMING- With sports competitions on hold, now would be a good time for Valley College to get into the esports scene.

AARON FOOSHEE  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Esports — the domain of competitive, organized, online video gaming — has gained popularity over the past decade and many colleges are getting in on the action.

Esports at Valley College isn't a thing, yet, but it could offer players and fans a way to connect during the pandemic and beyond. Additionally, the presence of esports teams opens the opportunity for new majors centering on esports management, game design and development. All of these activities

could provide Valley a new platform for promotion, increased enrollment and revenue.

Esports in American colleges and universities is already well established, including community colleges. At the last tally in 2019, ESPN recorded 128 colleges with varsity esports programs. These schools have seized upon the esports boom.

Research compiled by Newzoo, a leading esports analytics and market research firm, said in its most recent financial forecast that, "Global esports revenues will grow to \$1.1 billion in 2020, a year-on-year growth of +15.7 percent, up from \$950.6

million in 2019." This optimism is echoed by authorities from investment bank Goldman Sachs to market research company Valuates, each saying that growth isn't expected to slow anytime soon.

So, how might Valley join the esports ranks? The answer is not straight-forward.

The association serving most of the country's community college athletic departments, The National Junior College Athletic Association, has an active esports platform, NJCAA Esports, but California's community colleges are outside of their domain.

According to Dave Mallas, co-interim athletic director of the college's Athletics Department, due to its large number of community and junior colleges and high enrollment, California operates apart from most of the nation as the California Community College Athletic Association.

Unlike the NJCAA, the CCCAA has no significant involvement in organizing esports.

While there are some esports organizations open to American colleges of all types and from all states, such as The National Association of

Collegiate Esports, the lack of a strong, central organizing body orchestrating esports among all colleges leaves individual community and junior colleges in our state to organize esports on their own — or not.

Mallas, speaking for the Athletic Department, said that, "At this point in time ... there is no plan to get [esports] started."

Still, he personally expressed interest in the possibility and said it is something that has recently been discussed amongst his athletic department faculty peers within the CCCAA Western State Conference, a conference that includes Valley, Pierce College, Mission College and 15 other local colleges.

**"I'm a coach and it's hard to convince me that [electronic gaming] falls into the athletic category,"**

- Dave Mallas, Valley College co-interim athletic director

or business departments. But Media Arts Department Chair, Eric Swelstad, said he was unfamiliar with esports and did not immediately see how it would fit within his department.

The media consultancy activate said in its Activate Technology & Media Outlook 2021 report accompanying Founder and CEO, Michael J. Wolf's Wall Street Journal Tech Conference presentation that, "Gaming is the new technology paradigm as most digital activities ([for example] search, social, shopping, live events) will increasingly take place inside of gaming."

The report goes on to say, "during shelter-in-place esports were sports for many consumers; going forward, esports will be a major global catalyst for interest in interactive gaming, technology and entertainment experiences."

With esports emerging as a site where culture and commerce intersect, it is not surprising that many colleges have begun offering degrees and certificates in esports management and esports game design. Institutions offering these kinds of programs include small community colleges like Central Maine Community College and Jackson College, as well as large universities, most notably, nearby University of California, Irvine.

Perhaps someday, esports at Valley might find its place too. But, when and where, and under whose guidance this will happen is uncertain.

A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, with traditional sports on pause, now seems like a good time to be giving esports some serious consideration and if it is to happen, now seems like a good time to make a plan and act on it.

## SPORTS ANALYSIS

# Galaxy take the first round of three in Major League Soccer's most heated rivalry

LA Galaxy competed to the end against Los Angeles FC to defeat their bitter rivals 2-1 in El Trafico's first appearance in 2021.

BENJAMIN ROYER  
STAFF WRITER

In what was supposed to be a Mexican standoff, the Los Angeles Galaxy stood alone at Dignity Health Sports Park as they triumphed over the short-handed LA Football Club.

Carson played host to the rivalry match-up this past Saturday as the back-and-forth match took place waiting for someone to take and make their star moment. LAFC forward Carlos Vela was unavailable to play in what would have been his first duel against Galaxy forward and former Mexican national team partner Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez. Chicharito took advantage of the talent that was missing from the LAFC side, pulling the strings until the referee blew the whistle, ending the contest.

In the 11th minute, new Galaxy defender Derrick Williams slid through the legs of LAFC defender Josh Cifuentes' legs allowing the ball to fall in Chicharito's path. The Mexican forward took advantage of the opportunity, slotting the ball into the bottom-right corner, past opposing goalkeeper Pablo Siniega.

"It's just amazing to feel that energy of when the results come, when you give everything," said Chicharito to reporters after the match, according to MLSsoccer.

Chicharito's energy was needed during this match, but LAFC had their boosts of energy with their match-long 61 percent possession.

**"They laid it out all there today. Every single guy that went out there gave everything they had to the victory."**

- Greg Vanney, Los Angeles Galaxy head coach

LAFC kept the intensity up after falling behind grabbing a few opportunities before half-time, but the Galaxy kept the lead going into half. Both sides struggled with a structure defensively, leading to nail-bitingly close moments.

"The Galaxy cannot continue to do this for the rest of the game or they will concede a goal," exclaimed color commentator Stu Holden on the television broadcast.

Seconds later in the 62nd minute, after a magic touch from LAFC forward Corey Baird, the ball found its way to his striking partner, Diego Rossi. Rossi — the 2020 MLS Golden Boot winner — tucked it home past



GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION | GENE WICKHAM  
SOCCER- Los Angeles Galaxy won the first of three matches against their most intense rival, the LA Football Club.

English goalkeeper Jonathan Bond, knotting it up at one.

A touch of brilliance from Galaxy Head Coach Greg Vanney led to teenager Efrann Blvarez replacing the ever-reliable Sebastian Lletget in the midfield.

Minutes thereafter in the 79th minute, Alvarez' burst of energy proved dividends toward

the end result. The wonderkid started a fast break, which led to a cross that found Chicharito's cleats in the penalty box. A quick through-ball was sent through and midfielder Jonathan dos Santos powered the ball home into the net, sending the Galaxy faithful into a frenzy.

The chirping sounds and whistles followed the referee as

the match neared the 90th minute. Into extra time the match went, where the whistle was finally blown and the match finished 2-1 in favor of the Galaxy.

"They laid it out all there today," Vanney said postgame to the Los Angeles Times. "Every single guy that went out there gave everything they had to the victory."

Dos Santos pumped both his arms into the air, whilst in the same moment, Chicharito fell to the ground in exhaustion and relief. Both El Tri (the Mexican national team) members competed until the end, carrying their club to victory.

El Tri reigned supreme on the epic night in Carson.