

Associated Collegiate Press
Two-year reporter of the year writing portfolio
Ma. Gisela Ordenes
The Union
El Camino College

Resume is provided below.

Here is the online link if preferred:

<https://tinyurl.com/2nd8d4he>

Headlines on the four entry items in this portfolio of pages with links to the online versions:

1. News story: Human trafficking, fake students suspected in financial aid scams

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/2j8zncp3>

2. Feature story: Soccer success story: Record-breaking coach surpasses his own expectations

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/ywtk5d2z>

3. News story: History lesson: State senator discusses the need for reparation laws

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/mtehrb66>

4. News story: Death of woman sends shockwaves to El Camino community

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/35nm3p3w>

MA. GISELA ORDENES

WRITER, EDITOR,
RESEARCHER,
PHOTOGRAPHER

CONTACT

✉ sablayenya@gmail.com
🌐 <https://ma-giselaordenes.journoportfolio.com/>

WORK EXPERIENCE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The Union | Spring 2024

- Manages The Union newsroom
- Produces The Union's print newspaper and manages its website
- Produces The Union's weekly newsletter
- Manages a team of editors and student journalists reporting for the school paper
- Edits stories to make them readable and to ensure accuracy
- Coordinates with student reporters and photographers to make sure stories are delivered on time
- Makes sure that stories meet the deadline
- Writes stories for The Union and meets the deadline set by the other editors
- Helps with day-to-day tasks at the newsroom

ARTS AND FEATURES EDITOR

The Union | Fall 2023

- Manages The Union's Arts and Features desk
- Manages a team of student journalists reporting for the school paper
- Edits stories to make them readable and to ensure accuracy
- Coordinates with student reporters and photographers to make sure stories are delivered on time

INTERN

The Union | Spring 2023

- Writes stories for The Union and meets the deadline set by the editors
- Looks for stories around campus to report on
- Takes photos that will accompany the article

WRITER, EDITOR, RESEARCHER

Experience from the Philippines

I am an international student. I have prior work experience and education from the Philippines that I can provide upon request.

EDUCATION

ASSOCIATE OF ARTS DEGREE IN JOURNALISM

El Camino College | 2023 - 2025

PERSONAL PROFILE

I am an international film student taking journalism classes. I write, edit, research, and photograph.

EXPERTISE

Writing
Editing
Researching
Photography

SOFTWARE KNOWLEDGE

Adobe InDesign
Adobe Lightroom Classic
Canva
Google Suite
Microsoft Office
iMovie

AWARDS

News writing - Finalist
Los Angeles Press Club, May 2024
Editorial - First Place
College Media Association, March 2024
Non-breaking News Story - Second Place
California College Media Association, March 2024
Profile News Story - Honorable Mention
Journalism Association of Community Colleges, March 2024
Profile Feature Story - Second Place
Journalism Association of Community Colleges, Oct 2023
Sports Feature - Honorable Mention
College Media Association, Oct 2023

Thank you!

Faculty union fights for security video

By Isabelle Ibarra and Olivia Sullivent

Vandalism targeting El Camino College's faculty union and its president are no longer being investigated by the police department, despite union and college officials who said they may know the

identity of the suspect.

Following up on the vandalism earlier in the semester, new information was revealed that might identify who vandalized the El Camino Federation of Teachers office in the Communications Building.

A Federation official who tipped off The Union about the security video asked to remain anonymous so they don't impact the case.

"I don't want to jeopardize anyone or anything," the official who was granted anonymity said.

SEE [FED](#) PAGE 10 →

Number of unhoused students rise

By Nick Geltz

It's 4:43 a.m. at El Camino College, on Thursday, Nov. 30.

At 51 degrees Fahrenheit, as one walks outside, each breath released appears visible in front of them.

Most students are currently in their homes

or apartments snuggled up in bed. Some with heaters or an extra blanket on top of them to keep warm.

But at least one student at El Camino does not have those luxuries.

He sleeps on the bottom floor outside of the Communications Building in a green tent

from time to time. Next to his tent on a wall, there are games of tic-tac-toe he seemingly plays to keep busy.

The student was unable to talk to The Union at the time but patrolling campus police officer Darrell Miller spoke highly of him.

SEE [RISE](#) PAGE 4 →

Human trafficking, fake students suspected in financial aid scams

El Camino lost over \$100,000 to phony applications last academic year, officials said



Students walk to the Admissions and Records help desk in the Student Services Building on Tuesday, Dec. 5. El Camino College has been working to stop scammers using stolen identities from stealing financial aid. *Photo by Raphael Richardson*

By Ma. Gisela Ordenes

El Camino College has joined a growing list of community colleges that have been defrauded by what education officials believe could be a human trafficking ring.

The college lost \$110,298 in financial aid last academic year to scammers who pretended to be students.

Chau Dao, El Camino's financial aid director, said the college has filed cases with the Department of Education Office of the Inspector General.

The stolen money was disbursed to 77 successful Pell Grant recipients in the academic year 2022-2023. The amount released to scammers ranged from \$128 to \$3,448, officials said.

Successful grant applications mean the applications were approved and that money was released to the recipients of the grant.

Pell Grants are federal financial aid given to undergraduate students who display exceptional financial need. The

maximum award for 2022-2023 was \$6,895 per student in the country.

Dao said El Camino had to return the \$110,298 they released to fake students back to the federal government because it is considered an overpayment.

At the latest financial student aid conference Dao attended, she said one of the things to look out for is a student wearing earpieces during the interview for their financial aid application.

SEE [AID](#) PAGE 6 →

Men's soccer team becomes state champs in 4-0 win

By Johan Van Wier

El Camino men's soccer team defeated Cuyamaca College 4-0 during the California Community College Athletic Association State Championship to claim the fifth state title in the program's history.

The Warriors dominated control of the ball to start the first half of the Sunday, Dec. 3 game leading to three shots on goal in the 10, 12 and 13-minute marks.

The aggressiveness paid off as Warriors midfielder Charlie Cazares scored on a free kick from 21 yards away at the 15-minute mark.

"Getting that first goal gave us that 'Oh yeah, we're on top [feeling].' We got the ball in our court let's make them play," Warriors goalkeeper Donovan Palomares said.

SEE [CHAMPS](#) PAGE 12 →



El Camino coach Mike Jacobson is tossed in the air by the men's soccer team after becoming state champs. *Photo by Elsa Rosales*

ENTERPRISE

New degree program
See Page 5

ENTERPRISE

Campus lactation rooms
See Page 8

ENTERPRISE

Foreign students return
See Page 9

SCAN ME

Enrollment scams linked to trafficking

→ AID FROM PAGE 1

At the latest financial student aid conference Dao attended, she said one of the things to look out for is a student wearing earpieces during the interview for their financial aid application.

Dao said investigators from the Department of Education Office of the Inspector General (OIG) believe the individuals being made to pose as students are human trafficking victims.

The fake students don't know the information the traffickers provided on the applications so someone else dictates the details to them via the earpieces, Dao said.

"When we're asking questions to validate who they are before we start speaking to them about their financial files, it's actually the people behind the scenes that are in control of their applications," Dao said.

Dao said if a student is wearing earpieces in the interview during the verification process, the advice to financial aid staff is to ask the student to take the earpieces off.

"Do not allow the students to have earpieces," Dao said.

The Union tried to get more information by requesting an interview with the OIG. Catherine Grant, OIG public affairs liaison, said in a Nov. 1 email the OIG is "investigating the matter."

"Per our policy, the OIG does not discuss details of its ongoing work. This longstanding policy is in place to protect and maintain the integrity of our efforts," Grant's email said.

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office is unaware of human trafficking cases related to student enrollment or financial aid fraud.

But the Chancellor's Office has acknowledged that fraud occurred through "multiple avenues, generally including bots, individuals and fraud rings."

Paul Feist, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office vice chancellor for communications, said there are "international actors" involved in some of the fraud.

Kim Rich, a professor at Pierce College, currently on a leave of absence, said it would not surprise her if the enrollment and student aid fraud were tied to human trafficking.

Rich worked as a deputy sheriff for the Ventura County Sheriff's Department for 13 years. She's been teaching criminal justice since 2008 at Pierce College.

Rich is largely credited for breaking the story on bot students in August 2021 when she investigated suspicious students on her class roster.

Rich said fake students are often victims of identity theft.

"The extreme majority of the fake students enrolled in courses, they're first of all just placeholders," Rich said. "There's not a real person behind that and they're almost all victims of identity theft."

A 'Relatively Small' Amount

Robin Dreizler, El Camino dean of enrollment services, said it's not uncommon to have one person behind 40 or 50 fraudulent applications.

"So when we say a fraudulent student, it's really more a fraudulent record because it's not always tied to one person," he said. "It could be one person doing a lot of the activity."

El Camino did not provide data on how many fraudulent applications and enrollments the college had to fend off.

El Camino Vice President of Student Services Jeff Stephenson said while \$110,298 is a lot of money, it is relatively small compared to what other community colleges have lost to fake students.

The El Camino financial aid office processed 7,580 Pell Grant applications for the 2022-23 academic year.

The total amount awarded to students was \$27,993,242 or 0.39% of the total Pell Grant for 2022-23.

Information from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office said confirmed fraud reported in the state annually amounts to \$2.5 million.

This is equivalent to about 1% of all aid distributed.

"I will speak from where the college I came from, we had entire sections of classes that were fraudulent students," Stephenson said.

Stephenson was hired at El Camino in July 2023, following a move from American River College in Sacramento where he also served as the vice president for student services.

American River College is one of the four colleges in the Los Rios Community College District.

All four have been targeted by the fraud as reported by the Sacramento Bee, Los Angeles



Vice President of Student Services Jeff Stephenson works in his office in the Administration Building on Tuesday, Dec. 5. Photo by Raphael Richardson

Times, and American River College's student-run newspaper, American River Current.

American River College had at least 1,200 confirmed cases of registration fraud, as reported by the Current in September 2021.

Dreizler also said the number of financial aid fraud cases El Camino had to deal with is not significant compared to other colleges.

Recognizing Patterns

"Talking to sister schools around the state and hearing that entire classes were 30 to 35 deep with fake students, we had our share," Dreizler said. "But I don't think it was significant with the number of checks that we have in place."

Stephenson said fake enrollments in the previous college he worked at started before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

"It was starting to occur before the pandemic, but I think the pandemic really escalated [the fraudulent activities]," he said.

Dreizler said El Camino became aware of the fraud over a year ago but a lot of fraudulent activity happened during the pandemic.

"More students were applying and taking classes remotely, so they were pretty anonymous," he said.

Dreizler said they started seeing patterns and similarities with enrollees who were not participating in class.

"There were some consistencies from certain students, whether it was their location or their zip codes," he said. "Sometimes phone numbers would give away some patterns."

Dreizler said when they dug in a little bit deeper and reached out to the student, they found they didn't exist or their addresses didn't exist.

Dao said the scammers are becoming "more and more lackadaisical."

"They'll use addresses from Beverly Hills where the home value is like \$5 million," she said.

Dao said the financial student aid offices of community colleges nationwide have a network where they share information to identify and mitigate fraud.

"What was happening was that [the scammers] were jumping from school to school," Dao said. "And so with our network of communication with financial aid directors, we were able to kind of figure that out."

The scammers, however, haven't stopped attacking El Camino.

Dreizler said when the new eight-week classes started, a professor came to him alarmed that the "students" were submitting assignments that had nothing to do with the assignment prompts.

The new eight-week classes, which started on Oct. 21, were offered to help drum up enrollment to avoid budget cuts and a hiring freeze.

Josh Troesh, El Camino professor and Academic Senate vice president of finance and special projects, said a lot of people may think of enrollment and student aid fraud as a victimless crime.

"Who cares if someone's getting financial aid?" Troesh said. "But realize that as a society, there's only so many resources that we can put toward students."

Troesh said those committing fraud are not just taking from the government but from students who need those resources to advance their lives.

"It's theft from the government, but the real theft is that it's theft from students who need that money, that's where the money is ultimately going to come from," Troesh said.

Rich said fake students limit the ability of real students to enroll in courses because they are on rosters months before classes begin and they remain there even after classes begin.

Dao also said she thinks it's good for students to be aware that fraud is happening.

FINANCIAL AID FRAUD CASES IN CALIFORNIA WITH ACTUAL DISBURSEMENTS

El Camino College

Lost \$110,298 to 77 fake students in academic year 2022-2023

Peralta Community College District

\$179,000 released to scammers, with \$4,800 reversed in fraudulent summer 2021 disbursements

City College of San Francisco

29 received \$22,418 in Pell Grants

Mt. San Antonio College

\$190,732 to 63 disbursed to fraudulent students as of October 2021

San Diego Community College District

\$101,619 in aid to fraudulent student accounts in February and March 2022 and prevented another \$373,854

Sources: The Citizen, San Francisco Chronicle, EdSource, City Times Media

“Real students need to be aware because it’s impacting them indirectly because it’s taking spaces out of the courses that they need,” Dao said.

Fraud Widespread in California

The California Community Colleges Technology Center has identified “20% of the OpenCCC traffic as malicious and bot-related.” (See “Mapping the Fraud”)

This is according to an Aug. 30, 2021 memo from Valerie Lundy-Wagner, interim vice chancellor of digital innovation and infrastructure at the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office.

The memo also said the TechCenter has addressed 15% of the malicious bot attacks through a third-party filter and bot detector Imperva Bot Detection.

Imperva was implemented on July 15, 2021 to address enrollment fraud.

OpenCCC is an online portal maintained by the CCCCO. Anyone applying to the 116 colleges in the state must first start an OpenCCC account.

The intention is for a single sign-in account that allows prospective students to access the online services of the California Community Colleges, called CCCApply.

The Los Angeles Times reported on Sept. 1, 2021 that 105 out of the 116 campuses in the California Community Colleges were affected by enrollment fraud.

Feist said it’s important to make a distinction between enrollment fraud and financial aid fraud.

Enrollment fraud is “widespread throughout the system” while financial aid fraud is “more limited.”

“I wouldn’t say all colleges have been hit with financial aid fraud,” Feist said.

California colleges that have flagged questionable application and enrollment numbers include Mt. San Jacinto College, Contra Costa Community College District, Cerritos College and San Diego Community College District. (See “Application and Enrollment Fraud in California”)

Mt. San Jacinto College identified 42,000 suspected cases in the 2020-21 school year while Contra Costa Community College District had 40,000 suspected fake applicants in fall 2020.

Community colleges in other states that have reported fraudulent enrollment attempts include Portland Community College in Oregon, Salt Lake Community College in Utah, and Des Moines Area Community College in Iowa. (See “Application and Enrollment Fraud Outside California”)

Financial aid-related fraud occurs after the student has been accepted for admission, their identity is confirmed by the college and the college has begun the process of disbursing local, state and federal financial aid.

While the scammers may have different interests at every step of the fraud, Feist believes the end goal for most is to steal financial aid.

“I think ultimately, people do wanna create or commit financial aid fraud,” Feist said. “But there are so many eligibility and processing steps that stand between enrollment and actually receiving financial aid.”

The CCC Chancellor’s Office has requested monthly fraud reporting since September 2021 but colleges and districts have been showing “modest participation” in sending the data.

A Jan. 21, 2022 memo tried to correct this by requiring all colleges and districts to report suspected fraud

No Way To Verify Data

Rich is wary of the data being reported by colleges because “many schools have not been transparent,” she said.

She said colleges have not been forthcoming with their numbers and there’s also no way to verify the data.

“If you provide me with a list, but I have no way of verifying that list, then what good is that list to me?” Rich said.

Rich said one reason why colleges are hesitant to share the extent of fraud is because they’re scared of losing funding.

“Everybody that is allowing the fake students to enroll in classes or failing to remove them from classes is financially benefiting through funding,” Rich said.

Every student that remains in a class, fake or not, can mask real enrollment data.

Colleges are funded based on their enrollment numbers.

Rich said because this started happening during the pandemic and the uncertainty swirling around during that time, people were concerned about the funding and the impact that could have on classes.

“Obviously, nobody wants to lose the class that they’re teaching due to low enrollment,” Rich said.

Other California colleges that have reported financial aid fraud include Fullerton College, San Diego Community College District and Mt. San Antonio College. (See “Financial Aid Fraud in California”)

Fullerton College’s student-run newspaper, The Hornet, reported Fullerton has stopped “over \$1 million in financial aid funds” from being dispersed to fraudulent students in 2021.

The San Diego Community College District has prevented \$373,854 from being disbursed to fake students as reported by the City Times Media, San Diego City College’s student-run media group.

The district however has released \$101,619 in aid “to fraudulent student accounts” in February and March 2022, according to the same report.

Mt. San Antonio College distributed \$190,732 to “63 fraudulent students” as of October 2021, according to an EdSource report.

Feist said \$2.5 million confirmed fraud annually or 1% of all aid distributed is a relatively small number but it’s not an acceptable number.

“Obviously, we don’t want any but the reality is that people have been trying to scam systems,” he said.

Feist said a lot of the fraud is



El Camino College Dean of Enrollment Services Robin Dreizler in front of the Student Services Building on Dec. 4. Photo by Ma. Gisela Ordenes

“very organized and very sophisticated” and that’s why the CCCCO finds it challenging to keep ahead of the methods used by scammers.

Feist said the attacks increased during the pandemic when colleges were forced to go online “very quickly.”

There were more opportunities for bad actors to exploit vulnerabilities in the system during the swift online onboarding, he said.

“And frankly, there was more money available in the system because the federal government and the state government were trying to help students cope with the terrible effects of the pandemic,” Feist said.

The federal government provided \$76.2 billion in COVID-19 emergency funds to institutions of higher education and their students.

California received the lion’s share of that aid, \$9.5 billion. \$4.2 billion went to community colleges and \$1.6 billion was set aside for low-income students, according to a series of EdSource reports, “Following COVID money in education.”

California’s Efforts to Combat Fraud

The state government takes the matter of enrollment fraud seriously. It has set aside \$100 million “for various technology and information security purposes” for its 2022-23 California Spending Plan.

A big portion, \$75 million, was earmarked for “security network upgrades, general security software and anti-fraud technology.”

The Department of Education rolled back the more stringent verification process for financial aid applications in summer 2023.

The California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office said it will “directly impact Financial Aid fraud starting in the 2023-2024 school year” and will help in their fraud mitigation efforts.

The Chancellor’s Office has

also deployed various strategies to help mitigate the fraud.

Aside from Imperva, monthly reporting by colleges and automatic suspension of any accounts associated with fraudulent activity, the Chancellor’s Office has also added multi-factor authentication to CCCApply.

El Camino also announced it is instituting a multi-factor authentication, which will be “required to log in to El Camino systems, including Canvas, from off-campus” starting Nov. 27.

In December, the CCCCO will launch its newest program to combat fraud: identity verification service ID.me on CCCApply.

Through ID.me, CCCApply will adopt the same technology for identity verification and fraud reduction “as 37 state agencies and 15 federal agencies,” according to the Nov. 8 PowerPoint presentation.

The presentation also said “over 8 million Californians already have a verified ID.me account.”

The program will go live on Friday, Dec. 8.

APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT FRAUD IN CALIFORNIA

El Camino College Data not provided
Contra Costa Community College District 40,000 suspected fake applicants in fall 2020
Mt. San Jacinto College 42,000 suspected in 2020-21 school year
Cerritos College 9,000 suspected cases
San Diego Community College District 7,047 fraudulent applications from 2021 including 2,906 from San Diego City College
City College of San Francisco 4,300 suspicious enrollments since 2020

Sources: CalMatters, Talon Marks, City Times Media, San Francisco Chronicle

StoryMap: Mapping Application, Enrollment and Student

El Camino College lost \$110,298 in financial aid money last academic year to scammers pretending to be students. Many other colleges in California and beyond have also been affected.

SCAN ME





Soccer success story: Record-breaking coach surpasses his own expectations

By Ma. Gisela Ordenes

The coach is never late.

He's not just on time, he's always early.

"He arrives 40 minutes early to every team meeting and every training," one of his best players, Donovan Palomares, said.

When the players arrive at a meeting, all the instructions are up on the board. When they arrive at training, the coach is on the pitch, waiting.

Michael "Mike" Jacobson, the record-breaking El Camino College men's soccer team coach, is always ahead of schedule, including a meeting with his destiny.

In his six years as Warriors coach, which included a year when the season was canceled because of the pandemic, Jacobson delivered a state championship and the college's historic national title.

It was the first national title in the college soccer program's history.



El Camino College Men's Soccer coach Michael "Mike" Jacobson, center, smiles for a photo with two of his best players, goalkeeper Donovan Palomares, left, and forward Marvin Gamez, at the ECC Soccer Field on Tuesday, Dec. 12. Jacobson is married to Nicole Bucciarelli Jacobson. "She's the all-time leading goalscorer at UC Irvine," Jacobson said. The couple has two kids: Rachel, 14, and Jack, 6. (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)



El Camino College Men's Soccer coach Michael "Mike" Jacobson poses with the 2023 3C2A Men's Soccer State Championship trophy at his office in the Pool Classroom Building on Tuesday, Dec. 12. Jacobson and his team delivered the fifth state championship in the history of the men's soccer program in historic fashion, ending a 31-year state trophy drought. (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

The feat also earned the soccer program the distinction of being one of only two programs in the Warriors Athletics history to earn a national title. The other one was when the Warriors football team got it in 1987.

Jacobson, who counts the legendary Brazilian soccer player Pele as his idol, said he wrote down what his goals were for the program when he was hired as Warriors coach in 2018.

"It's funny. You have the vision of 'OK, in year five--and I have it somewhere down on paper in my house--was try to win a state championship and that was this year," Jacobson said.

The 48-year-old father of two said it was fantastic to hit the goal of how he planned things out.

"Two years ago, this program did get to a Final Four and honestly that was ahead of schedule," Jacobson said. "So we've been doing some good work leading up to this point."

The "good work" resulted in a near-perfect record of 24 wins, with the team's only blemish to its dominating season coming in their third game, a 3-1 loss to Norco College.

The Warriors website calls Jacobson's squad "one of the greatest teams in El Camino College history."

The 4-0 win over Cuyamaca College at Mt. San Antonio College on Sunday, Dec. 3, was just the fifth state championship in El Camino's history and the first in over three decades.

Under Jacobson's wing, forward Marvin Gamez earned the distinction of being the first Warriors soccer player to receive a National Player of the Year award.

Four of his players, including Gamez and Palomares, were picked in the 2023 United Soccer Coaches' Junior College Division III All-America Team, the first time in the El Camino soccer program that multiple players were selected in one season.



El Camino College Men's Soccer coach Michael "Mike" Jacobson, center, smiles for a photo with two of his best players, goalkeeper Donovan Palomares, left, and forward Marvin Gamez, at the ECC Soccer Field on Tuesday, Dec. 12. Jacobson is married to Nicole Bucciarelli Jacobson. "She's the all-time leading goalscorer at UC Irvine," Jacobson said. The couple has two kids: Rachel, 14, and Jack, 6. (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

Steven Barrera, the team's goalkeeping coach, said Jacobson is both "professional and personable."

Jacobson coached Barrera at California State University Los Angeles. When Jacobson was hired at El Camino, he asked Barrera, who he trained as a goalkeeping coach, to come work for him as his goalkeeping coach.

"It's been nothing short of professional. He was very professional as he coached me, and he was just as professional when it came down to coaching right next to him," Barrera said.

Barrera said it's not easy to manage a group of 30 competitive players who all wanted to play, but he credits Jacobson's honesty with the squad as the reason why each player understood his role.

He said what happened after the championship game is a testament to Jacobson's hard work of ensuring the players connect well.

"When we had won everything, the boys at a certain point all went to him and picked him up and started throwing him up in the air, like a little celebration," Barrera said.

Miguel Sanchez, the team's assistant coach, said Jacobson is very good at communicating what he expects from the team, and that's why everybody in the group can be on the same page.

"Any player whether they're a starting player or like guy on the bench that is not playing so much, they all feel the same respect and love for coach Mike," Sanchez said.

Palomares, the goalkeeper who was instrumental in not letting in a single goal in 17 games, said he had a connection with Jacobson.

"He's a big reason I came here [to El Camino]," Palomares said.



El Camino College Men's Soccer coach Michael "Mike" Jacobson, left, smiles for a photo with two of his best players, goalkeeper Donovan Palomares and forward Marvin Gamez, at the ECC Soccer Field on Tuesday, Dec. 12. Jacobson is married to Nicole Bucciarelli Jacobson. "She's the all-time leading goalscorer at UC Irvine," Jacobson said. The couple has two kids: Rachel, 14, and Jack, 6. (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

Palomares knew Jacobson from LAFC Academy, he was training there when Jacobson came as an academy coach.

Gamez, whose 28 goals made him the No. 1 goalscorer in the state for the season, credits Jacobson and his two assistant coaches for their record-smashing season.

Aside from making sure the players get the proper meals, training and recovery, they also made sure the players are not neglecting their studies.

"Mike was always on your stuff to make sure your grades are good to be eligible to play, and I feel like we did great with keeping that up," Gamez said.

Originally from Rochester, New York, Jacobson played college soccer at Syracuse University before playing professionally as a midfielder for the Alleycats, a team from Albany, New York.



El Camino College Men's Soccer coach Michael "Mike" Jacobson smiles for a photo at the ECC Soccer Field on Tuesday, Dec. 12. Jacobson is married to Nicole Bucciarelli Jacobson. "She's the all-time leading goalscorer at UC Irvine," Jacobson said. The couple has two kids: Rachel, 14, and Jack, 6. (Ma, Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

It was at Syracuse when he was about to graduate with a bachelor's degree in physical education, Jacobson decided he wanted to become a soccer coach.

"Dean Foti, my coach at the time, asked me what my interests were. I said like I'd like to do what you do and coach," Jacobson said.

Jacobson said he felt a great connection with Foti.

"He really was someone that was almost like a mentor to me," he said.

Foti helped Jacobson get a job at Plattsburgh State University of New York through Chris Waterbury.

"I was young, right out of college and my experience with Plattsburgh and Chris Waterbury was fantastic," Jacobson said. "It sold me on 'OK, this is what I want to do with my career.'"

He started getting coaching licenses, and the rest, as they say, is (Warriors) history.



History lesson: State senator discusses the need for reparation laws

By Ma. Gisela Ordenes

Bills seeking to pay the "debt that is 160 years overdue" owed to African Americans because of slavery and systemic racism are going to be signed into law "by the end of the year," California Senator Steven Bradford told The Union.

"But this is not going to be a one-and-done, it will probably take years, if not decades, to address all the harms from slavery in this country," Bradford said.

Bradford was at El Camino College for a Black History Month event at the Social Justice Center on Friday, Feb. 16, to talk about reparations to African Americans stemming from enslavement.

Bradford is a member of the Black Reparations Task Force, the group created by Assembly Bill 3121 to study slavery and its effects on living African Americans.

The Task Force is charged to recommend compensation, rehabilitation and restitution for African Americans as reparatory justice for enslavement.

"I invite all of you to read the final report. It's 115 recommendations on what reparations should look like," Bradford said.



"Many people will tell you that, slavery was 'Oh, it's so long ago, get over it!' Truly it's only 160 years ago. And there are people in their late 90s who are still alive whose parents or grandparents that they touched were former slaves." Sen. Steven Bradford, D-Gardena, says as he talks about slavery in the U.S. and why reparative justice is important. (Clarence Davis | The Union)



Sen. Steven Bradford, D-Gardena, speaks to attendees of a Black History Month event in the Social Justice Center on Friday, Feb. 16, to discuss reparations and the history of African Americans in the U.S. (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

The Reparations Task Force finished its final report on June 29, 2023. The 1,080-page document contains 115 recommendations to the California legislature to craft laws and policies to fix the injustices of enslavement.

The report also details the historical injustices done to African Americans, Bradford said.

The senator urged the crowd of about 30 El Camino students and staff to know their history.

"It's often said that there's stories that made America and then there's stories that America has made up," Bradford said during the event. "Much of what we teach in school are the stories that America has made up. Because we don't tell the truth."

"A lot of folks want to tell you that reparation is a handout, it's a charity. Far from it. It's what was promised. It's what was owed for what's 160 years overdue," Bradford said.

Bradford is also a member of the California Legislative Black Caucus.

In January, the CLBC announced 14 measures on education, civil rights, criminal justice reform, health and business that will represent its Reparation Priority Bill Package.



Sen. Steven Bradford, D-Gardena, talks with Wiley Wilson, student services specialist for the Social Justice Center, to a diverse crowd who engaged in questions as well as conversation with the senator on Friday, Feb 16. (Clarence Davis | The Union)

Bradford is the principal author of the bill to "restore property taken during race-based uses of eminent domain to its original owners or provide another effective remedy where appropriate, such as restitution or compensation."

The biggest applause of the event was the discussion on generational wealth. "Reparations was never about money. It was about land," Bradford said. "You got to understand generational wealth is passed on in this country, not by dollars. It's by land."

Bradford said those who have intergenerational wealth built it through land grants and deeds, things that were denied African Americans. "We were denied homesteading, and when we were allowed to homestead they found a way to take the land away from us."

The senator gave the case of Bruce's Beach, located in Manhattan Beach, as an example. In July 2022, California returned the property to the heirs of an African American couple, Charles and Willa Bruce, a century after city officials seized it through eminent domain.

Bradford said it's important California gets reparations right because legislators from the other 49 states can take what California has done as "model legislation" on reparative justice.

"If we get it wrong, they're gonna say, 'If progressive, super liberal, California can't get it done, how are you going to ever do it in Alabama, in Florida, or, you know, in Georgia, where there's still folks who do not want reparations?'" he said.



Sen. Steven Bradford, D-Gardena, left, and Wiley Wilson of the Social Justice Center pose for a photo at the Black Student Success Center on Friday, Feb. 16. (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

Responding to a question from political science student Lajoy Wilson on how the Black community can stand up despite the "bad picture painted over [them]," the senator reminded the crowd of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

SNCC was a group of Black college students who staged peaceful protests during the Civil Rights Movement.

"It was high school and college students who are the real impetus, the real movement behind the civil rights movement," Bradford said. "It's young folks, like yourself, who are going to have to shape where we are and who we are as a country."

Wilson, 21, said she attended the talk because she wanted to show her support. "I just really love learning about our culture as a whole and how to better our community."

Another student, nursing major David Oguekwe, 20, said he came to the event to see Bradford. "The youth, as they grow, they're gonna be more politically involved and things like that. So you have to know who's representing you," Oguekwe said.

Associated Students Organization President Jose Merino, 19, was also present at the event and went with Bradford as the senator toured the Black Student Success Center in the basement of the Communications Building.

"Especially regarding Black History Month, this is such an important forum for students to actually know the history behind this," Merino said.

Bradford said just because the atrocities happened in the past doesn't mean the country doesn't have an obligation and a debt to make things right. "America would not be America if it wasn't for the African American slaves."



Death of woman sends shockwaves to El Camino community; lack of communication from administration and police raises concern

By Angela Osorio and Ma. Gisela Ordenes

Candles. Bouquets. Framed photos.

These form two makeshift memorials for Junko Hanafusa at El Camino College, one by the place where she was attacked and the other inside the Schauerman Library.

Hanafusa was recently killed in a Dec. 24 attack on campus.

It was the day before Christmas, and Hanafusa was on her regular morning walk on campus, along with her dog Cherry, collecting bottles and cans to recycle.

No one expected that day would signal her last. According to a Dec. 27 press release by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Information Bureau, a "female Asian adult, 60 to 65 years of age" who was collecting recyclables on campus "was attacked by a Black male with a sledgehammer" on Sunday, Dec. 24 at 7:08 a.m.

The press release said the officers who worked on the case identified the attacker as Jeffery Davis, a 40-year-old transient known to be aggressive, according to Torrance residents who frequently saw him at Alondra Park, a public park beside the college.

News reports later identified the victim as Hanafusa, a 65-year-old Japanese woman.

According to a KTLA report, Davis was identified after the police viewed security camera footage outside the El Camino Gymnasium, where Hanafusa was attacked.



Photos of Junko Hanafusa, Parrish Geary and Norman Charles Foster Jr are on a small table in the Schauerman Library lobby. The one who set up the altar is Hana Oshita, a library technician. She said she did it last week to serve as a memorial for those who died. She asked her coworkers to contribute the other pieces on the table, including shells, flowers and candles. Her coworker, Charrissa Penn, added the water bottle to represent a fourth person, an unnamed student whom Penn said "committed suicide earlier last year." (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)



The site where the attack on Junko Hanafusa happened as seen on Monday, Jan. 8. (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

Davis was arrested a few hours later at Alondra Park. He now faces charges of first-degree murder, according to a Daily Breeze report.

His arraignment will be on Jan. 17 at the Torrance Superior Court.

According to Hanafusa's neighbors, her dog, Cherry, remained faithfully by her side until a passerby spotted Hanafusa on the ground and called the authorities.

Hanafusa was then taken to a local hospital and died on Christmas Day.

About the suspect

According to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department inmate locator, Davis is a six-foot male, weighing 180 lbs.

Davis has a history of nine arrests, including two misdemeanors handled by the El Camino Police Department. The most recent misdemeanor was in May 2023. He was also charged with several felonies, the most recent one on Nov. 29, 2023, in Lennox.

Several Torrance residents told The Union they would see Davis at the park, smoking marijuana and harassing people.

Torrance resident Stephen Grey said Davis would reside by the family picnic area, at one of the tables near the golf course.

Grey was at the park during the time of Davis's arrest, not knowing what was going on when he saw the park full of officers. He said Davis cooperated with the police and it was a peaceful arrest.

"He's been around that park... at least the last two years," he said.



Several El Camino Police cars and shuttles patrol the El Camino College grounds on Monday, Jan. 8. Hazelle Becera, a law major who works at the Schauerman Library, said she noticed that the police have been doing rounds and checking buildings since classes started on Jan. 4. (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

Grey said he witnessed Davis attacking people and animals at the park, including kicking geese and pushing a man into the pond.

Grey would warn others at the park to stay away from Davis, including Hanafusa, who used to walk early in the morning, around 5:30 a.m.

He warned her a few weeks before her death not to go out too early. As a result, she started going for a walk later in the morning, he said.

"She was harming nobody," Grey said.

Jon McCormack, another Torrance resident who frequents Alondra Park, also said Davis was known to be hostile and aggressive, screaming at invisible people and "yelling so no one would come near him."

"He's been known to harass people walking by for no reason," McCormack said.

Community grieves the loss of a 'sweet, kind, gentle woman'

The death of Hanafusa has brought shock and grief to many neighbors, who knew her as a sweet elderly lady who walked her dog every morning around the neighborhood.

"This woman didn't deserve what happened to her," Grey said.



Candles and bouquets of flowers rest on one of the pillars of the Gymnasium where the attack on Junko Hanafusa happened on Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023. Hanafusa was a 65-year-old Japanese woman who was walking her dog and collecting recyclables when the incident occurred. (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

Leslie Andersen, 63, lived a few streets away from Hanafusa, and would regularly see her on their morning walks with their dogs, for about six or seven years.

"She was just the sweetest, gentlest, kindest soul," Andersen said.

She said Hanafusa would walk early in the morning, collecting recyclables around the neighborhood, including on El Camino's campus.

Andersen would also drop off recyclables at her house.

"She didn't need the money. I think she did it just to do it," Andersen said.

Andersen found out what happened when she went to Hanafusa's house on Christmas morning to drop off some candy, only to learn about her death from Hanafusa's sister.

"This is just horrible," she said.

Andersen said Hanafusa was planning to retire before her death.

According to a report by the Daily Breeze, Hanafusa worked at Goldrich Kest, a real estate company based in Culver City.

Another neighbor, Oliver Maruna, didn't know Hanafusa personally but would see her walking her dog around the neighborhood.

"She was a very sweet woman," Maruna said.

Increasing crime and violence at Alondra Park

Feelings of apprehension and fear have stirred Torrance residents with the increase of crime in the area, particularly in Alondra Park.

McCormack, who has lived in El Camino Village for 45 years, said he has noticed an increase in crimes.

"Most people have the good sense not to go to the park after dark," McCormack said.

Over the past couple of decades, McCormack said there's been an increase in gang activities, tagging and overall "less law enforcement presence than there used to be."

He said a big concern is people getting captured and then released, resulting in criminals not feeling as threatened by the criminal justice system as they used to.

"Even if [Davis] is charged, a lot of us just don't have the confidence that he'll be taken care of," he said.

McCormack said his concern is Davis will not be extended psychiatric care, if that's what he needs, or that the prison might release him because of overcrowding.

Andersen, who has lived in Torrance for almost 40 years, said she's always felt pretty safe in her neighborhood.

Now, she does not feel as safe on her morning walks.

"I'm a little worried about going out and walking at six o'clock in the morning when it's dark out," she said.

Grey, who grew up in Torrance, said there has been an increase in crime since the pandemic. He often sees hypodermic needles on the ground, as well as an increase in graffiti and gang activities.

"You would never see that [in the past]," he said.

Grey said the police don't patrol the park as much as they used to. He said the officers at El Camino are "top-notch," and wishes "the park had more police like the El Camino [Police Department]."



The makeshift altar to commemorate the dead is in the Schauerman Library lobby. Hana Oshita, a library worker who set it up, said she has not decided until when the memorial will remain there but her coworkers are still adding pieces on the altar to remember the dead. (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

Maruna, who has lived across from the Dominguez Channel since 2009, said he used to walk with his kids on El Camino's campus but stopped bringing them due to the increase in crime in the area.

Maruna said he's seen an increase in the presence of transients, drug use and crimes in general.

"We're shocked [by Hanafusa's death] but definitely not surprised because of all the other stuff in that area," Maruna said.

He said he's seen transients on El Camino's campus several times, in places including parking Lot C, volleyball courts and in front of the tennis courts.

El Camino Police Chief Michael Trevis told The Union in a newsroom visit on Nov. 1, 2023, that transients inhabit campus and often stay overnight. Several students on campus are also unhoused, as previously reported by The Union.

The college's response

Nixle, a text alert system, regularly sends text message alerts about crimes that have occurred on campus. No Nixle alerts were issued to the El Camino community about the Dec. 24 attack.

"We had women walking there that same day, on El Camino. Nobody knew what happened," Maruna said.

However, a Nixle alert was released by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department on Dec. 27 at 4:19 p.m. The alert stated the basic details of the assault, saying "Los Angeles County Sheriff's Homicide Investigators are continuing to assist El Camino College Police Department with their investigation."

Kerri Webb, El Camino director of public information and government relations, said since the attack occurred when the campus was closed, sending a notification "would've made no sense."

"It would have just actually caused more harm and chaos and confusion," Webb said.



Screenshot of the El Camino College Interactive Map from the El Camino College website. The circle on the left shows where the attack on Junko Hanafusa happened on Dec. 24, 2023, while the circle on the right shows the location of the El Camino College Police Department. The circles are supplied by The Union. (Screenshot of the map used with permission from the El Camino College Public Information and Government Relations)

El Camino released an email to faculty and staff nine days after the Dec. 24 attack, lamenting the death of Hanafusa.

"El Camino College takes the safety of our students, staff, faculty and community members seriously. Sadly, this shocking loss of a beloved local resident should never have occurred," El Camino said in the email.

Webb said in the past 10 years she's worked at El Camino, this is the first time she's heard of a crime like this on campus.

"It was a really unfortunate situation," she said.

Students and staff apprehensive about returning to campus

The Union spoke to several staff and students regarding the Dec. 24 attack.

"I've never heard of anything that tragic happening on campus," Library Media Technician Charissa Penn, who has worked at El Camino for over 20 years, said.

Penn said her first reaction when she first heard it on the news was, "Oh my God, on campus? She didn't deserve that."

What got to Penn was the fact Hanafusa was an elderly woman and she wasn't bothering anyone.

"It really touched my heart to where I was really teary eyed. It's really sad, just for the fact that [attack] happened to the lady," Penn said.

Penn said she visited the place where the incident occurred when she returned to work on Jan. 2.

"They put flowers and candles down right there....and I just took a picture of it and sent it to my kids," Penn said.



Charrissa Penn, Library Media Technician II, assists a student in the Schauerman Library on Monday, Jan. 8. Penn has worked at El Camino College for 20 years but said the attack on Hanafusa is the worst incident she has heard happen on campus. Penn said she carries pepper spray now. "I know we can't carry weapons on campus to protect ourselves, but pepper spray is not really a weapon but it is something to kind of fight a person off if they try to attack," Penn said. (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

Tiana Fernando, a 19-year-old nursing major who lives near Alondra Park, said she is scared to return to campus in the spring.

"I know that we've had our fair share of crimes, but a murder...it was really shocking to hear about," Fernando said.

Fernando said she had negative experiences on campus last fall semester, with several people who didn't appear to be students approaching her asking for money or asking her to donate.

"I feel like they see where I come out from and [they] come right up to me," she said.

Fernando said her family has had cars vandalized and broken into at Alondra Park, and she's had a couple of encounters with transients there.

Hazelle Becera, a law major, said a coworker sent her an article about the attack over winter break.

"I read in the article the victim is Asian. So the first thought that I had was: 'Is it racially motivated?'" Becera said.

Becera, who is Chinese-Filipino, said she followed the news closely to find out whether the attack had anything to do with race, and it eased her to learn that it didn't appear so.

"But also now, my second concern was, could this inspire other people to commit something similar on campus? And that was something that worried me moving forward," she said.

Becera is the El Camino Associated Students Organization's senator for the library open learning resource. She said the ASO will set up a forum during the spring semester for students to talk about campus safety and what the organization can do to help.

Becera said after what happened, everybody in the library where she works is on high alert.

"They're watching, they're monitoring. I've noticed that campus police are doing rounds," she said.

She said El Camino Police are going around campus inspecting buildings, including every floor of the Schauerman Library along with the basement.

"That's something that maybe has helped me and a bunch of other people feel safe," she said.

Lack of communication, updates from the college worries community

Maruna said the El Camino administration has not informed the local community of what's going on.

"We're the residents here, and we're all surrounded by that," Maruna said. "They don't let anyone in the surroundings know what's going on."

Marissa Calderon, an 18-year-old Biology major, is taking in-person classes this winter semester.

Calderon said "it's weird and scary" being on campus, where anyone can walk in.

"It disturbed me a little bit, knowing that it's here," she said about the Dec. 24 attack.

Calderon, who lives in Gardena, said there have been more crimes in her neighborhood recently, as she frequently receives notifications from the app Citizen about assaults that have occurred in her area.

Calderon said she did not receive any messages from the college.

"El Camino didn't really talk about it at all," she said.

Kenny Simkins, El Camino's LGBTQIA+ student success coordinator, said he does not feel threatened on campus, but the Dec. 24 killing does raise concerns, as he didn't receive any text notifications alerting him of what occurred.

"Those notifications need to be sent out immediately," he said.



The candles and bouquets of flowers rest by the pillar of the Gymnasium where the attack on Junko Hanafusa happened on Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023. An unsigned note in one of the bouquets reads: "Prayers for your family. May they find peace." (Ma. Gisela Ordenes | The Union)

Wiley Wilson, a student services specialist at the Social Justice Center, said his concern is the lack of safety in the old Communications building, which houses the Black Student Success Center, the Social Justice Center, Mi Casa, Foster Youth centers and others.

He said it is "the least safe building on campus," due to a lack of security cameras.

"Out of all faculty and staff, our safety is the most in jeopardy because of the work we do here," he said.

Wilson added although the campus police are doing a good job, they can do better:

"Students do not have good trust with the police...that trust has to be developed," he said.

Ongoing Investigations

The Union contacted the El Camino Police Department.

Sgt. Ruben Lopez said "We're not going to comment on an open investigation that the Sheriff's Department is handling."

The Union tried to talk to several El Camino Police members patrolling the campus on Jan. 8 as well as staff from the Facilities Planning and Services.

Police said they don't have more information besides what was released from the Sheriff's Office.

Maintenance staff had one standard answer: "We can't talk." The Union asked if there was an order or memo to remain silent about the attack but the answer was still, "We can't talk."

Community finds ways to cope with death

The community has found a way to remember and grieve Hanafusa. A memorial or altar has been set up outside the El Camino Gymnasium, where the attack occurred.

The other altar is inside the Schauerman Library, honoring three other loved ones in the community who died, in addition to Hanafusa.

On the library's altar is a photo of Parrish Geary, El Camino's dean of student support services who recently died in a car crash on Dec. 28.

Another photo is of Norman Charles Foster Jr, a production specialist at the Industry Technology Education Center who died of natural causes last year.

A mineral water bottle on the altar represents an unnamed student who Penn said "committed suicide earlier last year."

Hana Oshita, another library technician at El Camino, said she set up the altar last week honoring these four people.

An unsigned note in one of the bouquets dedicated to Hanafusa by the Gymnasium reads: "Prayers for your family. May they find peace."

This is a continuing story. The Union is working to schedule interviews with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department and the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office.