

Associated Collegiate Press

Two-year reporter of the year writing portfolio

Erica J. Lee

The Union

El Camino College

Resume provided below can also be accessed online at:

<https://tinyurl.com/4rhhtb96>

The four entry items can be accessed on The Union website by clicking on the pdf headlines. Here are the titles of the four entry stories along with the links in case the pdf headline links fail:

1. **News story: International student's F-1 visa revoked at El Camino**

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/REPORTERLEE1>

2. **Feature story: The United Skates of Keiana**

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/5bkke8v6>

3. **Feature story: Blast from the past: ECC cosmetology students showcase their skills in a parade of vintage styles**

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/29tda3yf>

4. **Feature story: Smitten with Badminton: New club invites all to play**

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/3n24kr3e>

Erica J. Lee

Award-winning writer with experience in aviation industry aiming to take career to new heights as a freelance journalist

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EXPERIENCE

The Union, Torrance, CA — Copy Editor

February 2024 - Present

- Edited articles for an award-winning college publication.
- Worked on first drafts submitted by reporters for publication.
- Conducted research in order to fact check information
- Exhibited a strong command of AP Style and attention to detail.

Warrior Life Magazine, Torrance, CA — Staff Writer

August 2023 - PRESENT

- Created content for an award-winning college publication.
- Researched and interviewed multiple sources to create in-depth feature stories.
- Designed page layouts for print publication
- Assisted editor-in-chief in editing articles for print and online
- Marketed stories to increase reader circulation.

The Union, Torrance, CA — Reporter

February 2023 - Present

- Researched, interviewed and created content for an award-winning college publication.
- Wrote articles spanning from arts and culture to campus affairs.
- Consistently met time-sensitive deadlines.

Hallmark Aviation Services, Los Angeles, CA — Customer Experience Agent

December 2021- Present

- Utilized effective communication and listening skills to make quick, rational decisions and resolve customer conflicts
- Exhibited strong knowledge of airport operations to multitask and carry out duties in a fast-paced, time sensitive environment.

EDUCATION

University of California, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA — Bachelor of Arts in Modern Literature, Minor in Education

September 2009 - June 2013

Graduated with a 3.30 GPA.

SKILLS

Content Writing

Research

Interviews

Copy Editing

Social Media Strategy

Adobe InDesign

Photography

Video Editing

AWARDS

Best Multimedia Package,
1st place, College Media Association Apple Awards, March 2025

Best Critical Review,
2nd place, Journalism Association of Community Colleges, March 2025

Best Profile 2-Year Colleges,
1st Place, College Media Association Pinnacle Awards, October 2024

Best Arts and Features Story,
2nd Place, College Media Association Pinnacle Awards, October 2024

Best Multimedia Feature Story,
2nd Place, College Media Association Pinnacle Awards, October 2024

Best Personality Profile, Campus Personalities,
3rd place, Los Angeles Press Club SoCal Journalism Awards, June 2024



International student's F-1 visa revoked at El Camino

By Erica Lee

An El Camino College student's F-1 visa was revoked last week during spring break, ECC President Brenda Thames said in an announcement at the College Council meeting on Monday, April 21.

Over 1,700 international students from more than 270 colleges and universities have had their F-1 visas revoked as of Wednesday, April 23, according to Inside Higher Ed.

This is the only known revocation of an ECC international student's visa amid a nationwide rise in student visa revocations. The ECC student was not identified during the meeting.

F-1 visas allow foreign nationals to study at academic institutions in the United States. The recent revocations come after the Trump administration effected two executive orders in January related to visa authorization and enforcement.

Amy Herrschaft, counselor for the International Student Program at ECC, said during the meeting that information received from the federal government about the situation is vague.

Herrschaft said that ECC was given a standard statement which said the action was "background-check related" or a "visa revocation."

"We just know that [the student's] records with us, as an international student, are no longer valid," she said. "But that information is not given to us and limited information is given to the student as well."

Lillian Justice, registrar at Enrollment Services, said during the meeting that the student is still considered enrolled at ECC.

Several student newspapers at community colleges in California have reported visa revocations happening to students at other institutions.

A visa revocation occurred to one student in the Los Rios Community College District according to the American River Current as of Wednesday, April 9.

Nine students from the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, which operates two colleges in Northern California, had their visas either revoked or terminated, according to La Voz News as of Friday, April 11.



An El Camino College international student's visa was revoked during spring break, President Brenda Thames said at the College Council meeting Monday, April 21, at the Kenneth A. Brown Board Room in the Administration Building, as seen on Tuesday, April 22. This is the only known revocation of an ECC international student's F-1 visa amid a rise in visa revocations occurring across the United States. (Nikki Yunker | The Union)

Two students at Pasadena City College had their visas revoked according to the Courier as of Tuesday, April 15.

At Santa Monica College, ten student visas have been "terminated," according to the Corsair as of Wednesday, April 22.

The number of ECC students holding F-1 visas in fall 2024 was 341, which comprised 1.5% of enrollment, according to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Data Mart, an online database of statistics from the state's two-year colleges.

Thames said the CCCO is collecting information on international student visa revocations from college campuses across the state.

Herrshaft said that some international students may not have access to higher education in their home countries.

"We don't want to eliminate that opportunity to come here and study on an F-1 visa," Herrshaft said during the meeting. "I think that it's a balancing act for sure in terms of making sure we're continuing to support our students."

Alireza Ahmadpour, art history professor and College Council facilities steering committee voter, said the campus community should be informed about the revocation.

"I think we should inform the rest of the community, the other students... to see what they can do to stand up for their classmates," Ahmadpour said. "My point is, we can create movements against this nonsense."

This is a developing story.



The United Skates of Keiana

By Erica Lee

They call her “Na’cho.”

From underneath the rim of a shiny black S1 helmet that glitters in the outdoor basketball court’s bright floodlights, she silently observes the pattern of her teammates’ movements. Her shoulder-length hair, done up in finger-wide locs, frames her face.

At this practice, no one has completed the obstacle course. The skater who went before her was knocked out of bounds halfway through.

On the sharp blow of the coach’s whistle, Na’cho kicks into gear.

The obstacle course, consisting of two jagged lines of six skaters, moves back and forth like targets in a carnival game; darting from side to side, never twisting or turning their bodies away from their opponent.

Na’cho skilfully moves past her first obstacle, then carefully side steps the next on the toe stops of her quad skates past the opening the third skater makes.

To the frenzied strumming of electric guitars and bass of 90s alternative rock thundering in the background, she swiftly and expertly dodges her obstacles and clears the course to the cheering of her teammates waiting on the sidelines.



Since 2018, Keiana Daniel (middle) has been playing for the Badfish Roller Derby league in Long Beach as a blocker and a jammer. (Erica Lee | Warrior Life)



(L-R) Manuel Grimaldo, Alle Quistberg, Jenn Lee, Elise Vu, Cynthia Beers, Alma Grimaldo and Keiana Daniel line up at Junipero Beach Sports Center in Long Beach on Saturday, April 19. Founded in 2014 and named after a Sublime song, Badfish is one of four roller derby leagues representing the South Bay. (Erica Lee | Warrior Life)

As she flashes them a broad grin, a black mouth guard carefully fitted over her teeth, the lapels of her black zip-up hoodie fluttering in the breeze like a cape, Na'cho makes a triumphant victory lap before returning to the line for another round.

By night, Na'cho Luckiday is the indomitable jammer and blocker of the Badfish Roller Derby League.

By day, she is Keiana Daniel, the student success coordinator for the Black Student Success Center at El Camino College.

Since 2018, Daniel, 36, has led the growth and development of two communities.

One them is the Black Student Success Center, a support system as ECC students navigate community college life in pursuit of their academic and personal goals.

The other are the skaters of Badfish, a pool of new talent and seasoned pros from all walks of life who come together to practice and compete against other roller derby leagues from across the state and beyond.

The United Skates of America

Back in the 90s, long before she became "Na'cho Luckiday," Keiana Daniel was just a girl growing up in Southern California who loved books and sports. While she calls Riverside "home," her schooling would take her to Norwalk, La Habra, Cerritos and Long Beach.

She played soccer, volleyball and was even on a swim team.

"Athletics have always been a big part of my life," Daniel said. "So is reading, still does."

Like many girls growing up in the 90s, Daniel found escapism in fantasy novels and the American Girl books, a series of historical fiction stories based on a line of dolls.

Addy Walker, the courageous 9-year-old who fled to freedom on the Underground Railroad, was her favorite character.

"There's this resilience in her story that really just made me excited to see her achieve something," she said.



Keiana Daniel gears up with members of the Badfish Roller Derby league at Junipero Beach Sports Court in Long Beach on Saturday, April 19. Since 2018, Daniel has been servicing Badfish as a jammer and blocker with a stint as a coach. (Erica Lee | Warrior Life)

While she wouldn't know it yet, reading Addy's stories where she got to attend school, make friends and even have a birthday celebration as a free girl in Philadelphia lit a spark in Daniel. That one day, she'll grow up to help others find their potential and achieve their goals in academics and more.

In the meantime, Daniel was an elementary school student learning how to roller skate.

Her dad would take her and her sister to Skate Depot in Cerritos for lessons. Skate Depot, which was featured in the 2018 documentary "United Skates" about African-American roller skating culture, closed in 2014.

Daniel's first pair of skates was a rental.

"My parents' rule is, 'try something out. If you really love it, then we can invest,'" Daniel said.

When she was 10 years old, she graduated to a pair of black Reidell quad skates with red wheels. These would eventually be the first skates she would use at a roller derby practice over a decade later.

Cut to 2016.

After graduating with a master's degree in linguistics at California State University, Long Beach, Daniel returned to work with their TRIO Talent Search program, which helps low-income and first-generation high school students from Long Beach and the surrounding communities go to college.

One day, a coworker offered to take her to a roller derby practice after work.

It was for Badfish, a local league the coworker skated with under the name "Necronancy."

"They [skaters] were just like these superstars," Daniel said. "Just watching them blow through a warm-up was both intimidating and inspiring."

In her mid to late-twenties, she had a desire to be just like those skaters.

"And so, it was just like that, I wanted to be like them," Daniel said.

"Noise, color, body contact"

Roller derby's roots go back to 1930s Chicago.

That was when Leo Seltzer, a one-time movie theater owner from Oregon, made the career switch to capitalizing on one of the biggest fads sweeping the nation at the time: endurance contests.

Flagpole sitting, walkathons and dance marathons gave Americans an escape from the drudgery of the Great Depression. Some could even win money if they stuck it out long enough and outlast their competition.

His latest venture wouldn't be any different.

After reading an article in "Literary Digest" about how 90% of Americans have tried roller skating, Seltzer decided to cash in on these early ultramarathons by combining the two.

It worked.

Twenty thousand people packed the Chicago Coliseum to watch as two teams, consisting of a man and a woman, attempted to skate 57,000 laps around a flat track at the first-ever Transcontinental Derby on Aug. 13, 1935.

When attendance began to slow down two years later, Seltzer needed to inject some fresh blood if he hoped to continue bringing in the crowds.

That was when sportswriter Damon Runyon suggested spilling blood.

Introducing full-contact proved to be a monumental success.

Like professional wrestling today, roller derby in the 1930s to the 1970s drew in the crowds with violence and over-the-top theatrics. Players were encouraged to shove, hit, headlock and even get into fist fights with their opponents.

There were even accusations that some matches were rigged.

"Noise, color, body contact," Seltzer said in a 1971 article for The New York Times when asked to describe roller derby's appeal.



(L-R) Badfish Roller Derby skaters Alma Grimaldo, Alie Quistberg, Jenn Lee, Elise Vu, Cynthia Beers and Kelana Daniel goof off at Junipero Beach Sports Center on Saturday, April 19. (Erica Lee | Warrior Life)

But by 1973, Seltzer's son Jerry had shut down the roller derby empire his dad had built, citing high maintenance and travel costs. Because the elder Seltzer had owned all the teams in the league, they had disappeared.

There were attempts to revive roller derby in the 80s and 90s.

But roller derby wouldn't experience a full-blown resurrection until the early 2000s.

That was when a group of women in Austin, Texas, decided to bring back the sport but with a feminist bent. This time, the teams were all-women with a strong DIY culture and elements borrowed from the Austin drag scene.

According to the Women's Flat Track Derby Association, there were currently 413 member leagues spread across six continents by 2024.

Whip It

Although they are not a WFTDA-ranked league, Badfish Roller Derby follows their rules and regulations.

The rules of roller derby are simple.

A roller derby bout consists of two 30-minute periods. Active game play during those periods is called "jams," which can last up to two minutes.

Each team can have up to five skaters, four blockers and a jammer.



(L-R) Manuel "Creepy Taco" Grimaldo and Kelana "Na'cho Luckiday" practice together for an upcoming bout at El Dorado Regional Park on Tuesday, March 25. (Erica Lee | Warrior Life)

The jammer, who wears a helmet cover with a star, scores points by passing the blockers on the opposing team and making a successful lap around the track.

The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Founded in 2014 and named after a Sublime song, Badfish is a flat track roller derby team from Long Beach. They are one of four roller derby leagues based in the South Bay.

Flat track roller derby refers to the flat oval track on which skaters roll.

This is in contrast to banked track roller derby, which takes place on a slanted track and is ingrained in pop culture with movies such as 2009's "Whip It" and 2020's "Birds of Prey."

Banked track also increases the chances of injury from falling out of range during bouts.

Not that flat track derby doesn't come with its own risks.

During a scrimmage in 2018, Daniel lost a toenail.

"They somehow convinced me to be a jammer," she said. "And I lost a toenail that day."

To be fair, she had played as a jammer during practice. Her teammates had seen her incredible dodging skills and knew she could do it.

"It really pushed me out of my comfort zone," she said. "I laughed about it later. It's fine, toenails grow back."

Breaking Barriers

"There's no such thing as an average day in the Center," Daniel said.

A day at the Black Student Success Center can range from a "giggle-fest" where staff and students bond over upcoming events and share and celebrate their accomplishments. Other days, Daniel can be seen showing around high school students who plan on enrolling at El Camino. And other days, the mood is more somber.

"The last few weeks, there's been more therapy referrals than I've had in the past," she said.

The center is a hub for the college's student athletes, who are gobsmacked that their mentor plays just as hard and lifts as hard as they can.



Keiana Daniel works with her fellow roller derby teammates to create a "wall" during a practice at El Dorado Regional Park on Tuesday, March 25. A wall is a formation in which the blockers team up to stop the opposing team's jammer from passing and scoring points. (Erica Lee | Warrior Life)

"Last semester, I got challenged in person with a football player," Daniel said. "We went toe-to-toe to see how many [repetitions] we can do. It was very crazy."

As one of the founders of the Black Student Success Center, Daniel's heart and soul went into the creation of a community space where El Camino's Black students can thrive.

"She's passionate, she is very student-centered," Chris Hurd, the Student Equity and Achievement counselor and Daniel's colleague said. "She is someone who fights fearlessly for the best interest of her students."

There's even a personal touch with two pothos cuttings at the front desk. These came from Daniel's own plants at home, which she shares with her wife of two years and their tiny box turtles, Bert and Ernie.

When the BSSC closes for the day at 4:30 p.m., that's when Daniel starts to make the change to Na'cho.

Tell me, are you a Badfish too?

Badfish practice begins just as the sun sets and the lights surrounding the basketball court at Long Beach's El Dorado Park burst to life. The air is filled with cheers from the baseball field, where a girls' softball team plays, and the rush of airplanes landing at the nearby Long Beach Airport.

The time it takes to reach El Dorado Park from ECC is an hour if one takes the Interstate 405.

For Daniel, the commute can take 10 to 15 minutes from her home in the LB area if she takes Interstate 91.

Like Clark Kent, she seamlessly makes the transition to her secret identity.

By the time she rolls up to the basketball court at 7 o'clock, with her gear bag and skates in tow, the thin black and gold glasses she had been wearing at El Camino earlier that day have come off. She's not Keiana Daniel anymore.

She is Na'cho Luckiday.

Roller Derby names act as a secret identity.

This is where the influence of the Austin drag scene over 20 years ago comes into play.

These skaters come from all walks of life.

They are students, doctors, teachers and business owners. Their derby names reflect their personality. It can be chosen by the skater or someone close to them.

They're like drag names, but more risqué and violent. Names like Slammin De Beers. Llama Trauma. Esmay Hurt. Kandi The Kid. Malice in Wonderland.



Members of the Badfish Roller Derby team come in for a huddle at Junipero Beach Sports Center on Saturday, April 19. (Erica Lee | Warrior Life)

In the case of Na'cho Luckiday, her name came from brainstorming ideas with a skater who went by "Mandatory Beat Down."

"We tried a play on my actual name because it's kind of like Keanu Reeves from The Matrix," Daniel said. "We tried that and we were like, 'yeah, it doesn't really give derby.'"

On an average night, there can be up to 40 skaters practicing in one of the two basketball courts. Some skaters have been with Badfish since the beginning.

Others come from other leagues and teams. At least three once skated for Beach Cities Roller Derby, a WFTDA league that disbanded during the pandemic.

"We have a comradery that is unique to the area because we have had roller derby here for so long and people who have played for so long," Shayna "Pigeon" Meikle said.

Once in charge of Beach Cities Roller Derby, she is also owner of Pigeon's Skate Shop in Long Beach as well as Pigeon's Roller Rink.

"That's the beautiful thing about roller derby. There are so many reasons it draws people in... from finding social groups to getting athletic discipline to finding happiness again. The list goes on," Meikle said.

The Badfish skaters split off into two practice groups.

The beginners are known as the "guppies," skaters learning basic skills and the rules of roller derby. To move on to the next group, known as the "school," they must pass an assessment test.

This week, the school is practicing for an upcoming bout that will be held in Corona.

"We have to travel everywhere for our games because our track is too small," Badfish President Cynthia Beers said.

The basketball court that serves as a makeshift roller derby track measures 90 feet by 60.5 feet. There's not enough room for the referee to stand. There's not even room for spectators.

The lack of a home track invites the opportunity for the Badfish Roller Derby team to get out of the fenced-in confines of their practice space.

"We went to Alaska last year," Elise Vu, who skates as "Deja Bruise," said. "Casa Grande, Arizona, Oceanside, San Diego... People in Hawaii want us to go there. So yeah, we get to travel a lot, which is fun."

Travel costs are covered through fundraising and merchandise sales.

These include sparkly stickers, T-shirts, hoodies and hats. There's a Pride-themed Badfish shirt featuring their team emblem, an anglerfish with a pair of skated feet sticking out of its toothy maw.

Daniel sticks by Creepy Taco, one of the derby coaches, as the school skaters practice blocking and jamming, simulating gameplay.

"There it is, there it is," she murmurs, watching as one jammer seamlessly passes the three blockers, who have linked arms and are pivoting to and fro, trying to stop their opposition from scoring.

Then she calls out, "nice, good job!" as the jammer breaks past the wall and proceeds to skate a lap around the track.

When another skater is knocked down, she's the first to offer comfort and support.

The best trait a roller derby coach can have is leadership.

"When you are a coach, you are a leader and you have to keep your cool and be non-biased," Meikel said. "If a coach can bring a team together, that's really powerful."

Although it's been two years since she last coached for Badfish, the instinct is still there. Mentoring others doesn't stop at El Camino. It goes far beyond the confines of the campus.



Badfish Roller Derby league members huddle on Saturday, April 19. Practice sessions end when they put their hands in and shout, "Bah... Bah... Badfish!" (Erica Lee | Warrior Life)

"Na'cho is very good at explaining things in derby," Ezra Messer, a studio arts major at ECC who skates as Kandi the Kid, said. "I look up to Na'cho, Na'cho is strong."

When she is on skates, Daniel can be as swift as a running river or as formidable as a mountain.

"I'm just hitting you in vain," one Badfish skater said during a blocking exercise. This is when two skaters are paired off. The blocker, assuming a crouching derby stance, has to stop her partner, who is pushing against her, from moving.

Try as she might, the other skater can't force Daniel to budge.

Daniel sees herself more as a blocker, but has excelled as a jammer.

"This year is different, switching it up," Daniel said. "We'll see. Maybe I will be a pivot. Who knows?"



Blast from the past: ECC cosmetology students showcase their skills in a parade of vintage styles

By Erica Lee

"California Dreaming" by The Mamas & The Papas plays from the DJ booth as Noelle Boyd enters the spotlight.

Vintage sunglasses protect her eyes from the blinding stage lights as she sashays down the stage in a grey pinafore dress and patent leather Mary Janes. She stops at the edge to perch her sunglasses on top of her bright red hair, carefully teased into a bouffant, and strikes a pose.

For the 20-year-old cosmetology major, this is the moment weeks spent studying 1960s fashion and creating a look that paid homage to actress Sharon Tate has been building up to.

From retro flips to foot-high liberty spikes, the El Camino College cosmetology department took over the Campus Theatre stage on Wednesday night for a retrospective of vintage styles as part of its 5th annual hair show.

"It's a performance, but it's also documenting everything they learned in cosmetology about styling hair, putting together a look and following that rule of the look," Charlene Brewer-Smith, professor of cosmetology, said.

Over 60 students, split into five groups, worked together to put on a parade celebrating fashion from the 1950s to the 2000s.

"We display visuals and physical examples of things that we've learned," cosmetology major Lucy Dallavo, 22, said. "It's inspired by things like decades, themes and movies and we use our skills to replicate visuals from those times."

The hair show began at 7 p.m. with an opening act by the freshman cosmetology students.

They staged a circus performance set to "The Greatest Show," complete with ringmasters, clowns and a lion tamer who wielded her floor-length braid like a whip.



Ashley Labayen, left, and her fellow stylists jam to Donna Summer during their performance as "Disco Diva Dolls" at the 5th annual hair show on Dec. 4. (Erica Lee | The Union)



A model representing the punk aesthetic of the 90s adds a layer of hairspray to her liberty spikes during a performance at the El Camino College cosmetology department's 5th annual hair show at the Campus Theatre on Dec. 4. (Erica Lee | The Union)

Over 100 people attended the hair show, many of whom are family and friends of the stylists.

"We came last year," Chelsea Marquez, stepmother to student Cecelia Marquez, said. "We've been coming every year she's been in the program. She co-choreographed it, so we're really excited."

"Bibbidi Bobbidi Boo" heralded the entrance of the 1950s, where greasers rocked out to Elvis and a model in a demure pink dress passed out lollipops to "Lollipop."

The 1960s celebrated fashion icons Twiggy, Brigitte Bardot and Sharon Tate before the models disappeared offstage then reappeared again as the Beatles, complete with matching suits and shag wigs, to perform "Come Together."

The 1970s, resplendent in glittering jumpsuits as Disco Diva Dolls, made their entrance known by storming the aisles and wielding "Flower Power" picket signs to a medley of Donna Summer.



Noelle Boyd, center, and her fellow graduating classmates receive flowers at the conclusion of the 5th annual hair show on Dec. 4. (Erica Lee | The Union)

At 29 participants, many of whom are part of the cosmetology department's night classes, the 80s showed that "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" with a night out in neon jumpsuits and bold graphic prints.

"I used to be a dancer, so it brought back everything to me and I loved it," cosmetology major Cecelia Marquez, 22, said. "I used to watch a lot of 80's movies and I loved the half up, half done hairstyle."

When it came to the 90s, pop culture reigned supreme with models paying homage to "Friends" with a Phoebe look-a-like and the infamous crank call scene from "Scream."

With a proclamation that "the princess is here" from Ciara and Missy Elliot's 2004 hit "1, 2 Step," models showed off 2000's materialism in pink velour tracksuits and hairstyles invoking stars like Jennifer Lopez and Beyonce.

While the night was a celebration of the stylists' skills, the night was also a bittersweet reminder that this was the grand finale for some.

Graduating students were applauded for their hard work and rewarded with bouquets of flowers. Brewer-Smith noted that, at the beginning of her tenure at El Camino, many students didn't graduate.



El Camino College cosmetology students pay homage to the 90's with the "do you like scary movies" scene from "Scream" as part of the 5th annual hair show on Dec. 4. (Erica Lee | The Union)

"We're showing them how to do it and we're pushing it," she said, "You were in a good place and at a good time."

For those students leaving, Dec. 4 marks their last hurrah before moving on to the next chapter in their lives.

"I'm hoping to get out of this one last goodbye for my class because this is my last semester and it's the last activity we'll get to do together before I leave," Boyd said.



Smitten with Badminton: New club invites all to play

By Erica Lee

Rubber sneaker soles squeak against the polished wooden floor of the basketball court.

The air is filled with a series of whooshing sounds, punctuated by the loud thwacks of shuttles as they hit the racquets before hurtling over the high net.

The players quickly dart from side to side, intercepting the shuttle when it enters their side of the court.

They play in doubles to accommodate the 28 people who have shown up tonight.

More people are expected to join in the coming weeks.

And tonight is only their third meeting.



Members of the El Camino College Badminton Club share a laugh with club adviser and badminton coach David Levin on Wednesday, April 2 in the ECC Gym Complex. (Oriana De Quay | The Union)



Administration of justice and business administration major Anya Gore surveils the EL Camino College Badminton club members in the ECC Gym Complex on Wednesday, March 26. Gore plays for the ECC Badminton team. Having started playing in her backyard, she took badminton seriously at 12 years old and played in high school and now college, she said. (Oriana de Quay | The Union)

The El Camino College Badminton Club is one of the newest student-run organizations on campus. They made their debut at the Spring 2025 Club Rush.

They meet twice weekly on Monday and Wednesday night, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., in the ECC Gym Complex.

It is the brainchild of Marisela Gomez, 30, a high school substitute teacher and club secretary, and her sister Maria.

She had been taking fitness classes at ECC since fall 2023, but there was something special about the badminton course they took.

"My sister and I really love the class," Gomez said. "So we talked to Coach [David Levin], and he said we didn't have the club. So I decided to start the process of making the club."



El Camino College Badminton Club founder Marisela Gomez and ECC badminton coach David Levin catch up in the gymnasium during the Badminton Club meeting Wednesday, April 2. Many in the badminton class last semester wanted a club to be created for the sport, Gomez said. She pushed the idea further and finalized the paperwork to make it happen. (Oriana de Quay | The Union)

With the help of members of ECC's women's badminton team, four of whom serve in leadership positions, Gomez started crafting the club constitution, talking to the college for access to the gymnasium and applying for the official notice.

By December 2024, the Inter-Club Council approved the ECC Badminton Club's application.

"I don't think there's ever been a badminton club before this one," Levin said. "Not that I know of. There's team badminton at El Camino and there's badminton in the curriculum."

Badminton is a racquet sport whose origins can be traced back to India.

Like tennis and pickleball, the goal of badminton is to score points by landing the shuttle, a feathery projectile also known as a "shuttlecock" or "birdie," into the opponent's side of the court.

Players must score 21 points to win a game. Badminton is played as "best out of three," meaning the winner is determined after winning two games.



(L-R) Badminton Club Inter-Club Council representative Montila Winyaworapon, 26, and club Vice President Saray Kilos, 20, keep track of points during a match at the Badminton Club meeting Wednesday, April 2 in the El Camino College Gym Complex. The club's biggest turnout consisted of fifty people. "We created the club so everyone could play," Kilos said. (Oriana de Quay | The Union)

British army officers, who had been introduced to the sport while stationed in India, brought it to England in the 1860s.

The name comes from the estate of the Duke of Beaufort, Badminton House, where he introduced the game to his friends at an 1873 lawn party.

Today, badminton is the second most popular sport worldwide. It is popular in Asian countries such as China, Thailand and Indonesia.

However, badminton is now gaining popularity in the United States.

According to Google Trends, which analyzes search trends, badminton saw a sharp spike in popularity between July and August 2024.

This coincides with the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, where badminton is an Olympic sport.

For the Badminton Club, the interest was more face-to-face.



El Camino College Badminton club president Anya Gore, 18, watches for the birdie during a badminton match Wednesday, April 2. Gore plays on the ECC badminton team and runs the Badminton Club. She graduated high school at 16 by passing her California High School Proficiency Examination, and came to El Camino College the following year majoring in both business administration and administration of justice. (Oriana de Quay | The Union)

"A lot of people don't know about the sport, so once they heard about it during the Club Rush, they were interested," Montila Winyaworapon, 26, said. The kinesiology major pulls double duty as a member of the ECC badminton team and its club's ICC representative. "They show up and they enjoy it."

Experience isn't a requirement to sign up for the Badminton Club.

The college provides the racquets and shuttles needed to play. All members need to bring are a pair of suitable shoes.

No black soles are allowed, as the club's Instagram account has to remind its over 70 followers, because they "will damage the court by leaving black marks, which are impossible to remove."

During the spring 2025 Club Rush, the Badminton Club saw over 76 people sign up over two days.

"If we were there for three days, we'd have more people sign up," Winyaworapon said.

The ages of the members span from late teens to 50s.

"I like everything because there is no age limit," Maja Mandic, 50, a language academy student from Serbia, said. "There are great people who play so well, but it's important to have fun."



El Camino college Badminton club founder Marisela Gomez, 30, rallies at the ECC gym on Wednesday, April 2. Gomez is a substitute teacher and copy editor. Gomez says, she feels rewarded watching the joy people get from learning. (Oriana de Quay | The Union)

For the March 26 meeting, the gymnasium was converted into six temporary badminton courts.

The players pair off for doubles matches, while others wait on the sidelines for their turn. Others congregate at the center of the gymnasium to practice their swings and serves.

"My hope is that it continues, that it's not just a one-semester event," Levin said. "All it takes is one person to make it happen."