



## Orange Coast College Names Interim Vice President of Instruction

Orange Coast College has hired Pamela D. Walker as its Interim Vice President of Instruction while it continues the search for a permanent replacement for Kevin Ballinger, who retired in June after more than 30 years at the College.

Walker hails from Auburn, Calif. where she has been a higher education consultant for the past three years. She previously served as the Executive Vice Chancellor of Educational Services and Vice Chancellor of Academic Programs at the California Community College Chancellor's Office in Sacramento.

Walker brings to OCC a wealth of experience, including a long tenure at American River College, where she served as the interim president (2014-2016), Vice President of Student Services (2006-2014), and Associate Vice President of Instruction (2004-2006).

"Dr. Walker's experience has extensively encompassed many facets of the instructional program serving previously as a part-time faculty member, instructional dean, vice president, interim president, vice chancellor of academic programs, and her latest role as the Executive Vice Chancellor of Educational Programs for the CCC Chancellor's Office," says OCC President Angelica Suarez. "We look forward to welcoming Pam to the OCC family as she begins her new role."

Walker holds a doctorate in organizational leadership from the University of San Francisco, a master's degree in physical education from California State University, Sacramento, and bachelor's degree in education from Eastern Oregon State College.



## International Student Recruiting Coordinator Receives Distinguished Service Award

Orange Coast College's International Student Recruiting Coordinator Kris Toribio was selected as the recipient of this year's Distinguished Service Award by the International Association for College Admission Counseling.

The International ACAC is a regional affiliate of the National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC) and currently has approximately 3,000 members representing more than 90 countries worldwide. Toribio is the first community college representative, and the second person of color, to receive the Distinguished Service Award.

"I am very happy to have had an opportunity to represent OCC, and to demonstrate that our community college is more than just a place for transfer," says Toribio of the honor.

"My platform has always been to make sure international students at community colleges have a space [within organizations like International ACAC] and that they know choosing OCC will give them a university experience at a more affordable price."

Typically, Toribio travels all over the world to participate in recruiting events and he often serves as a liaison between the college and international education officials. Two years ago he was instrumental in arranging for OCC to become the first college accredited by the ministry of education in Brunei, and his efforts resulted in six Bruneian students attending OCC in Fall 2019.

Toribio also is passionate about combating elitism and racism within the college recruiting world, and organized a panel at this year's virtual conference titled "International ACAC: Unfiltered" where recruiting officials could share their experiences of racism on the road.

"I've been mistaken for the driver while on recruiting trips, and I've been subjected to second searches at the airport on



multiple occasions,” he shares. “I’ve even been told that I’m the wrong ethnicity to represent the U.S. while on recruiting trips. It’s important to combat those stereotypes in any way we can.”

Currently, Toribio is managing OCC’s International Student social media accounts, and is hosting regular recruiting and transfer live sessions on Instagram, where he can connect with students from all over the world who are interested in attending OCC.

## Student Services Connects Students to Technology, Support Needed to Stay in School

During the Spring 2020 semester, as the COVID-19 global pandemic unfolded and classes at OCC were transitioned online, the College’s Student Services Division created various programs in order to support students in need.

One such program — OCC’s laptop loan program — is a game-changer for many students who struggle to access the technology they need for online coursework. To date, OCC has handed out 110 Chromebooks and 13 iPads, and Student Services currently is working with the Coast District IT department to also offer Samsung Galaxy tablets. Galaxy tablets, like the iPads currently on loan, come with a built in wifi hotspot for students who lack reliable internet access.

“We are committed to doing the best we can to remove barriers for our students,” says Vice President of Student Services Madjid Niroumand. “As we have moved to remote delivery of instruction and services, we want to make sure we do not limit our students’ access to education because of lack of technology. In addition to devices, our Student Equity Program has been engaging with students to identify their needs so that we can provide them with timely support.”

During the spring semester, OCC’s Student Equity program coordinated an effort to contact students who dropped their courses in order to offer assistance with the transition to online learning, as well as conduct wellness checks. As OCC gears up for a fall semester that will take place mostly online, this team of mostly reassigned Classified employees is ramping up their efforts to connect with students and inform them about resources that might help them.

“Initially, it was strictly wellness and assistance with transitioning to online learning environments, but since the spring we’ve expanded our messaging to include registration reminders, CARES funding reminders, etc.,” says Student Programs Project Coordinator Erin Fitzgerald. “We have also collaborated with the Instructional wing and Retention team to contact students who were referred to us by faculty members.”

Student needs are identified and addressed on a case-by-case basis, with many students’ needs changing rapidly as a result of the pandemic. “We have found that things are changing so quickly with the pandemic that what students need day to day changes, too,” explains Fitzgerald. “For example, some students lost their jobs and then their computer died. We

trust our students, and decided early on that if a student is requesting assistance, it was because it was needed.”

To date, OCC’s Student Services has contacted more than 3,400 students to offer assistance.

## Pirates Name Nate Johnson as Head Baseball Coach

After an extensive search, Orange Coast College named Nate Johnson as the new head baseball coach in July, making him just the seventh OCC skipper in the 72-year history of the Pirate program.

The hiring comes just six months following the tragic loss of longtime head coach John Altobelli, who died in late January alongside his wife, Keri, daughter Alyssa, and six others in a helicopter crash.

While it’s been a roller coaster of emotions ever since, Johnson, who became close to Altobelli during the seven years he served as an assistant coach,

is excited to follow in his mentor’s footsteps.

“[Coach Alto] has set the standards high with this program and I’m going to do my best to not only maintain the success he brought, but also maintain his legacy,” he says.

Johnson was selected as the Pirates’ head coach following a two-month hiring process that saw more than 70 applicants vie for one of the top community college baseball head coaching positions in the state. He takes over a Pirate baseball program rich in tradition, with a record of dominating the sport. Orange Empire Conference champions over the past three seasons (excluding the 2020 season canceled due to COVID-19), the Pirates have won four state baseball championships since 2009 and seven titles in school history.

“I came to OCC as a kid, and [Coach Altobelli] really took me in,” says Johnson. “I wanted to learn everything I possibly could from him and I managed to work my way up the ranks.”

After Altobelli’s death, the shell shocked players and coaches were surrounded by a community that rallied in support of the program, giving Johnson a glimpse of how strong bonds that tie the “Pirate Family” together really are. “The thing I remember the most from Alto’s death was the love and support our team received from everyone involved with our school ... other coaches, administrators, former Pirate players ... it was incredible. As the head coach, I want to be able to return that same support to the rest of our teams and to our college. The term ‘Pirate Family’ is used a lot, but it’s real and I’m excited to be a part of it.”

