

March
4, 2021



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Santiago Canyon College Receives Distinction as a Gold-Level Military Friendly® School Resources and Mentorship provided through the SCC Veterans Resource Center

(Orange, CA) - Santiago Canyon College (SCC) recently announced that it has earned the 2021-2022 Military Friendly® School Gold-Tier Level distinction for its services to students who are veterans or active-duty members, and their families.

According to Military Friendly®, this distinction is the leading, trademarked standard that measures an organization's level of commitment and success in creating opportunities and positive outcomes for members of the military community. Institutions that are designated as Military Friendly® are in good federal standing and have met, or exceeded, benchmarks for recruitment, retention, advancement, support and job placement of veterans.

A Military Friendly® School with Gold distinction scores within the top 10 percent of the 10th ranking school in their category. The list of 2021-2022 Military Friendly® Schools will be published in the May issue of *G.I. Jobs* magazine and can be found at www.militaryfriend.com.

Through its Veterans Resource Center (VRC), SCC continues its commitment to providing best-in-class services for veterans, service members and their families by incorporating enhanced service options and streamlining available resources.

SCC Interim President and U.S. Army veteran José F. Vargas said the college is honored and delighted to be recognized by the Military Friendly® School program for a second year in a row, advancing to Gold tier.

"This designation represents the sincere care that our staff at the VRC has for our veterans, active-duty service members and their families," Vargas said. "We want our veteran students to know that they can come to SCC and understand that we will make sure they aren't left behind. We are proud of our work to make the transition to civilian life as seamless as possible with the available resources at the newly rebranded VRC."

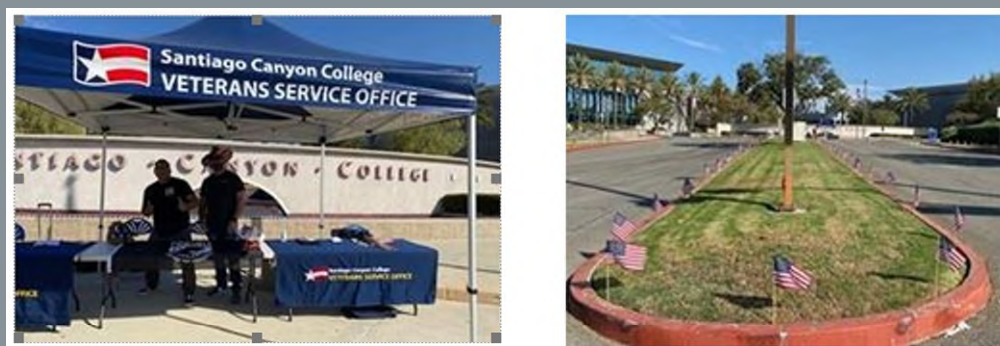
Last fall, the College was awarded a pair of two Student Success Services (SSS) congressional awards totaling \$260,000 yearly over a five-year time span. One was a renewal award for SCC's TRIO program, and the second was a new award for SCC's TRIO-Veterans' program. Only 1,100 TRIO grants are awarded every five-year grant cycle. Over the last year, SCC's VRC was also the recipient of two \$7,500 donations from the Community Foundation of Orange, and a \$15,000 donation from the Stanley W. Ekstrom Foundation. These funds supported emergency grants, scholarships, educational supplies and equipment for veteran students, allowing the VRC to redeploy scarce resources toward hiring additional staff and increasing one-on-one support services.



SCC Director of Special Programs Dr. LaKyshia Perez, said SCC is committed to providing a holistic approach to the needs of the military-affiliated students at the College.

"We're working from the strong foundation that was developed by my predecessor," said Dr. Perez. "Upon that platform we'll offer additional services and activities that will enhance the veteran's experience with us."

The VRC, which is expected to hold its grand reopening with its new branding, once SCC can reopen to normal on-campus activities, now offers increased tutoring and greater access to case managers for its students. Additionally, SCC has tripled the number of hours accessible for veterans to meet with a case manager, an essential service for veterans as they need to have their classes certified in order to access their benefits. One unique service offered by VRC is the placement with peer mentors who assist student veterans with accessing their benefits and navigating bureaucratic systems within Veterans' Affairs (VA).



SCC's Veterans Service Office (VSO), which [was](#) rebranded to Veterans Resource Center (VRC) hosted a veteran-student drive-thru event to celebrate Veterans Day in November [2020](#).

Student Services Specialist Steven Stenersen is one of those peer mentors and works with veterans, service members, and their families within the VRC. He is often one of the first persons to work with them in their academic journey at SCC. Stenersen, a nine-year Marine Corps veteran, said he struggled to access his benefits when he was exiting active-duty service, despite being well-informed.

"I was like 'I got this, it won't be that bad.' And it ended up being horrible," Stenersen said of his experience trying to access the benefits he was entitled to through his military service. "Most of the information I got was outdated, stuff like that. So, I try to make the transition as seamless as possible to take as much stress out of the process for the veterans."

Stenersen and peer mentors like him help veterans apply for benefits, build an education plan for their time at the College, and help put the student-veterans in touch with resources in the community as needed.

If interested in making a donation to help fund student veterans, service members and their families, [visit their website here](#). These funds have helped veterans with the purchase of textbooks, laptops and calculators, as well as emergency cash for basic needs that include housing, transportation, food, etc.

For more information about Santiago Canyon College's student veteran programs, visit [Veterans Resource Center](#) website.

About Military Friendly® Schools:

The Military Friendly® Schools list is created each year based on extensive research using public data sources for more than 8,800 schools nationwide, input from student veterans, and responses to the proprietary, data-driven Military Friendly® Schools survey from participating institutions. The survey questions, methodology, criteria and weighting were developed with the assistance of an independent research firm and an advisory council of educators and employers. The survey is administered for free and is open to all post-secondary schools that wish to participate. Criteria for consideration can be found at www.militaryfriendly.com.

About Viqtory:

Founded in 2001, VIQTORY is a service-disabled, veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB) that connects the military community to civilian employment, educational and entrepreneurial opportunities through its G.I. Jobs® and Military Friendly® brands. VIQTORY and its brands are

not a part of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Department of Defense or any federal government entity. Learn more about VIQTORY at www.viqtory.com.

Military Friendly Press Contact:

Kayla Lopez
Military Friendly
National Director of Military Partnerships
mf2021@militaryfriendly.com

About Rancho Santiago Community College District

Located in the heart of Orange County, Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) is home to one of the state's oldest community colleges, [Santa Ana College](#), and also one of its newest, [Santiago Canyon College](#). RSCCD serves a population of more than 700,000 residents in the communities of Anaheim Hills, Orange, Santa Ana, Villa Park and portions of Anaheim, Costa Mesa, Irvine, Fountain Valley, Garden Grove and Tustin. Encompassing 24 percent of Orange County's total area (193 square miles), RSCCD maintains eight facilities that include Santa Ana College, Santiago Canyon College, the Centennial and Orange Continuing Education Centers, the Digital Media Center, Orange County Regional Fire Training Center, Orange County Sheriff's Regional Training Academy, and the District operations center. In 2019, RSCCD served over 50,000 students enrolled at both SAC and SCC sites.

#

Contact: Ruth Cossio-Muniz
(714) 480-7500
cossio_muniz_ruth@rsccd.edu

Rancho Santiago Community College District
Communications, Marketing and Public Relations Department
2323 N. Broadway
Santa Ana, CA 92706
www.rsccd.edu