

2026

PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER



ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT
St. Philip's College

ISSUE

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President's Message



Shown here from left: St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston, HEB Senior Director of Diversity & Inclusion and Supplier Diversity James Harris, and Shavonda Harris.

Hospitality is more than an industry. It is a tradition, a calling, and a reflection of who we are at St. Philip's College. It represents service, excellence, and the intentional care we extend to others in the San Antonio community. This spirit was beautifully demonstrated during the recent Culinary Gala I hosted in November on campus at our student-led fine dining restaurant, Artemisia's.

It was my distinct honor to host this special capstone event, welcoming community partners, donors, and our outstanding student leaders to celebrate the remarkable talents of our Tourism, Hospitality, and Culinary Arts students. The evening showcased a gourmet dining experience thoughtfully prepared and presented by our students, an extraordinary demonstration of their creativity, technical expertise, and commitment to excellence.

Events like the President's Culinary Gala reflect more than student achievement; they represent a legacy that began in 1898 when St. Philip's Episcopal Church educated the daughters and granddaughters of emancipated slaves in cooking and sewing.

Over the decades, our Tourism, Hospitality, and Culinary Arts programs have grown alongside San Antonio's emergence as a global tourism destination. From the debut of restaurant and hotel management programs in the 1970s to achieving national and international recognition, St. Philip's College has consistently prepared students for careers in one of our city's most vital industries.

Today, our state-of-the-art Tourism, Hospitality, and Culinary Arts facility, including Artemisia's fine dining restaurant and Café 1898, provides immersive, real-world learning environments that elevate student success and community engagement.

At St. Philip's College, hospitality is deeply rooted in our mission of student success as it reflects our commitment to welcoming all students, nurturing their talents, and preparing them to serve their communities with dignity and pride. Our students are not only learning the art of hospitality, but they are also becoming ambassadors of service, culture, and innovation.

SPC Hosts Inaugural Annual Manufacturing Symposium



Shown here from left: St. Philip's College Dean for Academic Success, Applied Science & Technology - SWC Chris Beardsall, San Antonio Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones, and St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston.

On Oct. 1, 2025, St. Philip's College Southwest Campus welcomed students, industry leaders, and community partners for its first National Manufacturing Day Symposium, an event designed to highlight the economic impact of manufacturing and inspire future generations to pursue high-demand

careers in the field. The program featured remarks from St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston, San Antonio Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones, and keynote speaker Carla Wright, Vice President of Manufacturing at Toyota North America.

St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston said the symposium underscores the importance of preparing students to meet the workforce needs of a rapidly evolving industry.

"As of August 2025, U.S. manufacturing has contributed \$2.90 trillion to the economy, with job openings at 415,000 and average annual earnings of more than \$102,000," Dr. Loston said. "That opportunity is significant, but so is the challenge. We must close the talent gap, and that starts with education and training."

Carla Wright, who oversees daily operations at Toyota Texas, the \$4.7

billion facility that produces the Toyota Tundra and all-hybrid Sequoia, spoke about the future of advanced manufacturing and the need for collaboration between education and industry to build a sustainable workforce.

Attendees toured the college's manufacturing labs, including programs in Advanced Manufacturing Technology, Automated Industrial Processes, and Computer Numerical Control (CNC). The day concluded with a manufacturing employer and resource fair, connecting students with potential job opportunities and industry representatives.

The symposium coincides with National Manufacturing Month, a nationwide initiative that promotes the role of manufacturing in the U.S. economy and seeks to inspire interest in high-skill, high-wage careers.

SPC Hosts Grand Opening for Southwest Campus eSports Center



St. Philip's College celebrated the grand opening of its new eSports Center at its Southwest Campus on Oct. 13, 2025, providing students with resources to compete, develop skills, and explore opportunities in the rapidly growing gaming industry.

"On behalf of St. Philip's College, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the grand opening of our brand-new eSports Center here at Southwest Campus," said St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston. "This center is a place where innovation, competition, and teamwork join in a unique way."

eSports, short for electronic sports, involves organized, competitive video gaming, where individuals or teams compete for prizes, trophies, and recognition. The industry has expanded globally, offering professional leagues, tournaments, and a

platform to cultivate strategy, creativity, and leadership skills. The new center features high-performance computers, consoles, and networking equipment, allowing students to practice and compete on official college eSports teams in leagues and tournaments. It also includes broadcasting areas for streaming events and serves as a social hub for students interested in gaming, collaboration, and skill development.

During the grand opening, the college showcased the technology available for student use and outlined plans for the eSports club to grow into a program competing at the local, state, regional, and national levels. Club officers were introduced, and partnerships with the Tech Port Center, the Greater Gaming Society of San Antonio, and the Kansas City Pioneers were announced to provide professional networking and skills development opportunities in the gaming industry.

"Gaming is for everyone, and so is this club," said Nathaniel Martinez, club lead advisor. "You don't have to be the biggest, strongest, or fastest to be considered a great gamer. Whether you're focused on competitive play, casual gaming, tabletop gaming, streaming, or content creation, this club is a space for all so we can build an inclusive community that enhances our students' sense of belonging at SPC."

SPC Hosts Rey Feo Scholarship Reception



Shown here from left: Alamo Colleges District Chancellor Dr. Mike Flores, Alamo Colleges Foundation President Bart Simpson, Rey Feo Scholarship Chairman Johnny Gabriel, Rey Feo Scholarship Co-Chairman & Executive Director Jennifer Barbaro, Rey Feo 76 Fabian Castillo Sr., Rey Feo Royal Consort Vicki Castillo, St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston, Rey Feo Event Minister Lisa Wong, Rey Feo Scholarship Director Claudia Castoreno, Rey Feo Justice Minister Joe Gonzales, and St. Philip's College Director of Institutional Advancement Dr. Sharon Crockett-Ray.

St. Philip's College celebrated its students' academic achievements on Sept. 30 during the Rey Feo Scholarship Reception, where San Antonio's Rey Feo 76, Fabian Castillo Sr., and his Royal Court presented a \$200,000 donation to the college.

The event recognized nearly 100 students who received scholarships of \$500 and \$1,000 funded by the Rey Feo Scholarship Foundation. The scholarships provide financial support for students pursuing degrees and workforce credentials in one of the college's 30 career programs.

"Today, we celebrate academic excellence and a commitment to making a positive impact in our community," said St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston. "Contributions like the Rey Feo Scholarship help open doors that would otherwise remain closed, making a lasting difference in our students' success."

The foundation, which has partnered with St. Philip's for several years, supports students by reducing financial barriers to higher education and helping them avoid unnecessary debt.

Distinguished guests at the event included Alamo Colleges District Chancellor Dr. Mike Flores, Executive Director of the Alamo Colleges Foundation Bart Simpson, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Rey Feo Scholarship Foundation Johnny Gabriel, and Executive Director of the Rey Feo Scholarship Foundation Jennifer Barbaro.

Students who were recognized at the reception were applauded by family members, faculty, staff, and community leaders. "Congratulations to all of our scholarship recipients," Dr. Loston said. "You embody what makes St. Philip's College great, and I know you will continue to make us proud."



Alamo Colleges District Chancellor Dr. Mike Flores provides remarks at the event.



SPC Student Onboarding & Recruitment Assists More Than 1,500 Students this Semester

The St. Philip's College Student Onboarding & Recruitment team is making significant strides this semester in helping local high school students prepare for college.

As of October, the team has assisted 1,551 students through on-site visits, workshops, and college readiness activities. Their efforts are strengthened through partnerships with the San Antonio Education Partnership, Project STAY, the Financial Aid Outbound Team, and Good Samaritan Community Services.

A key focus has been supporting students with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA. Several students submitted their FAFSA applications even before the official opening date, reflecting strong early engagement.

To expand access, the team has hosted multiple FAFSA Nights in collaboration with district financial aid staff, providing in-person support to hundreds of students and families. Financial aid specialists

also joined Student Onboarding & Recruitment representatives for FAFSA Day visits across area campuses.

Through these outreach efforts, St.

Philip's College continues its mission to ensure every student has the guidance and resources needed to begin their college journey with confidence.



San Antonio Education Partnership College Access and Success Advisor Stephanie Cruz and St. Philip's College Certified Enrollment Coach Logen Rodriguez help students with their Apply Texas application at the Healy Murphy Center, a charter school on the east side of San Antonio.

SPC receives accreditation through the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing

St. Philip's College's (SPC) vocational and associate degree nursing programs have received initial accreditation from the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), a leading national organization that sets standards for nursing education.

At its August 2025 meeting, ACEN's Board of Commissioners granted initial accreditation to SPC's vocational and associate degree nursing programs, confirming that both programs met ACEN's 2023 standards and criteria.

ACEN is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education

Accreditation. It provides specialized accreditation for all levels of nursing education and transition-to-practice programs, using a voluntary peer-review process to ensure programs meet national standards of quality and excellence.

Accreditation through ACEN signifies that the SPC nursing programs meet high-quality benchmarks, support continuous improvement, and enhance student learning opportunities. Graduates of ACEN-accredited programs are often eligible for licensure, federal financial aid, and admission to graduate nursing programs, and have an advantage in the job market. The vocational and associate degree programs join other accredited

health sciences offerings at St. Philip's College, which has expanded to meet growing demand in the healthcare industry.



SPC Names New THCA Café



More than 100 students, faculty, and staff gathered on the morning of Dec. 1, 2025, as St. Philip's College celebrated the grand opening of its newly named campus

café, "Phil's Brewed Awakening." The event, held from 7:30 to 10:30 a.m. on the second floor of the Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts Building, featured remarks

from St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston, who commended students for their creativity and engagement.

The winning name was submitted by student Alexandria Gonzalez, who received a \$500 scholarship check as part of the contest. Alexandria attended with her mother, who joined her in expressing gratitude for the opportunity.

Guests enjoyed free coffee in a variety of flavors, including black, caramel, mocha, vanilla, and sugar-free options, along with complimentary cupcakes.

Phil's Brewed Awakening will operate Monday through Friday from 7:30 to 10:30 a.m. while classes are in session, providing a new gathering space for the college community.

SPC Observes Veterans Day



On Nov. 11, St. Philip's College held commemorative events at both its MLK and Southwest Campuses to honor Veterans Day. Each campus hosted a wreath-laying ceremony as a central part of the observance, providing a solemn moment of reflection and respect for those who have served. During the ceremonies, college leadership addressed attendees, offering remarks that highlighted the importance of remembering veterans' contributions to the nation and the local community. The events concluded with refreshments, allowing attendees to gather and connect, and a group photograph to capture the occasion.

SPC Celebrates its 153rd Commencement Ceremony



St. Philip's College celebrated its 153rd Commencement Ceremony on Dec. 10, marking a historic milestone as the college awarded its first-ever Bachelor of Applied Technology degrees in Cybersecurity.

The ceremony opened with remarks from George H. Johnson III, Vice President for College Services, followed by the posting of the colors by the Sam Houston High School JROTC Color Guard and the national anthem performed by Associate Professor David Uminski.

St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston highlighted a year of institutional growth, announcing the fulfillment of a vision first imagined more than a century ago by the college's founding president, Saint Artemisia Bowden.

"This 153rd commencement ceremony represents how far we have come since our founding in 1898 as a sewing school for the daughters and granddaughters of emancipated slaves," Dr. Loston said. "Tonight, St. Philip's College can officially say we have issued a four-year degree."

Dr. Loston also recognized Valero Energy Corporation for its \$1 million donation supporting the Bachelor of Applied Technology in Cybersecurity program.

Student speaker Jon Aguilar, one of the college's first cybersecurity baccalaureate graduates, shared a personal story of perseverance. Jon, who returned to college after leaving school many years earlier, spoke about overcoming illness, personal loss, and family hardships while pursuing his degree.

"Class of 2025, we have accomplished our academic goals, overcame obstacles, embraced growth, and proved to ourselves that we are ready for whatever challenges lie ahead."

The ceremony also featured remarks from Valero Senior Vice President of Communications, Public Relations, and Engagement Seymour Battle III, who spearheaded the company's recent donation to St. Philip's College.

As tassels shifted from right to left inside Freeman Coliseum, St. Philip's College celebrated the accomplishments of its 1,209 graduates and the fulfillment of Saint Artemisia Bowden's vision of St. Philip's College offering a four-year degree.

SPC Celebrates First Graduates of BAT Program



Shown here from left: Bachelor of Applied Technology graduates Jon Aguilar, Michael Enriquez, Candace Garza, St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston, Andres Cardenas, Pedro Abundis, and Julian Reyes.

St. Philip's College (SPC) honored the inaugural graduates of its Bachelor of Applied Technology (BAT) in Cybersecurity program during a Donning of the Stoles Ceremony on Dec. 3, at 6 p.m.

For SPC, the event marks a milestone, recognizing the first cohort to complete the four-year BAT Cybersecurity degree, a program designed to build on the college's existing associate-level offerings and prepare students for careers in

one of the fastest-growing fields in cybersecurity technology. There are 14 graduates in total.

The ceremony included remarks from the Cybersecurity & Information Technology Department Chair, Dr. Chacon, and Dean for Academic Success, Applied Science & Technology – MLK, Edith Orozco; together, they highlighted the evolution of the program from an associate degree to the current BAT curriculum.

St. Philip's College President Adena Williams Loston delivered the presidential welcome address, congratulating students for their pioneering role in the program and challenging them to reflect on their vision for the future, "What do you see? What do you have the capacity to see?"

The highlight of the evening was the donning of stoles, where each graduate was recognized individually by college leadership. The ceremony concluded with a reception and networking session, giving attendees an opportunity to celebrate with faculty and fellow graduates.

St. Philip's College's BAT in Cybersecurity program reflects the institution's commitment to empowering students to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving workforce, and the graduating class represents the first of many to benefit from this innovative program.

Spring 2026 Graduate Spotlights



Jon Rene Aguilar

Jon is among SPC's first Bachelor of Applied Technology in Cybersecurity graduates and gained hands-on experience through an ARIAS internship, where he contributed to Ubiquiti security system installations, user data management, and the development of sandbox applications. He plans to pursue cybersecurity certifications and identity-theft prevention work.



Chastity Clark

Chastity earned an Associate of Arts at SPC and has a lifelong passion for storytelling and creative expression. From a young age, she immersed herself in the arts, earning acting and poetry awards. After graduation, she plans to return to London to continue her studies.



Roger Gaspard

Roger graduated this December with an Associate of Arts in Teaching. During his time at SPC, he was published in the Tiger PAWS Literary Art Journal and served as an editor for four semesters. After graduation, he will continue his academic journey at Texas A&M University–San Antonio in Spring 2026 to pursue a bachelor's degree in mathematics with a teaching certificate.



Davi'na Lathers

Davi'na graduated with an Associate of Science. During her time at SPC, she served as Vice President of the Blue Blazer Society and is a founder of the Pearls of Distinction and Tiger Network, as well as activities coordinator for Collegiate 100. After graduation, she plans to pursue a bachelor's degree, ultimately aiming for an M.D.



Julianna Elizabeth Lujan

Julianna earned an Associate of Arts. While at SPC, she collaborated with the Office of Community Engagement, supporting Safe Space initiatives and outreach efforts by promoting Student Accessibility Services. After graduation, she will transfer to the University of the Incarnate Word to pursue a bachelor's degree in business administration.



Honey Sanchez

Honey graduated with an Associate of Applied Science in the Collision/Refinishing Technician program. During her time at SPC, she completed internships with Steel Body Work and Brass Knuckle Kustoms, gaining hands-on experience in polishing, dent repair, painting, and detail work. After graduation, she plans to work in the industry to gain additional knowledge before opening her own restoration shop.

Caring Campus Employee Spotlights



For Caroline Mora, Program Director and lead instructor of the Bachelor of Applied Technology in Cybersecurity Program at St. Philip's College, student success starts with connection.

Caroline has worked in education and public service since 2007, bringing experience from the Department of Defense, the U.S. Air Force, and the

Department of Homeland Security. Her background across military, federal, and academic settings has shaped her student-centered approach to teaching and program development.

Caroline is one of ten faculty members leading The Heart of Teaching: SPC Caring Campus Initiative, launched in Fall 2025. The initiative identified faculty with the strongest student persistence and success outcomes, and aims to strengthen a culture of connection, consistency, and support across the college. She and her colleagues will present their practices during the St. Philip's College Professional Development Week in January 2026.

"I've had the opportunity to highlight strategies that foster engagement, belonging, and positive relationships, which directly contribute to student retention and long-term success," she said.

Caroline incorporates Caring Campus principles through early and consistent communication. She greets students at the door or online, learns their names, and personally reaches out when someone appears disengaged or misses class. Weekly announcements, reminders, and standardized course modules help

students know what to expect.

She conducts early check-ins during the second week of class, providing gentle reminders before deadlines, and offering feedback that begins with strengths before moving to areas for improvement. She calls her office hours "Getting to Know You Sessions" to reduce anxiety and reinforce that cybersecurity is a skill that can be learned through practice.

That support is critical in cybersecurity, a field that can feel intimidating to newcomers tackling advanced labs, technical writing, team projects, and professional presentations. To reduce pressure and build confidence, she uses real-world scenarios, small-group discussions, and a boardwalk-style gallery walk that allows students to share work, review peers' submissions, and exchange feedback.

"These approaches help students feel safe asking questions, making mistakes, and experimenting in hands-on lab environments," she said. "When students feel supported and know their instructor is invested, they are more likely to persist through challenges and become confident in mastering cybersecurity concepts

St. Philip's College Surgical Technology Program Director and Professor Marc Aguinaga believes student success starts with connection.

Professor Aguinaga has been a Surgical Technologist for almost 30 years, in education for 12 years, and at St. Philip's College for 3 years in January 2026. He is among the faculty members participating in the new Caring Campus initiative, launched at the beginning of the Fall 2025 semester. The effort, developed by a group of 20 to 30 instructors selected for their high student persistence and success rates, aims to create a culture of support by training faculty to foster engagement and a sense of belonging in the classroom.

For Professor Aguinaga, that means starting with something simple: conversation. On the first day of class, he gives students four icebreaker questions: "Who are you? Why are you here? What scares you? What brings you joy?". These

four questions help him to learn more about the student's motivations and challenges.

"Based on their responses, we're able to identify where students might need support," Professor Aguinaga said. "When they share their fears, we can help them develop coping skills. And when they share their goals, we can remind them of what drives them."

He says these small moments can make a lasting impact. "Many moons ago, someone did the same for me," he said. "That one phone call gave me the motivation to finish the semester and complete my degree. Now, I'm paying it forward."

To keep his early morning students energized, he even sets up a coffee cart before class. "We start clinicals at 6 a.m.," he said with a laugh. "A little coffee and conversation go a long way."

Recently, Professor Aguinaga



experienced what he calls a "full-circle moment." While at the hospital with his wife for a scheduled surgery, he was cared for by a former student. "She said, 'You took care of me once, and now I can take care of you,'" he recalled. "That's what this work is all about."

SPC Students Showcased at La Villita



Shown here from left in front row: St. Philip's College Baking and Pastry Students Brian Brown, Cornelius Taylor, Ray Villegas, Catherin Lewanski, Valarie Eggar, Hannah Schmidt, Desiree Rivera, Lydia Grafton, and Paula Solorzano. Shown here from left in back row: Chef and Délice Chocolatier & Patisserie San Antonio Co-owner Nacho Aguirre, Chef and Entrepreneur Johnny Hernandez, St. Philip's College Alumnus and Johnson Brothers' Bakery Supply Operations Manager Vivianne Villanueva, Chef and Délice Chocolatier & Patisserie San Antonio Co-owner Susana Mijares, St. Philip's College Chef Instructor Cynthia De La Fuente, St. Philip's College Department Chair Frank Salinas, St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston, and St. Philip's College Dean for Academic Success, Applied Science & Technology – MLK Edith Orozco.



St. Philip's College (SPC) celebrated its historic roots and student talent on Dec. 13 with the dedication of the 2nd Annual Winter Village at La Villita.

The event showcased four student-built holiday houses, highlighting the college's Construction Technology program. Two of the houses were constructed by SPC Construction Technology students, while the remaining two were created by the college's P-TECH students from Lanier High School and Bandera High School. In addition, SPC Welding Technology students designed a sit-in sleigh complete with reindeer, further showcasing their craftsmanship and creativity.

The event also highlighted the SPC Baking and Pastry program as four teams of three students, the Sugar Trio, Snow Laughing Matter, the Tres Vets, and Wicked Bakers, competed in a gingerbread contest led by Chef Instructor and Program Director Cynthia De La Fuente.

Gingerbread judging began at 4 p.m., followed by opening remarks at 5 p.m. from Chef Johnny Hernandez, who thanked sponsors and introduced St. Philip's College President Dr. Adena Williams Loston. Dr. Loston formally dedicated the Winter Village, marking the historic site where the college was founded 127 years ago, in an 18x18 classroom in the front room of the St. Philip's Rectory next door to the Little Church of La Villita.

"What began here in 1898 as a vocational day school has grown into a multi-campus institution serving more than 21,000 students across more than 30 workforce programs," Dr. Loston said, noting the significance of La Villita, the college's original home.

Rene Capistran, President and CEO of Noble Construction, also offered remarks, followed by a presentation recognizing SPC students and instructors. The Winter Village offered visitors a holiday celebration of craftsmanship, culinary arts, and the legacy of St. Philip's College.





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Proceeds from CultureFest help fund student scholarships.

St. Philip's College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award certificates, associate degrees, and a baccalaureate degree. St. Philip's College also may offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of St. Philip's College may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website (www.sacscoc.org).

Upcoming Events

For more information on upcoming events and to receive the latest information on campus announcements follow us on social media.



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