



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Palo Alto College celebrates graduates at 31<sup>st</sup> annual commencement ceremony**

Alamo Colleges District-Palo Alto College will celebrate students' academic achievements at the annual Spring Commencement ceremony at 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 19, at Freeman Coliseum. More than 800 students are expected to walk the stage to accept nearly 1,600 degrees and certificates collectively from the 2017-2018 academic year, including the College's first group of graduating students from early college high schools.

In 2014, Palo Alto College launched four early college high school partnerships (Frank L Madla Early College High School, Southside A.C.E.S. Early College High School, S.T.E.M. Early College High School, and Zacharias Early College Leadership Academy) allowing students to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and up to 60 college credit hours toward an associate or bachelor degree. Fast forward to spring 2018, more than 200 ECHS graduates will now cross the stage during the college's graduation ceremony to celebrate earning their associate degree before receiving their diploma from their respective high schools.

Palo Alto College will also celebrate the achievements of more than 40 students from the college's Adult Learning Academy who have successfully completed their high school equivalency preparation and testing (commonly known as GED).

Distinguished guests will be recognized during the ceremony, including Dr. Carmen Tafolla, who will receive an honorary degree, the 21<sup>st</sup> honorary degree approved by the Alamo Colleges District. Honorary degrees are awarded based on achievements that exemplify the mission and vision of the Alamo Colleges District. As the 2015 Poet Laureate of the State of Texas and the Inaugural City Poet Laureate of San Antonio from 2012-2014, Dr. Tafolla is an award-winning poet, storyteller, performance artist and author of more than 30 books.

Delivering the keynote address will be Erika Prosper Nirenberg, Director of Customer Insights for H-E-B and First Lady of San Antonio. Growing up as a migrant in the Rio Grande Valley, much of Prosper Nirenberg's passion revolves around efforts to help improve quality of life among underserved populations through girls and women empowerment, arts education, and literacy.

Since 2013, Palo Alto College has honored a former student during its annual commencement ceremony for exhibiting professional achievement, community service, and support of education. Palo Alto College's 2018 Outstanding Former Student award will be presented to Steve R. Alaniz, CEO of Momentum Physical Therapy, which has 16 locations across four states.

Palo Alto College, part of the Alamo Colleges District, is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The College has been a recipient of the 2015 Texas Award for Performance Excellence, a finalist for the 2016 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and named to the top ten finalists for the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. With over 10,000 students, Palo Alto College is accredited to offer associate degrees and short-term certificates. The College is located on the south side of San Antonio at 1400 W. Villaret Blvd. at I-410 and Texas Hwy 16 and online at [alamo.edu/pac](http://alamo.edu/pac).

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