SAN DIEGO CITY COLLEGE TO AWARD 1,700 DEGREES & CERTIFICATES
Friday, May 20 | 5:00 p.m. | Balboa Park

San Diego (May 13, 2016) — San Diego City College will hold its 2016 Commencement at the outdoor Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park on Friday, May 20 at 5:00 p.m.

Of the nearly 1,100 associate degrees and 600 certificates awarded, the most popular disciplines among the graduates include the liberal arts and sciences, behavioral sciences, biology, psychology, nursing education and business administration.

More than one-third of the 1,400 graduates will graduate with Honors (3.50-3.74 GPA), High Honors (3.75-3.99) or Highest Honors (4.0 GPA). One hundred seventy students will receive two or more awards.

More than 400 graduates from ages 18 to 69 are expected to participate in the commencement activities.

• The most senior graduate is Virginia Elizabeth Hankammer, age 69. Virginia Elizabeth will receive her associate degree for transfer in psychology and plans to pursue advanced studies at SDSU in the fall. Virginia Elizabeth said, “Coming to City College was the best decision I made in my life as City students always have the emotional and academic support they need to achieve their goals”.

• The most junior graduate is Talia Wiles, age 18. Talia will receive her associate of science degree and a certificate of achievement with high honors in cosmetology. She plans to transfer to SDSU to obtain her master’s in business administration. Talia said, “The Cosmetology program at San Diego City College has allowed me to learn many different skills and to realize my true passion of serving people in any way that I can”.

• The graduates include 125 active duty or veteran military personnel. San Diego City College has earned all three Military Friendly designations, the Military Friendly® Employer, Military Spouse Friendly Employer®, and Military Friendly School® designation by Victory Media, publisher of G.I.Jobs® and Military Spouse.

• City College graduates come from across the country, including Colorado, Hawaii, New York, and Washington and from around the globe, including as far away as Germany and Liberia.
STUDENT SPEAKERS
Laura Benavidez, the City College Associated Students Government president, is the student commencement speaker. Laura, 30, also serves as one of three student trustees on the San Diego Community College District’s governing board and as a peer educator with the college Mental Health Counseling Department. Off campus, Laura is a program coordinator at LifeSTEPS, and volunteers with community organizations such as the National Conflict Resolution Center and the San Diego Compassion Project. In March, Laura was honored for her exemplary leadership by Assembly Speaker Emeritus Toni Atkins at the 78th Assembly District Women of the Year luncheon.

Laura is graduating with an associate of arts degree in Chicano Studies, sociology, and communication studies with plans to continue her studies in the fields of education or political science. Graduating is a family affair for Laura as her sister, Matilde Gutierrez, 24, will also be receiving her diploma on May 20. They are the first in their family to graduate from college.

FACULTY OF THE YEAR – GOLDEN APPLE AWARD
Linda Ocen-Odoge, professor of nursing was selected by her students to receive the Golden Apple Award for Faculty of the Year. Linda earned a bachelor’s of science in nursing from Chicago State University in Chicago, Illinois, a master’s of science in maternal-child health nursing from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, and a family nurse practitioner certificate from the University of California San Diego

Since 1989, Linda has been full-time faculty member at City College, teaching didactic/clinical instruction to RN students in Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Medical-Surgical nursing. She also supervised students in the clinical setting at Naval Medical Center SD, Sharp Memorial, Kaiser, Scripps Green and Scripps Mercy Hospital. Prior to teaching, Linda was a Surgical Unit Charge Nurse and a Labor and Delivery Staff Nurse at Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois. A mother to 3 daughters, Susan also volunteers with AARP and Susan B. Komen.

In learning she had been named the Golden Apple Award recipient, Linda said she was “in shock for a few days”. In thanking her students, she shared, “I learn something new every day from my students! I truly love my job and I am grateful that I get paid, because I would probably teach for free.”

OUTSTANDING STUDENT
2016 New Century Scholar, All-California Academic First Team, All-USA Academic Team
Issanna Loughman, 32, is one of just 20 students from more than 1,900 nominations selected for the 2016 All-USA Community College Academic Team. The All-USA Community College Academic Team recognizes high achieving two-year college students who demonstrate academic excellence and intellectual rigor combined with leadership and service that extends their education beyond the classroom to benefit society. Issanna was also named a 2016 Coca-Cola New Century Scholar for receiving the highest application score in California

Issanna received a $5,000 scholarship from the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society for making the All-USA Team and a $2,000 scholarship as a New Century Scholar. The All-USA honors were presented to Issanna and City College President Anthony Beebe at the Presidents Breakfast during the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Convention in Chicago in April. She and the other 19 team members are also featured in a special edition wrap that accompanied today’s USA TODAY.
“We’re so proud of Issanna, as she personifies the academic excellence our students work to achieve,” Beebe said. “Her accomplishments speak volumes about the quality of our faculty and the academic programs at San Diego City College.”

Issanna overcame many challenges in her journey, including a degenerative disc disease that left her unable to walk for year and required spine surgery.

Issanna, a psychology major, is on the dean’s list with a 3.94 GPA and has been inducted into two national honor societies: Psi Beta and Phi Theta Kappa. A dedicated community volunteer, she has created multiple outreach programs including the Hart Healing Art Project for therapeutic art activities, the Vida Joven Preschool Program to help orphaned preschoolers in Mexico, and a college psychology and alcohol and other drug studies tutoring program. Issanna is transferring to UCSD to earn a B.A. in developmental psychology and a doctorate in clinical psychology so she can offer therapy to children with mental illness and conduct research to support positive policy change concerning the treatment of children in residential psychiatric care.

In reflecting on her recent honors, Issanna shared, “I never thought I was smart enough to be an honors student or transfer to a four-year college, but by being at San Diego City College I have been able to do things I never thought possible. I am so grateful to have earned a place on the All-USA academic team and represent City College, because in my opinion there is no better place to go to school than here.”

Middle: All-USA Community College Academic Team Member and 2016 New Century Scholar, Issanna Loughman, San Diego City College
L: Charles Klein, Nevada/California Regional Coordinator for Phi Theta Kappa, and Math Instructor, De Anza College
R: Brice Harris, Chancellor, California Community Colleges | Community College League Awards, Sacramento, CA. 3.24.16

• If inclement weather, 2016 Commencement will be held in the San Diego City College Harry West Gymnasium at 1480 Park Boulevard.

About San Diego City College: Founded in 1914, San Diego City College celebrated its 100th Anniversary in 2014. Serving as the educational cornerstone of downtown San Diego, City College offers 200 degrees, 500 certificates, and 1,800 classes. City College is part of the San Diego Community College District, comprised of City College, Mesa College, Miramar College, and Continuing Education. For more information, visit: www.sdcity.edu. For graduation information: www.sdcity.edu/graduation.