

THE PAW PRINT • FALL 2025

# TURNING *Over A* NEW LEAF

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College of the Canyons Associated Student Government







cheers to a festive fall semester 🍷



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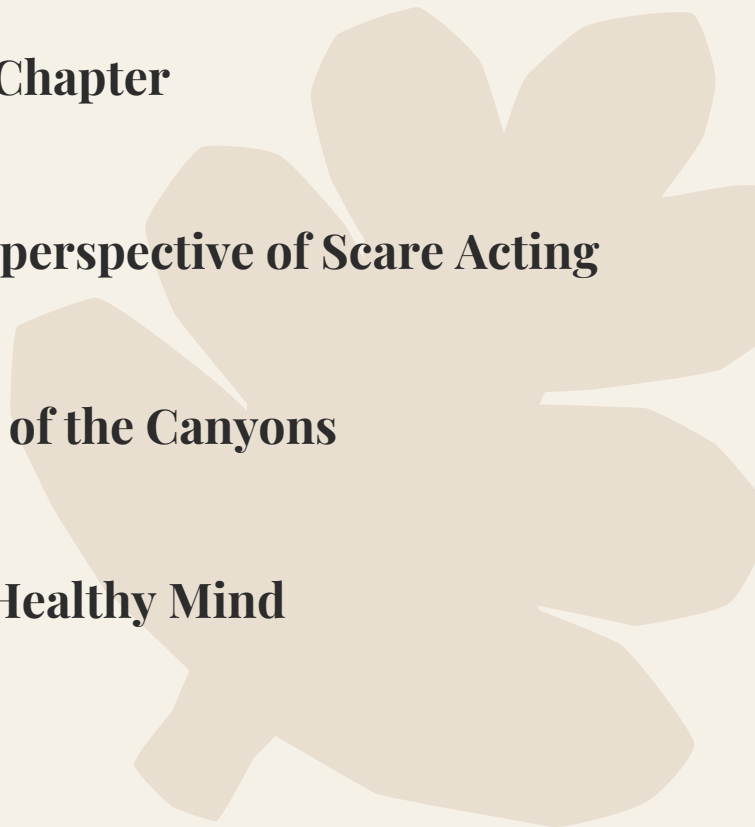
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# A *Letter* From the Editor

WORDS BY AVA HERNANDEZ

**D**ear Reader,

This Fall semester has reminded me that courage comes in many forms and that strength can look different from one day to the next. I have definitely relied on both while navigating a season of significant change for our school and community.

With that in mind, I aimed to create an edition that would be engaging and inviting, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in meaningful stories and step away from their daily stresses.

I am incredibly grateful for the 2025 Fall Paw Print Team. Our Staff Writers have really put so much effort and time into writing, even while balancing demanding moments (e.g., college applications...eek!). Our Graphic Designer has also made this edition look so sleek and appealing to read! I hope that every person who has taken the time to read this year's publication has a wonderful holiday break!





# Meet the *Team*

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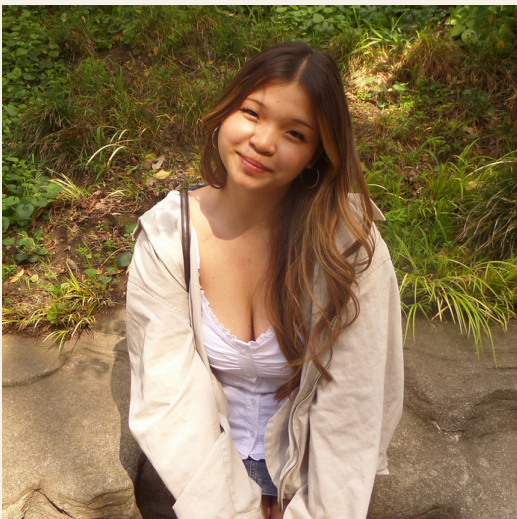
## **Joshua De Jesus - Graphic Designer**

Hi! I'm Joshua De Jesus, your ASG Paw Print graphic artist! Currently, I am in my 1<sup>st</sup> year at COC as a full time student, but I have taken classes before as a dual-enrolled high school student! My major is biology, and I am interested in going into the healthcare field. As the graphic artist, I aim to express my creativity in arranging everything in this newsletter, hope you enjoy!



## **Jordan Wheeler - Staff Writer**

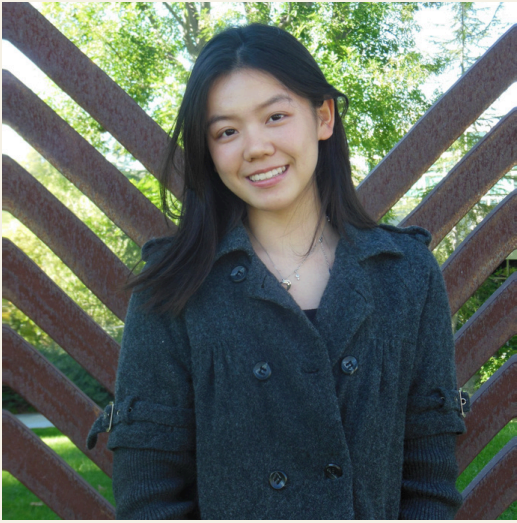
Hello everyone! I'm Jordan Wheeler, and I am a first-year student here at COC majoring in psychology. Writing has always been a fun hobby of mine, which means participating in school events, competitions, or journaling. I've had a fantastic first semester being a member of the Paw Print, and I cannot wait for an even better Spring semester.



## **Chrislynn Quach - Assistant to VP of Communications**

Hi everyone! I'm Chrislynn Quach and this is my first year here at COC. I'm a liberal arts and sciences major with an emphasis in health sciences. I love being behind the scenes of our social media content and creating entertaining engagement for/with students here on campus. I'm excited to share the next incoming projects with everyone, and don't forget to follow our social media!





### **Ariel Wang - Staff Writer**

Hi everyone! I'm Ariel Wang, a second-year international student here at COC majoring in Business Economics. I grew up in China, and this is my second year studying in the U.S. I really enjoyed my time here, and one of my favorite parts is sharing the stories that make our community special. As a staff writer for ASG Paw Print, I'm excited to bring you articles about everything happening on campus and around our city. Turning over a new leaf-let's open the 2025 Fall Paw Print together!



### **Jake Stokes - Social Media Editor**

Hi everyone, my name is Jacob Stokes, and I am your Social Media Editor. My job involves managing the COC ASG social media account and creating content for it. Additionally, through our Social Media Spotlight system, I can highlight many club and department events that are taking place. We hope you enjoy reading and follow us on our social media channels at @coc\_asg!



### **Nicole Figueroa**

Hi! I'm Nicole Figueroa, majoring in Paralegal Studies and Real Estate. My position is staff writer at the ASG. It's very important to me to be a part of College of the Canyons throughout my journey towards my career. I hope you enjoy reading the Fall 2025 PawPrint!

**follow  
our  
social media!**

SCAN THE QR CODE





# CicLAvia: *Los Angeles* On Two Wheels

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WORDS BY JORDAN WHEELER

**F**rom its first event in 2010 to the present day, CicLAvia (sic-lah-VEE-uh) has become the largest open-streets event in the United States. The event promotes active transportation by closing certain streets to cars so that people can safely walk, bike, and run—essentially, Angelenos are encouraged to take to the streets and transform them into a public bike path.

Over the past 15 years, CicLAvia has hosted an estimated 1.8 million attendees who have traversed more than 300 miles of open street. Beyond fostering community and nurturing health, these events also help improve LA's air quality by encouraging residents to reduce their carbon footprint.



Fig 1. Downtown Crossing



On October 12th, my friend and I, wanting to experience the event for ourselves, participated in CicLAvia's 63rd ride, which marked the organization's 15th anniversary. Our route started at MacArthur Park, one of LA's historic monuments, fed by natural springs and home to many adorable geese. We began on West 7th Street and cut our way into Downtown LA.

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*“It was uncanny to bike past the imposing skyscrapers on a carless street, yet a blast to take in the sights and a refreshing break from the constant traffic.”*

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Fig 2. Open Streets

We took a left on Broadway, and after some more pedaling, we reached our destination in Chinatown. We grabbed lunch and browsed a tourist store. I even haggled with a store owner who assured me the bamboo plant she was selling would bring good luck. Though my friend has seemed to be less superstitious than I, no ill-luck has befallen me since I purchased it. Tired but satisfied, we retraced our route and made our way home in the early afternoon.

CicLAvia's last event this year was on Sunday, November 23rd. The route was Melrose Ave, known for its boutiques, trendy restaurants, and street art. They had partnered with Netflix to promote the release of Stranger Things season 5 on the 26th. So if you're looking for something new and exciting during the holidays, or next year I encourage you to hit the streets of LA and roll on through.



# Stranger Things 5: *The Final* Chapter

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WORDS BY ARIEL WANG

**R**eady to head back to '80s Hawkins, chased by monsters from the Upside Down?

Stranger Things—Netflix’s most-watched English-language series—is returning with its final season in November 2025. It is a sci-fi/horror drama that centers on a group of young friends who witness supernatural forces and secret government experiments in their town Hawkins.

Stranger Things 5 kicks off in the fall of 1987 with Hawkins scarred by the opening of the Rifts. And our heroes united by a single goal: find and kill Vecna (The “boss” monster).



Fig 3. Stranger Things



**Here are some things we need to know for Stranger Things 5:**

**What are the release dates for Stranger Things 5?**

Netflix is expecting the show to dominate the holiday season: The first four episodes premiere over Thanksgiving, the next three at Christmas and the finale on New Year's Eve.

Volume 1: November 26, 2025 (4 episodes)

Volume 2: December 25, 2025 (3 episodes)

Volume 3 (Finale): December 31, 2025 (1 episode)



Fig 4. Stranger Things BTS - The Duffer Brothers

**What are the Stranger Things 5 episodes?**

Season 5 will consist of a total of eight episodes.

Episode 1: "The Crawl" – 1 hour and 8 minutes

Episode 2: "The Vanishing Of..." – 54 minutes

Episode 3: "The Turnbow Trap" – 1 hour and 6 minutes

Episode 4: "Sorcerer" – 1 hour and 23 minutes

Episode 5: "Shock Jock"

Episode 6: "Escape From Camazotz"

Episode 7: "The Bridge"

Episode 8: "The Rightside Up"



Fig 5. Stranger Things Cast



### **Who will be in 'Stranger Things' season 5?**

Luckily for us, the majority of the main cast in Season 4 were alive and present in the final season. This includes Millie Bobby Brown (Eleven), Finn Wolfhard (Mike), Caleb McLaughlin (Lucas), Gaten Matarazzo (Dustin), Noah Schnapp (Will), Priah Ferguson (Erica), Natalia Dyer (Nancy), Charlie Heaton (Jonathan), Maya Hawke (Robin), Joe Keery (Steve), David Harbour (Hopper), and Winona Ryder (Joyce). Some new cast members who will join the final season include Nell Fisher, Jake Connelly, and Alex Breaux.

### **What did the Creators say?**

The Stranger Things 5 creators

Duffer Brothers have spent more than 10 years on creating the series. Ross Duffer told Variety: “We’re trying to put 100% energy in just making sure we land this plane. So no thought is going elsewhere at the moment.” Matt Duffer added, “It’s going to be different than what anyone is expecting, including Netflix.” This is very intriguing indeed.

We can know that this final season will turn the world of Hawkins upside down once again. Get ready, because when the lights start flickering, you will know it's time.



# Boo!—a detailed, *first-person perspective* of Scare Acting

WORDS BY AVA HERNANDEZ

**O**n the night before I moved to Santa Clarita, I kept sobbing on the floor of my childhood home, upset about leaving the town where I had grown up and frustrated by months of unsuccessful job applications. I have always been so sentimental, and change (even good change) can be hard for me at first. I went to the bathroom to wash my swollen, crying face, and I caught my reflection in the mirror. My appearance resembled Regan MacNeil from *The Exorcist* a little too accurately, which made me laugh. Somehow, my eerie reflection snapped me out of my self-pity and inspired me to find creativity in my lowest moments. That night, I submitted one last application as a Scare Actor, then I went back on the floor, oddly comforted, and fell asleep.

I found my first sense of community in the Santa Clarita Valley when I was selected as a Maze Ghoul for Six Flags Fright Fest. Until then, my life had been full of structured performances, such as competing in the marching band and playing the flute for film gigs. None of these experiences can compare to the pure adrenaline when chasing after people with my prop chainsaw. Scaring became my lifeline. Every chase through the maze was an experiment: how to move





silently, building suspense, and reading through every guest you encounter when performing. My first season was full of mistakes, and it took months to develop an effective scaring style. Yet, with every night, my adaptability and confidence grew, and by the end of the season, I was honored as the Maze Ghoul Scare Actor of the Year.

I recently completed my second year at Fright Fest, where I was a clown for their brand-new 2025 maze, as well as Amanda Young in SAW and Sam from Trick 'r Treat. Though I may step away from Fright Fest due to other life priorities, scare acting remains a lasting part of how I approach the world with an innovative outlook. In difficult times, I recall that first night, when I saw the haunting reflection of myself in the mirror, as a reminder that I can continue to adapt and thrive even in the darkest moments.



Fig 6. Carnage Maze



# *Umoja Community* at College of the Canyons

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WORDS BY NICOLE FIGUEROA

**T**he Umoja Community at College of the Canyons (COC) is a transformative program dedicated to enhancing the cultural and educational experiences of Black and African American students while welcoming all students who value culturally enriched learning. Umoja—meaning unity in Swahili—serves as a powerful support system grounded in community, cultural relevance, and academic excellence.

## **A New Chapter: COC's Black/African American Student Success Program**

As COC expands its commitment to equity and inclusion, the Umoja Community now serves as the college's central Black/African American student success program. The program combines culturally responsive teaching, academic counseling, mentoring, and community-building activities to support students holistically—academically, socially, and personally.

Through this enriched support structure, Umoja students become three times more likely to earn a degree and transfer to a four-year university, according to statewide Umoja Community Education Foundation data. This success rate reflects the power of culturally grounded learning environments that affirm identity and promote belonging.

## **Culturally Enriched and Student-Centered**

Culture is at the heart of the Umoja experience. Umoja faculty and staff incorporate African and African American cultural traditions, literature, history, and community engagement into their curriculum and programming. This approach not only deepens students' personal connections to their coursework but also strengthens their confidence, critical thinking, and leadership skills.

The learning environment is intentionally:

- Positive
- Family-oriented
- Supportive of all identities and backgrounds

Although Umoja centers the Black and African American experience, students of all ethnicities are welcome and embraced within the community.

## **Growth and Recognition: Umoja Expansion in Summer 2025**

Beginning in Summer 2025, the Umoja Community Education Foundation approved four new

community colleges, including College of the Canyons, to join the statewide Umoja network. This milestone recognizes COC's dedication to supporting students of color and expands access to Umoja programs across California.

With this addition, COC joins a powerful statewide movement that continues to change the landscape of community college education by keeping culture, unity, and support at its core.

## **Transfer Opportunities: A Pathway to HBCUs**

The Umoja Community is directly linked to the California Community Colleges Transfer Guarantee Pathway to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Students who complete designated requirements gain guaranteed admission to participate in HBCUs across the country.





### **This partnership offers Umoja Scholars:**

- Increased access to four-year universities
- Opportunities to explore culturally rich learning environments
- Support beyond COC as they transition into bachelor's degree programs

### **Experienced and Dedicated Staff**

The COC Umoja team is led by higher-education professionals committed to equity, mentorship, and student success:

- Anthony Morris
- Ciara Asberry
- Samantha McCray

Each member brings experience working with culturally responsive programs, academic counseling, and student engagement initiatives. Their combined expertise ensures that COC's Umoja Scholars Program remains grounded in the nine statewide Umoja Practices, which emphasize mentorship, community building, cultural pedagogy, and student empowerment.

Together, they are committed to helping students access the full range of Umoja benefits, including:

- Academic counseling
- Priority registration
- Umoja-designated courses
- Book vouchers
- Access to the Umoja Village Space
- Cultural events, workshops, and field trips

### **How to Join Umoja**

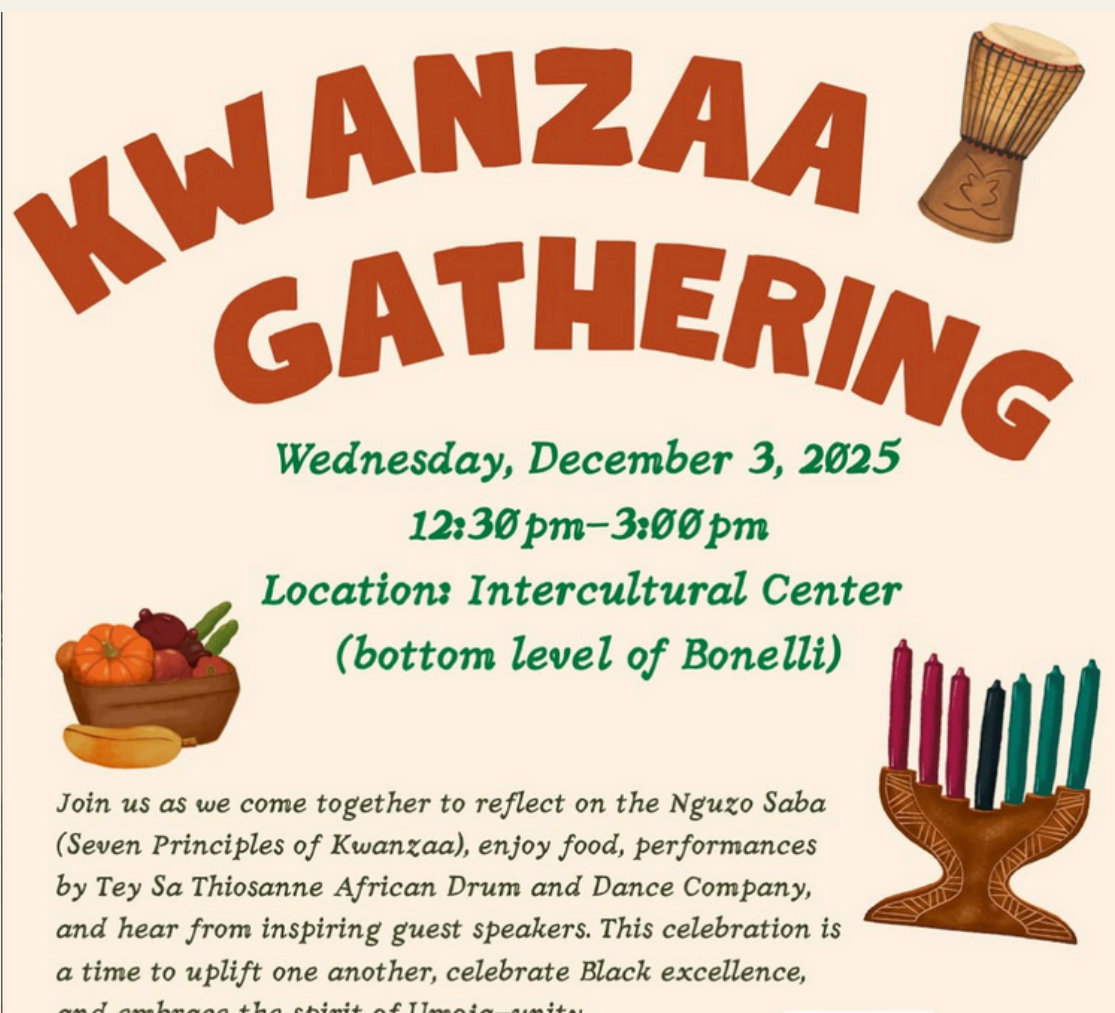
To participate in Umoja at COC, students must:

1. Complete the Umoja application
2. Attend the mandatory orientation
3. Meet regularly with an Umoja counselor
4. Stay engaged in the program
5. Enroll in Umoja-supported courses

### **Upcoming Events:**

The Umoja Community at COC hosts a variety of events designed to strengthen cultural identity, build community, and support academic success. An upcoming event will be:

- Kwanzaa Gathering  
Date: Wednesday, December 3, 2025  
Time: 12:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.



Join the Umoja Community as we celebrate Nguzo Saba — the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa. This gathering will feature food, live African drumming, and inspiring guest speakers as we reflect, uplift one another, and honor the beauty of Black culture and unity.

### **Learn More**

Students interested in joining the Umoja Community or learning about upcoming events can visit the COC Umoja website

or connect directly with the Umoja team for more information, counseling appointments, or program updates.

**Additional details can be found on the official COC Umoja webpage:**  
**<https://www.canyons.edu/student-services/counseling/Umoja-Community/index.php>**



# Thought and Language for a *Healthy Mind*

WORDS BY JORDAN WHEELER

Our daily lives are filled with symbols, and the interpretation of them is crucial in many ways. You understand the nuance of braking at a red light when you are driving; perhaps you have an understanding of musical notation and can perform a beautiful musical solo, or you can discern the three-part sequence of the symbols '5,' '6,' and '%' to understand why that's not good news for your midterm in general chemistry.

Of all symbolic systems, language is the most subtle yet complex system, and how we choose to interact with language in our thoughts is a key determinant of our wellbeing. I realized in my own life the drastic effect that the way we think with language has on our actions and beliefs.



Fig 8. Mental Health

To explore this, it helps to consider specificity and abstraction in language—that is, how narrowly or broadly we describe what we discuss. For example, the sentence “the cat is funny” is perfectly sufficient. If you imagine all the other terms that could replace the cat while still preserving meaning, you will build a ladder of abstraction. The higher you go on the rungs of the ladder, the more general the concept becomes. In this case, you could start at the top with “organism,” move down to “animal,” “feline,” “cat,” “cartoon cat,” “Garfield, the cartoon cat,” and finally “Garfield, the cartoon cat, in panel 3 of the June 1978 comic strip.” There are plenty more examples of what could be placed in between the rungs, but that is beside the point.

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*“While we rarely need such detail in our daily conversation, a principle stands: the more abstract our language is, the more we risk losing nuance or misrepresenting our reality.”*

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However, this isn't a call for extreme specificity at all times. Saying “Garfield is funny” is usually enough, and overexplaining can be tedious. There is an art to finding the right balance in communication; it usually stumbles if one leans too far in either direction. Poor storytellers often drown in specificity, while inept lecturers skim over crucial details.

The stakes are low when talking about cartoon cats, but they start to rise when we perceive people in our social groups. It seems obvious, but it's something that creeps up on you. I was having this same discussion with my friend, who then, while looking for an apt example, remarked, “So a Southerner might broadly apply racist assumptions to a certain group of people” —ironically, he had unknowingly applied a broad generalization to an immensely diverse social group. Language allows us to categorize, but these categories can distort our reality and heavily reinforce bias.

Fig 9. Jumbled Thoughts





Research supports this connection between language and perception. One study found that when participants were given verbal cues for objects whose visibility was suppressed, they detected them more quickly than without a verbal cue (Lupyan & Ward). If we habitually apply negative labels to someone or something, we are more likely to perceive these attributes, regardless of reality. Another study found that the amygdala—the part of the brain central to processing emotion—activates strongly when presented with “out-group” faces (Chekroud et al.). Through this habitual grouping, many people begin to build emotional, and at times illogical, responses to others.

However, the mind is like a muscle. You can train it in healthier ways compared to this neglect. Through cognitive reappraisal and repeated practice, we can reshape our emotional regulation (Denny & Ochsner). This highlights the vast capacity we have to reframe language and reshape thought.

Language is not only a tool for communication; it builds a framework for thought and perception. By choosing intentionally how we speak, challenging habitual labels, and balancing specificity in our communication, we allow for clearer thinking and healthier emotional responses. The way we speak shapes our perception and the world we live in; paying attention to our language is paying attention to our wellbeing.

# COC Students *Shine*

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WORDS BY ARIEL WANG

**O**ur COC Chapter performed extraordinarily at the 2025 State Fall Business Leadership Conference.

Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) is the largest business Career and Technical Student Organization in the world. It offers opportunities for leadership development, networking, and competitive events that test students' business knowledge and skills. The State Fall Business Leadership Conference (SFBLC), hosted by California FBLA Collegiate, is an annual premier event bringing together college students from across the state who share a passion for business and leadership.

On November 8–9, the College of the Canyons FBLA chapter led its largest delegation yet to the conference. Members participated in a full schedule of competitive events, workshops, and networking sessions. They proudly represent COC with professionalism and enthusiasm. The chapter competed in all major competitive categories, including Marketing Case Study, Finance Case Study, Hospitality Case Study, Entrepreneurship Pitch, and Public Speaking

**Weeks of preparation paid off as our members achieved outstanding results and brought home multiple awards:**

1st Place – Public Speaking: Amir Mojdeh

3rd Place – Public Speaking: Krish Singh

2nd Place – Marketing Case Study: Nathan Brown & Olivia Egstrom

3rd Place – Finance Case Study: Edgar Avakyan, Bjorn Bacon & Diego Trejo



**In addition to individual and team awards, the COC chapter also earned chapter awards:**

3rd Place-Greatest Membership Growth

2nd Place- Conference Attendance

### **A First-Person Perspective as an FBLA Officer**

As the Vice President of Marketing, I couldn't be prouder to see our members step onto the stage and showcase their hard work. We spent more than a month preparing. Me and other officers hosted case study workshops, shared insights from past conferences, and arranged carpools to make sure everyone could join. Watching our members grow, gain confidence, and support each other made our time in San Diego truly meaningful.

Our College of the Canyons chapter demonstrated dedication, teamwork, and passion throughout the whole event. The chapter's remarkable performance shines in this fall.

I'm already looking forward to the next and even bigger conference in San Francisco near the end of March. If you're interested in business, leadership, or simply want to challenge yourself, don't hesitate to reach out to me or any FBLA officer. We'd love any COC student to join us.



Fig 10. FBLA Conference





thank you for reading! 🐾



