



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Santa Ana College's 95th Commencement Honors Former Students Interned During World War II

(Santa Ana)—After a 69-year wait, Margaret Funakoshi Masuoka will finally achieve her lifelong dream of being awarded her associate degree from Santa Ana College, in Santa Ana, CA. Masuoka, an 89-year-old San Francisco resident, will be among the 1,800 graduates receiving a degree or a certificate from Santa Ana College this spring.

Attending Santa Ana College was an easy choice for Masuoka because her family owned the "Flower View Nursery and Flower Shop," located very close to the college. Likewise, her choice of studying botany was a natural. She was so committed to her studies that when she learned that her family was going to be sent to the Santa Anita Relocation Center, she quickly spoke with her professors and got them to agree for her to complete her studies by correspondence while in the Poston internment camp. She mentions taking more books than clothing with her when she went to the camp.

Masuoka vividly recalls her favorite professor coming to visit her at the Santa Anita center. She was on the inside of the barbed wire fence and her professor was on the outside. He said to her, "How sad. [There's a] fence between us." He then handed a small gift to her through the fence—a magnifying glass to help her identify the plant species she was studying.

The war ended. She married her husband David, had daughter Susan and son James. She worked as a Kelly Girl and enjoyed travels. She proudly proclaims that she climbed Mt. Whitney and Mt. Fuji, but she never got her college diploma. "Every time, I heard a graduation march, I would get goose bumps because I couldn't walk and get my diploma." On May 20, her entire family will be there to applaud her as she gets to make that walk.

After an extensive search for former Santa Ana College students eligible for honorary degrees under the California Nisei College Diploma Project, the college will also present honorary degrees to 20 individuals in the 6:30 p.m. ceremony. Three former students are expected to attend to be publicly honored. They are 88-year-old Tom Tamio Furukawa of Monrovia, 93-year-old Masao Frank Masuda of Fountain Valley, and 89-year-old Kazuo Nobuko Sato of Tustin. Another seven will be represented by family members who will receive posthumous diplomas honoring their loved ones. Ten honorary degrees will be sent to former students or their family members who are unable to attend.

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[AB 37](#), which became law on October 11, 2009, requires California's public college and university systems – University of California, California State University and California Community Colleges – to retroactively grant an honorary degree to any student of Japanese American descent, living or deceased, who was forcibly removed and subsequently incarcerated during World War II.

“The high point of every academic year is seeing the joy of achievement on the faces of our graduates,” said Erlinda J. Martinez, Ed.D., Santa Ana College president. “These honorary degrees are our college’s opportunity to honor our former students who didn’t have the chance to finish what they started so long ago at Santa Ana College. We recognize their sacrifice and look forward to welcoming them to what will always be their college.”

More than 5,000 people, including 500 graduates, friends and families, are expected to attend the commencement ceremony on May 20 at Eddie West Field in Santa Ana. Among the graduates will be 16 Middle College High School graduates who will receive both their high school diplomas and associate degrees this spring paving their way to transfer to universities.

The Class of 2011 valedictorian is Donald Cluff, a 24-year-old resident of Santa Ana. He graduates with an associate degree in liberal arts with an emphasis in social and behavioral sciences and a grade point average of 4.0. Cluff has applied to the University of Southern California, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of California, Berkeley with admission decisions still pending at all three.

Cluff completed five years of honorable service in the Marine Corps as an avionics technician and work center supervisor, as well as a Marine Corps Martial Arts Program instructor at Miramar in San Diego, CA. He rose through the ranks quickly, earning the rank of Sergeant just halfway through his enlistment. His deployments include one tour to Iraq from 2006-2007 and one onboard aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis in 2009.

Note: The Nisei Diploma Project honorees will begin arriving at Eddie West Field, 602 N. Flower St., Santa Ana on May 20 at 5:30 p.m. Please contact Judy Iannaccone at (714) 480-7503 (office) or (714) 222-4777 (mobile) to arrange for interviews.

About Santa Ana College

Part of Rancho Santiago Community College District, Santa Ana College serves nearly 35,000 credit and non-credit students each semester and offers 136 certificate and associate degree programs. This mission of the Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) is to respond to the educational needs of an ever-changing community and to provide programs and services that reflect academic excellence. Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College are public community colleges of RSCCD, which serves the residents of Anaheim Hills, East Garden Grove, Irvine, Orange, Santa Ana, Tustin and Villa Park. Both colleges provide education for academic transfer and careers, courses for personal and professional development, customized training for business and industry, and programs to train nurses, firefighters and law enforcement personnel.

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