



# INSTRUCTION INSIGHTS NEWSLETTER

March 2025

## Celebrating Success, Creativity, and a Well-Deserved Break!

As we head into spring, there's plenty to celebrate in the SBVC community! From the incredible achievements of our Arts & Humanities Division to the well-deserved tenure of our dedicated faculty, our campus continues to thrive with creativity and excellence. This month, we shine a spotlight on Mandi Batalo and the Gresham Gallery, a vital space that enriches our students and community through art and cultural events, as well as Amy Mills, whose dedication and impact continue to inspire. Plus, with spring break just around the corner, we want to know—how are you planning to spend your time off? Whether you're relaxing, traveling, or catching up on projects, we hope you take time to recharge for the rest of the semester!

*Congratulations!*

### Congratulations to Our Newly Tenured Faculty at SBVC!

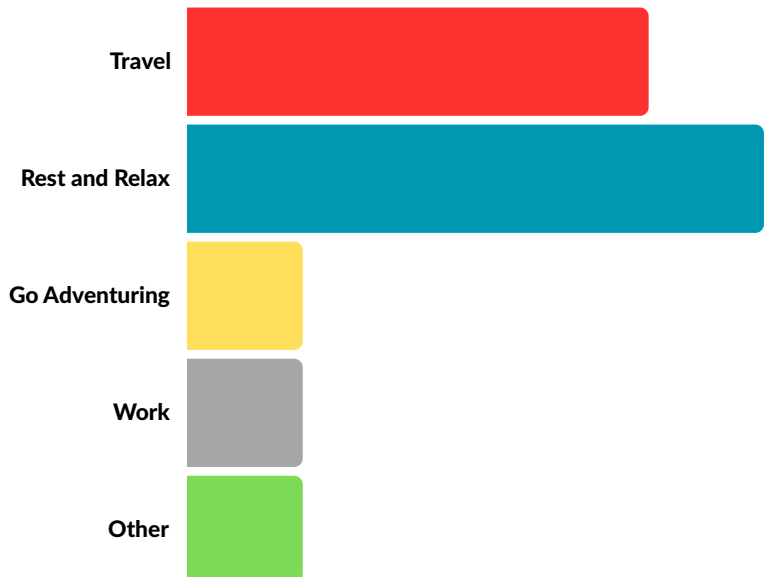
**Join us at the Tenure Reception on April 25,  
2025 at 4:00 p.m. in the Art Gallery**

Leif Andersen - Science  
Thomas Berry - Arts & Humanities  
Espreo Foscolos - Science  
Rema Ghazaleh - Student Services  
Fernando Gomez - Science  
Michelle Jackson - Science  
Reshmi Kappattil - Science  
Thomas Lechuga - Science  
Edward Shea - Arts & Humanities  
Angela Vogel - Science  
Rangel Zarate - Arts & Humanities

## Spring Break!



**Relax, Recharge, or  
Explore - How Will  
You Spend Yours?**



### Here's what some faculty had to say about their Spring Break plans:

- Sllleeeeeeep!!!
- My wife and I are going to Iceland to try and see the Aurora Borealis. Hoping for clear skies and solar activity! We are also going to venture into a glacier.
- Work outside in my garden
- Self care: extra gym days, resting at a himilayan salt cave, reading, and visiting local bookstores!
- Traveling to Mexico City!
- Golf as much as humanly possible. Hopefully, take the metrolink into LA for some museums and food as well. DTLA Arts District has great stuff!
- Our family is finally taking a trip to Europe and we are all so excited.

# Cultivating Creativity

## HOW SBVC'S ARTS & HUMANITIES FACULTY TRANSFORM LEARNING

The Arts & Humanities Division here at SBVC is a vibrant and dynamic community committed to fostering creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. The division stands out for its diversity of faculty, the representation of diverse perspectives within the curriculum, and a deeply supportive and caring environment. Faculty members demonstrate unwavering dedication, continual innovation and persistence to ensure students receive a transformative educational experience. The faculty body is equally committed to supporting the campus body and system at large as evidenced by how they actively participate in and contribute to the shared-governance committees, campus committees, work groups, Curriculum, and Academic Senate.

Through cross-departmental collaboration and a willingness to go the extra mile, the Arts & Humanities faculty inspire students by exposing them to real-world opportunities such as internships, industry connections, and unique educational experiences. An example of cross-departmental/division collaboration is how the English department continues to support student poetry readings through the newly created event: The Lamore.

The students and faculty of the division continue to achieve remarkable successes. Here are a few examples demonstrating achievements and success. This semester, we welcomed 54 new Honors students, with 11 Honors students set to graduate. Another standout success is having one of our own Spanish 103 students recently accepted into the University of California, Riverside School of Medicine. The Theatre students experienced tremendous success at this year's Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Success included a scene from *Alice by Heart* being selected as one of only 5 scenes from both Region 7 and Region 8 (12 states competing), student Alexa Salinas being selected to compete in at Regionals for Stage Management and Jasmyne Wade will compete at the National Festival at The Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. in April. Jasmyne won the Aspire Arts Leadership Competition.

In the Film, Television, and Media (FTVM) program, Viviana Bivian's submission, *Ghoul-Be-Gone*, won the "Best of" Award in the 2025 Broadcast Education Association (BEA) Festival of Media Arts – Two-Year Colleges Competition. Meanwhile, our Art Department faculty and staff have successfully organized fundraisers that have secured two partnership positions for SBVC students at the prestigious Pilchuck Glass School this summer, as well as a coveted spot at the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina. The Gresham Galley hosts many events, such as Poetry Out Loud for high school students, Sound Baths and Gentle Yoga. The gallery has approximately 2,000 visitors per academic year.



***The newest member of the FTVM equipment family, a Grip Truck for state of the art, hands on, workforce relative lab experiences for students.***



***The Theatre Arts team ready to leave for Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in Arizona.***

Students in our division have access to a wealth of unique opportunities, including our student-journalists publishing their work in SBVC's own newspaper publication, in digital and print formats, invitations to the annual UCR Honors Conference, participation in the Mini Honors Conference hosted at SBVC, Speech and Debate Tournaments, and the opportunity to participate in the Foothill Consortium on Study Abroad. Our Theatre Department produces two major performances each year, including a musical.

Our English and Journalism students also have opportunities to publish their work in Phineas, our annually published literary journal. Events such as Wolverine Con, which drew a full house for the Route 66 Film Festival, further enrich our students' learning experiences by offering industry insights and exposure. Established in 2015, The Horror Film Festivals (in fall) and the International Film Festivals (in spring), continue to bring together faculty and staff from across the campus to engage our students and the community in fun and educational experiences. The list is long and goes on, but these examples demonstrate the efforts of the division faculty and staff in providing unique, engaging, and diverse learning experiences.

Beyond the classroom, the Arts & Humanities Division plays a critical role in supporting and preparing students for their academic success. Student support is provided through the Writing Center and embedded tutoring, with extended hours and online options available to support all student populations. The Arts & Humanities Division also plays a critical role in preparing students for their future careers. One example of this is through our participation in the Pathways to Success Grant.



***Students performing at Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.***

Looking ahead, we are excited about expanding our Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) and Open Educational Resources (OER) initiatives, as well as continuing to celebrate the success of our students in new and meaningful ways. As the role of Arts & Humanities in higher education evolves, especially at the community college level, we remain committed to providing an education that cultivates global citizenship and prepares students to navigate an ever-changing world.

Leading this dynamic, creative, and hard-working division is a privilege and an honor. The brilliance and talent of our faculty and staff make the work of leadership both rewarding and inspiring. Their evidence-based commitment to supporting students in both academic and real-world experiences, along with their genuine care for one another, strengthens our division and enhances the impact we have on our students' lives. Together, we continue to innovate, inspire, and create transformative educational experiences through the power of the arts and humanities. As we like to say and share often, the Arts & Humanities is the best division on campus. I can affirm, they are pretty fantastic and I am honored to be part of the greatness.



***Students networking and connecting at Meet the Pros event as part of Wolverine Con.***



# Faculty Spotlight

## Amy Mills -

### *Inspiring Growth Through Literature and Mindfulness*

At San Bernardino Valley College, dedicated educators play a vital role in shaping students' academic journeys. Among them is Amy Mills, a passionate English faculty member whose path to teaching was forged through resilience, mentorship, and an unwavering commitment to student success. From an early age, Amy knew she wanted to teach. She initially pursued a single-subject teaching credential with plans to work in secondary education but graduated during the recession, forcing her to rethink her path. She quickly pivoted, earning her master's degree in English while working as an embedded tutor at Fullerton College. It was there, under the guidance of an inspiring mentor, that she discovered her passion for community college education, a calling she now wholeheartedly embraces.

Amy joined SBVC as an adjunct instructor in Fall 2020 and transitioned to full-time faculty in Spring 2022. She primarily teaches English 101 and its corequisite 686, English 102, with honors sections for these courses. She has also taught English 151, Introduction to Literature, and plays a key role in the English 101 and 102 athletic cohort learning community, where she supports student-athletes by integrating their interests into coursework and accommodating their demanding schedules. Beyond teaching, Amy is an academic senator, co-advisor of Alpha Gamma Sigma, and an active participant in honors program events and campus book discussions.

Amy finds immense joy in hearing students' stories and witnessing their confidence grow. She views writing as a powerful medium for self-expression and connection, providing students with the opportunity to discover more about themselves while strengthening their communication skills. To further support students, she has incorporated mindfulness techniques into her classroom, helping them manage stress and enhance creativity. Her teaching philosophy is deeply influenced by two authors: Carol Dweck, whose book *Mindset* reshaped her approach to student learning, and Brené Brown, whose research on vulnerability and leadership transformed her perspective on teaching and personal growth.

A lesser-known fact about Amy? She is a devoted fan of the Eurovision Song Contest, hosting annual viewing parties and dreaming of attending the event in person. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her husband and two children, taking frequent trips to Legoland, and exploring independent bookstores. A dedicated reader, she humorously declares that "bookmarks are for quitters" and finds comfort in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Harry Potter*.

Amy's guiding advice to students: "Our best can look different every day." She encourages them to embrace growth, practice self-compassion, and understand that progress is not always linear. Through her dedication and enthusiasm, Amy Mills continues to inspire and uplift the SBVC community—one student at a time.





# Mandi Batalo and the Gresham Gallery

## ***CULTIVATING CREATIVITY AND COMMUNITY AT SBVC***

At San Bernardino Valley College, the Gresham Gallery serves as a vibrant hub for creativity, education, and community engagement. Under the leadership of art professor and gallery director Mandi Batalo, the gallery has evolved into a space that not only showcases high-quality art but also fosters student growth and well-being.

Batalo, alongside Gallery Curator Ian White, has worked to elevate the gallery's exhibitions to a level comparable to those found in major metropolitan museums. By bringing in thought-provoking, contemporary works, the gallery provides students with exposure to diverse artistic perspectives without having to travel outside the Inland Empire. Beyond visual impact, Batalo and faculty member Rania Hamdy have introduced programming that connects creativity with mental health. Monthly sound baths and gentle yoga sessions in the gallery space provide students, faculty, and staff with a sanctuary to relieve stress and build resilience. These initiatives highlight the therapeutic power of art in fostering emotional well-being.

The Gresham Gallery is an extension of SBVC's learning environment, enhancing the educational experience of students across disciplines. Batalo emphasizes that exhibitions align with educational goals, allowing students to engage with contemporary issues, explore new artistic techniques, and see their coursework come to life. In addition to professionally curated exhibitions, the gallery hosts an annual student art showcase and faculty exhibition. These events give students hands-on experience in presenting their work, helping them develop professionalism and confidence as emerging artists.

Batalo balances her role as a professor and gallery director by incorporating real-world arts management into her teaching. With the support of professional expert Chase Hanson and volunteer Kenia Cruz, the gallery continues to operate efficiently while providing students with opportunities to engage in arts leadership. Her recent completion of an M.A. in Arts Management and Entrepreneurship has strengthened her ability to mentor students in professional artistic practices. For those aspiring to enter the gallery scene, she offers practical advice: build a strong portfolio, present work professionally, network within the arts community, leverage campus opportunities, and remain committed to continuous growth.

The gallery's impact extends beyond SBVC, engaging with the broader local arts scene. Recent collaborations have included Poetry Out Loud, a national poetry recitation program, as well as art therapy workshops with Dr. Danielle Graham and the Psychology Club. Future events will include partnerships with faculty across disciplines, such as Professor Lucas Cuny's Wolverine Con and an Art/Biology Night with Professor Jennifer Flores. Additionally, the gallery will host an Alumni Mixer and a Tenure Reception in collaboration with Kia Harris Tattetrain and the SBVC Office of Development and Community Relations. As the Gresham Art Gallery continues to evolve, Batalo's leadership ensures that it remains a cornerstone of artistic and educational enrichment at SBVC, offering students and the community transformative experiences through art.



**Sound Bath**



**Screen Writing**



**Art Therapy**