



SBVC Partners with VARP to Expand Access to Higher Education for Justice-Impacted Individuals



San Bernardino Valley College and VARP representatives flash the “Valley Up” sign to celebrate their growing collaboration in support of justice-impacted individuals.

From left to right: Marco Cota (SBVC Dean of Counseling), Rosie Esparza (Interim Director of Financial Aid, SBVC), Dr. Gilbert J. Contreras (SBVC President), Yvonne Gutierrez-Sandoval (SBVC Vice President of Student Services), James Dettman (Business Development Specialist, VARP), Shelly Mattazaro (Executive Director, VARP), and Frank Dunn (SBVC Counselor, Rising Scholars Project). *The “Valley Up” sign symbolizes San Bernardino Valley College’s spirit of encouragement, transformation, and upward mobility for all students.* **Photo credit: Giovanni Elizarraraz.**

San Bernardino Valley College (SBVC) has launched a transformative partnership with VARP, Inc. (Veterans Alcoholic Rehabilitation Program), a leading nonprofit provider of substance abuse recovery services, to expand college access for individuals impacted by the justice system.

Through this collaboration, SBVC’s *Rising Scholars* program is working hand-in-hand with VARP to support prospective students with academic advising, enrollment assistance, and pathways into high-demand programs such as aviation, welding, and HVAC. The partnership creates a powerful bridge to opportunity for individuals navigating recovery and reentry.

“I am excited to see this partnership develop further as we continue to open doors and create pathways for every learner,” said SBVC President Dr. Gilbert Contreras. “Together with VARP, we are opening doors, removing barriers, meeting people where they are and helping them rise.”

The SBVC/VARP partnership features:

- **Quarterly visits by SBVC representatives** to VARP’s facilities to meet directly with participants and share the message that college is within reach.
- **Bimonthly campus tours** for VARP consumers, giving prospective students an immersive look at academic programs, student services, and campus life.
- **On-site presentations** by SBVC staff at VARP’s Gibson House facilities every two months, beginning in July.
- **Training for VARP Discharge Counselors** on key college application and enrollment processes, including the CCCApply application and FAFSA/Dream Act submissions.

On June 26, SBVC welcomed a cohort of prospective VARP students for its inaugural campus tour, where participants explored programs of interest and received college swag and refreshments.

Many of VARP’s staff and alumni are proud SBVC graduates.

Founded in 1979, VARP, Inc. is the largest substance abuse rehabilitation provider in San Bernardino, with nearly 200 individuals in treatment at any given time. Its programs—including the Gibson House for Men, Gibson House for Women, and Metcalf Recovery Ranch—span more than 20 residential facilities across San Bernardino and Blythe. With a diverse staff of certified counselors, doctors, and support professionals, VARP offers evidence-based recovery services in a safe, inclusive, and judgment-free environment.

For more information on VARP, visit www.varpinc.org.

For more information on SBVC’s Rising Scholars program, contact info@valleycollege.edu.