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NEWS RELEASE

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**Commencement Ceremonies at SFCC**

**SFCC Sees Highest For-credit Enrollment in College History**

**Santa Fe, NM, May 12, 2009** — More than 300 students will receive more than 340 degrees and certificates at Santa Fe Community College's graduation ceremony, held May 15 at 5 p.m. in the William C. Witter Fitness Education Center on the SFCC campus, 6401 Richards Ave.

This year's commencement ceremony caps off SFCC's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of serving students and signals the end of a dynamic academic year for the college, marked by burgeoning enrollment, forward-looking construction projects and a tightening budget.

In a sign that more students are looking to higher education as a means of overcoming tough economic times, SFCC has watched its for-credit enrollment rise to record levels, with more than 6,420 students enrolled in for-credit classes this spring.

"Our graduates are prepared to enter the local workforce with greater skills, energy and problem solving skills than ever before, because they have dedicated themselves to learning and re-tooling in these challenging times," said SFCC President Sheila Ortego. "They are the entrepreneurs, civic leaders, teachers, builders, medical professionals and more in our community. We could not be more proud of their accomplishments."

At this year's ceremony, 118 students will receive their Associate in Applied Science degree; 111 will receive certificates; and 86 will earn an Associate in Arts degree. Of the 305 graduates, 75 percent are female. The average age is 36, with ages ranging from 15 to 72. More than half of the graduates are minorities, with 41 percent white, 43 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Native American and less than 1 percent black.

In addition, SFCC retention rates have risen to figures above national averages. Between fall semester 2007 and 2008, the retention rate for first-time full-time degree seeking students at SFCC was 62 percent, which is higher than both state and national averages, according to SFCC administrators.

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The graduation ceremony features a keynote speech by award-winning author David Morrell. A former professor of American literature at the University of Iowa, Morrell has written 28 books, including novels of international intrigue like “The Fifth Profession,” “Assumed Identity” and “Extreme Denial.” Morrell, who lives in Santa Fe, is the author of “First Blood,” the 1972 novel that gave birth to the infamous Rambo character and a string of blockbuster films. His best-selling novel, “The Brotherhood of the Rose,” was the basis for the 1989 NBC miniseries that premiered after the Super Bowl.

SFCC graduate Estevan Archibeque, 20, will deliver the student speech. While pursuing his associate’s degree in General Studies at SFCC, Archibeque has earned high marks not only in his academic studies, but also for his generosity and energy, as well as for his extra-curricular work with SFCC’s Student Ambassador and Aspire Club programs. The Capital High School graduate will attend University of New Mexico in the fall where he plans to study architecture and civil engineering.

For those unable to attend in person, the graduation ceremony will air on SFCTV Comcast 16.

Earlier in the day, at 1 p.m. on May 15, SFCC’s Nursing Education Program holds its annual pinning ceremony, in which 23 student nurses will be honored with graduate nursing pins. The ceremony takes place in the William C. Witter Fitness Education Center. According to the nursing department, all of the graduates are moving into professional nursing careers. The program boasts a 91 percent student pass rate which is higher than both the state and national average, according to the program.

**About Santa Fe Community College**

For more than 25 years, Santa Fe Community College has been the gateway to success for individuals and the community by providing affordable, high quality educational programs that serve the social, cultural, technological and economic needs of a diverse community. The college serves more than 14,500 students per year in its credit, noncredit and adult basic education programs. For further information, visit [www.sfccnm.edu](http://www.sfccnm.edu) or call (505) 428-1000.

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