



January 2026

Program in Focus: Rising Scholars/IGNITE

Overview

Santa Rosa Junior College's Rising Scholars/Second Chance programs provide a comprehensive pathway for justice-impacted students, from courses inside local detention facilities to holistic support on campus. This update highlights the program's growth, the role of Rising Scholars Network grant funding, the expansion of IGNITE course offerings at the Main Adult Detention Facility and Juvenile Hall, and the powerful impact on students' lives as illustrated by student success stories.

On-Campus Support

Second Chance began in 2005 within EOPS, modeled after a similar program at City College of San Francisco that supported formerly incarcerated students. It initially operated as an informal group of staff committed to serving justice-impacted students and later evolved into a student club. The program gained significant momentum in 2015–16 with dedicated counseling support. In Fall 2018, Second Chance was formally established as an official Student Services program with a designated counselor and coordinator. Since that time, the program has grown from approximately 25–30 students at its inception to serving more than 300 students today. Second Chance is both a student services program and a student club that provides a judgment-free space, holistic counseling, and a sense of belonging for currently and formerly incarcerated and systems-impacted students at SRJC. As part of the California Community Colleges Rising Scholars Network, Second Chance connects students to academic, career, and personal counseling, peer community, and leadership opportunities that support persistence, transfer, and long-term success.

Rising Scholars Network

The California Community Colleges Rising Scholars Network is a statewide initiative that supports students who are currently incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, or otherwise justice-impacted by building clear pathways from correctional facilities into and through community colleges. Financially, the Rising Scholars Network is funded through ongoing state allocations administered by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, which are distributed to colleges in the form of competitive and formula-based grants.

Grant:	Year Awarded:	Number of Students Served On Campus:	
			# of students
CCCO Re-entry	2019	Currently	290
RSN 1.0	2022	Since 2021	1929
Juvenile Justice	2024		
RSN 2.0	2025		

Across these grants, SRJC's Rising Scholars programs contribute to statewide evidence showing that justice-impacted students meet or exceed the academic success of their main-campus peers, underscoring the effectiveness of these investments.



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Support in our local facilities

The IGNITE program began when one counselor and two English faculty members volunteered to bring noncredit coursework and counseling into the Main Adult Detention Facility, creating an early “inside-out” pathway to SRJC. As partnerships with the jail and probation office deepened, IGNITE expanded to offer credit-bearing courses and stronger transitional support, allowing incarcerated students to begin their education in custody and then seamlessly continue in Second Chance on campus after release. What began as a small collaboration has grown into a coordinated team of coordinators, counselors, faculty, staff, and administrators working across all of SRJC’s Rising Scholars programs to support systems-impacted students throughout their entire educational journey.

Student Spotlights

Hannah

I am currently enrolled in the SWHS program and preparing to transfer to a four-year university to complete my bachelor's degree in social work. I maintain a 3.882 GPA. Moreover, I work at Athena House as a substance abuse counselor, where I manage a caseload of six clients. This work is deeply meaningful to me, as I am passionate about using my lived experience with addiction and incarceration to support others in our community. The Second Chance Program has played a vital role in my educational journey. It provided me with a welcoming community, essential resources, counseling, financial support, and a safe space to return to college. Coming back to school after a period of incarceration was intimidating, and I initially felt out of place. Second Chance helped me feel supported, understood, and not alone. I truly do not believe I would have felt as comfortable pursuing my education without the program's guidance and community.



Jason



I am currently working toward Associate of Arts degrees in Social Work and Human Services, Addiction Studies, and Social and Behavioral Sciences, with plans to transfer to a four-year college to earn my bachelor's degree. I maintain a GPA of 3.80 while taking more than 15 units per semester and am on track to receive the highest academic honors beginning in Fall 2025. In addition to my studies, I serve as President of the Students for Recovery Club and as the Inter-Club Council Representative for the Second Chance Club at SRJC. I am also employed by SRJC as a Peer Success Coach in the Academic Counseling Department. My goal is to become a Drug and Alcohol Counselor so I can use both my lived experience and my education to give back to my community. The Second Chance Program has been a crucial foundation in my educational journey, providing a safe and accepting environment that has allowed me to pursue my goals despite the stigma associated with being a justice-impacted student.



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Eddy

Eddy is a powerful example of the life-changing impact of Santa Rosa Junior College's Second Chance program. A former participant in our Juvenile Justice initiative, he earned two SRJC degrees—an Associate in Arts in Social and Behavioral Sciences with High Honors and an Associate in Arts for Transfer in Anthropology with Highest Honors. He is now enrolled at UCLA as a Sociology major, where he balances his studies with his role at the John Wooden Center, the university's largest recreation facility. Eddy has also held an internship with a Bay Area company supporting marketing and customer acquisition, and in January he will begin preparing for the LSAT and participate in the UCLA Law Fellowship Program as he explores a future career in corporate or sports and entertainment law. Eddy often shares that the Second Chance team does far more than guide students academically—they continuously open doors, foster belonging, and walk beside their students as they rebuild their lives. He expresses tremendous gratitude to the faculty, staff, and community partners whose dedication and compassion made his success possible. Eddy's story is one of resilience, transformation, and hope—a living testament to how Second Chance changes lives and strengthens our community. With this program, there truly are no limits.



Contact Information

For additional information about Second Chance, please contact secondchance@santarosa.edu.