Class 32: United and Ready
by Erica Brenes, Puente Co-Coordinator and English Instructor

Our Puente students returned from Winter Break motivated for the second phase of our program and its accompanying high rigor courses. This semester, our 55 students, split between two cohorts, took English 1A and English 1C. In these writing-intensive courses, they continued to grow as scholars, paying special attention to matters of social justice and the work of Latino writers, such as Richard Rodriguez, Julia Alvarez, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Alex Espinoza, and Junot Diaz. This semester, the students also took Human Development courses where they explored prospective career opportunities, interviewed professionals in their field of study, continued to prepare for their ultimate transfer, and reflected on who they truly want to become. This semester, our program was also categorized under different management, and we are now a part of Student Support Services.

To complement our experiences in the classroom, Puente, in conjunction with Project Success, hosted Village to University Day, where representatives from different universities came to our campus and spoke directly to our students about their concerns and questions. Many of the universities sent delegates of color or first-generation status, so that students could see themselves represented. Many motivated Puentistas, who were curious about universities in Northern California, traveled over spring break recess with the Transfer Center to visit UC Santa Cruz, Davis, Merced, and Berkeley. Before break was over, our busy familia also journeyed to UC Santa Barbara’s College Day, where the students walked through club rush, enjoyed lecturers discussing their expertise in small-classroom settings, toured the stunning seaside campus, and were able to imagine their lives beyond El Camino College.

Counselors Mariel Hernandez and Griselda Castro also took a group of our continuing students, those about to graduate and transfer, along with a handful of interested current members, to UC Riverside to meet with alumni. While most of the semester was spent visualizing and preparing for the successes to come, we also organized a trip to the Autry Museum in Griffith Park, where students and their mentors celebrated photographs of the Chicano Rights Movement between the years of 1967–1977. Our last event of the semester is our End-of-the-Year Banquet, in which we celebrate the Puentistas who worked all year to complete Phase 1 and 2 of our program, those who are graduating, and those who are transferring. Spring 2018 left us with many reasons to celebrate and with an excitement for what’s to come!
Graduation Spotlight: Jayro Lopez Torres
Future College Counselor

Jayro Lopez Torres, Puente 30, is an excellent scholar. For three consecutive semesters, he has maintained a 4.0 GPA. He manages his responsibilities as a son and a brother; he serves his campus and community as an EOPS peer mentor, and he is the proud and accomplished child of Mexican immigrants. When I asked him how he managed it all, he explained that it wasn’t always easy. Although he credits his mother and father for their unwavering support and love, he recognizes that his high school and his neighborhood failed to offer him the resources he needed as a first generation-college student. As a result, before joining our familia, Jayro never saw himself as a scholar. Now, he manages his classes with ease, encourages his brothers to finish school with high marks, and dreams of one day returning to our campus as a college counselor. While he may have come to El Camino unprepared, he says, “I now feel ready to transfer and know that even when I do leave, I can always come back to Puente and they will keep supporting and helping me along the way.” He’s not yet sure where he’ll transfer next Fall, but Jayro has received admission to nearly every school he applied to, including UC Irvine and Cal State Long Beach. Jayro closed our discussion with the following sentiment: “I know I could not have done all of this without Puente. My expectations for myself weren’t high enough before, but Puente made me realize I can accomplish anything I set my mind to.”

Special Thanks to Our 2017-2018 Puente Mentors

Indira Amaya
Argelia Andrade
Julieta Aramburo
Martha Arias
Ibeth Arriaga

Maria Barrio De Mendoza
Thania Bogarin

Giovanni Bohorquez
Masiel Calderon
Ronald Calderon

Veronica Casillas
Carlos Castro
Guillermo Castro

Jessica Cifuentes
Gilmer Contreras

Odette Cook
Todd Crabtree
Katya De Los Rios
Eileen Del Pino

Darcie Descalzo
Graciela Diamante
Rocio Diaz

Vanessa Escobar
Vilma Fuentes

Jaime Gallegos
Erika Gavitt
Bernice Gonzalez
Ricky Gonzalez
Cesar Jimenez
Maria Jimenez
Arnulfo Juarez
Jhania Lantan
Philip Lantz
Cynthia Lopez-Herrera
Edgar Lopez
Rene Lozano
Araceli Martinez
Myrna Mendoza

Daniela Massarina
Jeff McMahon
Lesley Meza
Carlos Montalvan
Josephine Moore
Christina Nagao
Salvador Navarro
Toni Newman

Sue Oda Omori
Oscar Ortiz
Veronica Palafoux
Edith Parra
Blaine Pearce
Christian Perez
Blanca Prado
Jessica Quezada

Veronica Quinonez
Dulce Ramirez
Johanna Silva
Jennifer Valdez
Carla Velasquez-Lopez
Kristell Villacorta
Breanna Von Stein
Vanessa Watson

Each Puente mentor, like Sue Oda Omori, photographed here with Mentee, Kathy Sanchez (current Puentista), is from the professional community and ready to offer guidance on the path to a degree. ECC is fortunate to have a rich pool of mentors, many of whom are Puente alumni themselves. We appreciate their continued support.

In Their Own Words...

“To me, Puente means joining a second family that doesn’t judge and always supports. Without Puente, I wouldn’t have learned from my strengths in school, weaknesses, or how to open up to people.”
Kathy Sanchez

“It’s a home away from home—my at-school family.”
Matthew Enriquez

“Puente means family, community, growth, and friendship.”
Dulce Puente

“Puente is a family that wants the same thing in life: SUCCESS!”
Jeselyn Castillo
Jesse Cisneros Solis, Puente 24 student, will graduate this Spring from the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) with a degree in Physics. Jesse was accepted to a Post-Baccalaureate Research Education Program (PREP) at the University of Michigan--Ann Arbor focusing on Molecular Biology Physics and is interested in pursuing a Biophysics doctoral program in the future. He is motivated to make a difference in the field of cancer or virology (the study of viruses). Before graduating, Jesse served as a UC LEADS scholar, a stem Diversity member, and the co-Vice President of UCSC’s SACNAS chapter (Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science). Although Jesse’s family had always encouraged him to pursue higher education, when he first began at El Camino College, he didn’t know what he wanted to major in. Thankfully, while enrolled in the Puente Program, Jesse received the support and mentorship he needed to discover his true passion, navigate college life and successfully transfer. At El Camino, Jesse used the resources around him to get involved. He loved his Puente community and participated in both the STEM Trio and MESA program on our campus. Jesse worked hard to get where he is today, but he also attributed parts of his success to Puente: “College was a huge culture shock to me because in high school I wasn’t a great student. Once I started, I found that I was missing a lot of necessary skills. Puente introduced me to those skills.” We’re so happy to have been a part of Jesse’s story and look forward to his future success.

CREATIVE WRITING: “Mojado 3 Veces”

Mojado tres veces
(Three times a wetback):
That’s what that Mexican song said.

Mexicans are mojados,
We are triple mojados,
Triple the pain.
Different tongue
Different culture
Different people

Spat at
Cursed at
Yelled at
Unwelcomed
Undocumented
Uncolleged

Mojado 3 veces: we hear it
At work
At school
At stores

Mojado 3 veces:
We hear it so many times
Mojado 3 veces
3 veces
3 veces

Mojado has become our name

Alejandra Nunez (Puente 32) was inspired to write this poem while reading Sonia Nazario’s book, “Enrique’s Journey.”

WE PROUDLY ANNOUNCE OUR GRADUATING STUDENTS

“EDUCATION IS OUR PASSPORT TO THE FUTURE, FOR TOMORROW BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE WHO PREPARE FOR IT TODAY.” –MALCOLM X

Kenia Alcaraz
Pedro Contreras
Andrea Dardon
Daniel Diaz
Jannett Diaz
Jason Leal
Monica Lima
Amilcar Rodriguez
Jayro Lopez
Angela Orozco
Brianna Sandoval
Celso Uribe
Keeyan Ventura

In loving memory of William Chun (1997–2016, Puente 30)
WHAT IS PUENTE?
ENGLISH • COUNSELING • MENTORING

THE MISSION OF THE PUENTE PROJECT IS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF EDUCATIONALLY UNDERSERVED STUDENTS THAT WILL ENROLL IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, EARN DEGREES, AND RETURN TO THE COMMUNITY AS LEADERS AND MENTORS TO FUTURE GENERATIONS.

DESCRIPTION & HISTORY
Since its origin in 1981 at Chabot College in Hayward, California, The Puente Project has been committed to the success of Latino students. Currently in its 32nd year on the El Camino College campus, the program includes three components: teaching, counseling, and mentoring. Our students receive English instruction as well as academic and career counseling, both of which emphasize the Latino experience in the U.S. The purpose is to provide a supportive and stimulating environment to help students build confidence in their writing skills and the ability to navigate the college system to succeed in higher education.

OUR IMPACT

THE NUMBER OF TRANSFERS TO FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITIES CONTINUES TO INCREASE: 573 PUENTE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTICIPANTS TRANSFERRED IN 2009 COMPARED TO 397 IN 2001, APPROXIMATELY A 44% INCREASE.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES WITH PUENTE PROGRAMS TRANSFERRED 44% MORE LATINO STUDENTS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA THAN COLLEGES WITHOUT.

MEET OUR FAMILIA
PUENTE COUNSELORS
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"To make a great dream come true, the first requirement is a great capacity to dream; the second is persistence."

Cesar Chavez

The El Camino Community College District is committed to providing an educational and employment environment in which no person is subjected to discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, creed, age (over 40), disability (mental or physical), sex, gender (including pregnancy and childbirth), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, military and veteran status, or retaliation; or on any other basis as required by state and federal law.

STUDENT SUCCESS

• 70% OF EL CAMINO’S PUENTE PROJECT ARE FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS.

• BETWEEN 2000 AND 2009, 225 OF THOSE PUENTISTAS WHO TRANSFERRED CHOSE A UC. 56% A CSU. AND 21% CHOSE OUT OF STATE OR PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES.

• IN SPRING 2018, THE FAMILIA RETAINED 97% OF ITS COHORT MEMBERS.

• MORE THAN 5,500 STUDENTS HAVE BEEN ENROLLED IN THE PUENTE PROJECT, AND AN ESTIMATED 300,000 NON-PUENTE STUDENTS HAVE BENEFITED FROM OUR STAFF- DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.