



EL CAMINO COLLEGE

PUENTE NEWSLETTER

Fall 2013

Meet Puente 28!

Ricardo Abreu
 Kenia Alcaraz
 Eric Alvarado
 Uriel Antonio
 Brenda Balbuena
 Eric Bravo
 Cecilia Cholic
 Pedro Contreras
 Andrea Dardon
 Katrina Elmore
 Alicia M. Gonzalez
 Pierre Gonzalez
 Yareli Gutierrez
 Christopher Hernandez
 Edgar Hernandez
 Juan Hernandez
 Josue Lopez
 Omar Martinez
 Luis Medina
 Fiorella Messarina
 Luis Mireles
 Mario Morales
 Wilber A. Morales
 Steven Olvera
 Yarithza Ortiz
 Miguel Paz
 Eduardo Pioquinto
 Natalie Ramos
 Araceli Rodriguez
 Llesica Rosales
 Maria Saavedra
 Jeremias Saenz
 Laura Valle
 Mario Vivas
 Mustafe Warsame

Puente 28—Driven to succeed at ECC

By Julisa Garcia, Puente English 26, and Rachel Ketai, Puente English Instructor



Puente 28 students pose for the annual class photo, which is displayed in front of hundreds of Puente students from all over Southern California at the Regional Puente Motivational Conference.

Puente 28 students have been busy adjusting to life as transfer-bound students at ECC. In the classroom, they successfully completed **Human Development 8**, where they researched campus resources and composed an educational plan. They have also written four essays in **English A**, including a research essay proposing a solution to the problem of Latino high school drop-outs in Los Angeles.

Students kicked off fall events with the annual **Southern California Puente Motivational Conference** at UC Riverside. Students gained

inspiration and information about how to succeed in college from speakers and breakout sessions. They also met the larger Puente community of more than 800 Southern California Puentistas.

Students then attended the **Mentor-Mentee Mixer**. The gathering introduced students to their mentors—college graduates (many of whom are former Puente students themselves) committed to supporting students on their paths to transfer to a four-year university.

Next up was **Noche de Consejos (Night of Advice)**. This event allows students to gain wisdom from peers and mentors about how to overcome obstacles as first-generation college students.

Finally, on Dec. 5, students and their families will visit campus for **Familia Night**, where family members learn about the Puente program, experience a college campus environment, and meet student mentors.

The busy fall semester has prepared students to tackle spring 2014 and the exciting road to transfer ahead of them.

Congratulations to Puente mentor John Vargas on his election to ECC Board of Trustees!

John Vargas (left) and his mentee, Eric Alvarado (right), get to know each other at the Puente Mentor-Mentee Mixer.



Puente Mentors Erika Solorzano (left), John Vargas (center), and Idania Reyes (right), bond at the Puente Mentor-Mentee mixer.

Indira Amaya, transfer student on a mission

Puente 25 student Indira Amaya used to be a quiet, studious student who did not think it was important to make connections or even friendships at school. Throughout four years of high school, her circle of friends never grew.

"I simply wanted to get out with good grades and that's about it," Amaya said.

Amaya wanted to enroll at ECC after high school because she had seen the struggles that her single mother went through just to put food on the table. Although her mother did not have a college degree, she always pushed Amaya to succeed in school and become a role model for future generations of the family.

"I certainly did not want to live the same life my mom had. If I have the advantage of going to school and becoming someone greater in life, why not take it?" said Amaya.

Amaya was also inspired to earn a college degree to show other Hispanic women that living under a social stereotype does not have to define them.

When she first enrolled at ECC, Amaya wanted to get her degree and transfer as soon as possible. Her mind was set on becoming an English major and transferring to UCLA.

Amaya said, "That was my plan. But it changed, and I am glad it did."

Amaya joined the Puente program where she was inspired by the program and its mission. Learning that many Latinos don't make it to a four-year university made her want to make a difference.

"I have always been a 'dream big' kind of person and being involved in this program has made me realize that I can make a difference by attending a four-year institution. I can succeed and achieve great things and this program has given me a jump start to the rest of my career. I am truly grateful," Amaya said.

The Puente English courses allowed Amaya to show true passion through her essays, but it was the Human Development courses that allowed her to grow out of her shell



Puente 25 student Indira Amaya says she was "always a dream big kind of person." After graduating from ECC with an English major, she plans to transfer to the University of California and later attend law school. She dreams of one day becoming a Supreme Court Justice.



Puente students Ruben Ruiz (left), Indira Amaya (center left), and Angel Gomez (right), cheer on fellow Puentista, Martha Quezada (center right) at spring commencement 2013 as she prepares to transfer to UC Davis. This spring 2014, Amaya will be the one in cap and gown ready to transfer.

through networking and public speaking. "I would advocate my passions through writing, and now I can advocate verbally, which is a useful tool for what I want to do in life," Amaya said.

Now Amaya is more open to the idea that in order to be a great student, she has to make connections, not only with professors, but with students. She continues to be a serious student when it comes to her studies, but she also enjoys oral presentations and uses her networking and social skills daily.

Amaya believes college has changed her not only academically, but also spiritually. "I don't panic as much when it comes to tests because I pray before them. College is hard and it can only get harder from here, so I find my moments to meditate and fulfill my spiritual needs before I go on and take a test," she said.

Amaya credits Puente Counselor Maribel Hernandez for making her college experience so transformational. When Amaya came to ECC she was lost and terrified, but she had Hernandez to help lead her through her academics. "She makes it easy for a student to ask questions and she doesn't intimidate you. She knows how to make a student feel welcome and comfortable," Amaya said.

Amaya is currently applying to transfer to several University of California and California State University campuses. She hopes to attend University of California, Irvine as a Criminology major. She feels grateful to the Puente program for helping her reach this point. The Puente program has helped her feel ready for the transition to a competitive university campus environment. With the Puente experience under her belt, she is confident that she will do just fine once she gets there.

After graduating with her bachelor's degree, Amaya plans on going to law school, becoming a prosecutor, and eventually becoming a judge with the dream of one day being elected to the Supreme Court.

"Transferring can be a scary thing to do but this program has pushed me to get out of my comfort zone and...explore what is out there for me. One day I would like to come back as a mentor and give my experience to the future students," says Amaya.

News Update: The Puente Program goes national!

The Puente program has been a California success story since its start at Chabot College in Hayward, CA in 1981. Now, the program's impact on student success is spreading beyond state lines. In 2012, Puente expanded to three community college districts in Texas: El Paso, McAllen and San Antonio. The ECC Puente program welcomes Texas to our Puente familia!

David Herrera—from Puentista to principal, mentor

Puente mentor David Herrera worked as a mechanic until he joined Puente 6 in 1991. Now, 22 years later, he is the principal of Enterprise Middle School in Compton. “I support teachers and students to build a great middle school,” Herrera says.

Herrera’s path to success was not a walk in the park. Along the way, he had to overcome many obstacles.

Growing up, Herrera always planned on working for his family’s auto repair shop. The day after high school, he became a mechanic at Scott Robertson’s Honda, where he interned during high school.

When Herrera decided to go back to school several years later, he told his parents he wanted to be a teacher. His father did not talk to him for five years because he wanted his son to work in the family business.

Without support from his family, Herrera worked at United Express as a baggage holder to pay his way through ECC. He wanted to prove he could be a teacher. He knew from coaching soccer that he loved interacting with children.

Unfortunately, before he joined the Puente program, he also lacked the academic and emotional support he needed to succeed in college. One day, Margaret Quinones-Perez, Puente counselor at the time, called Herrera and explained how the Puente program could help him achieve his goals. Herrera jumped at the chance to join the program.

Herrera still does not know what made Quinones-Perez make that fateful phone call, but he believes that a counselor might have taken pity on him and referred Quinones-Perez to him when they saw him confused about how to register for classes.

Herrera soon joined Puente, but still struggled in creative writing and his English class. He sought out and received help from Sally Brown, the Puente English instructor at the time. He found the Puente instructors to be the support he needed to move forward with his

academic and professional goals.

A non-traditional student, Herrera was 27 years old when he joined Puente. Even though he was older than most of the other Puente students, Herrera was still able to connect with them. He was also able to share the wisdom from his life experiences and the benefits of having a clear goal in college.

Puente taught Herrera how to build the network of support he needed to succeed in school. His Puente mentor Alex Ariian was a great help to Herrera while he was a student at ECC. They still keep in contact today.

After graduating with his associates degree in General Studies from ECC, Herrera transferred to The University of California at Riverside, where he majored in English and creative writing and earned his teaching credential. Herrera then went on to earn his masters from California State University, Northridge.

What helped Herrera prepare for such success at these four-year campuses? “The amendments of Puente—study, ask for help, build relationships,” he said.

The strain on Herrera’s family relationships eventually eased. His mother was supportive of his progress, and his father grew proud of his son’s accomplishments before he died. “My father would always zing me in a playful way about

my career, and that is how I knew things were OK,” said Herrera.

Last year, Herrera decided to contact ECC because he wanted to give back as a mentor in the Puente program. He hoped to share what he learned from his experiences with new Puente students. Now, he tells his mentees, “I’m here to push you out of your comfort zone.”

“It feels good to give back,” Herrera says. “It is [too] easy to just drop out.”



David Herrera (second from the top left) poses with the class of Puente 6 in 1991 at El Camino College.



David Herrera now serves as principal of Enterprise Middle School in Compton.

Special Thanks to Our 2013-2014 Puente Mentors

Each Puente student is matched with a mentor from the business or professional community. Mentors share with students their personal, academic, and career experiences, and provide a window into “real life” work environments. The network of trained Puente mentors provides many resources for the Puente students, their families, colleges and the community.

Lucy Alamillo

Linda Beam

Griselda Castro

Matt Cheung

Ismael De La O

Adam Dunigan

Mario Escalante

Jamie Gallegos

Juan Ramon Guerra

David Herrera

Xocoyotzin Herrera

Amy Herrschaft

Rene Lozano

Victoria Martinez

Jeff McMahan

Myrna Mendoza

Jo Moore

Christina Nagao

Julieta Ortiz

Melchisedec Palacios

Blaine Pearce

Blanca Prado

Jesica Quezada

Idania Reyes

Erika Solorzano

John Vargas

Rachel Williams

WHAT IS PUENTE?

The Puente Project is an academic preparation program for educationally disadvantaged students that is co-sponsored by the University of California at Berkeley and the California Community College Chancellors' Office. The goals of the Puente Project are for students to transfer to a four-year university, earn a college degree, and return to their communities as mentors and leaders.

Puente students commit to a full year program, which consists of English instruction (English A in the fall and 1A in the spring), counseling (Human Development 8 in the fall and 5 in the spring), and mentorship. The English instruction focuses on culturally relevant writing and Latino and multicultural literature. The counseling element guides students into becoming successful college scholars by heightening their awareness of college resources, study skills, and career exploration. Finally, the mentoring component supports and motivates students along their academic journeys, providing inspirational stories of success.

The Puente Project has been helping educationally disadvantaged students in California transfer to four-year universities for more than 30 years. It is currently implemented in 33 high school and 59 community college sites throughout the state.

Puente is open to all students.

PUENTE HISTORY

Co-directors, Felix Galaviz and Patricia McGrath at Chabot College in Hayward, founded Puente in 1981. The program mission was to increase the number of Mexican American/Latino students transferring to four-year colleges and universities. Since then, Puente has expanded to more than 59 community colleges throughout the state. As an outgrowth of its success as a community college program, Puente high school programs were added throughout the state in 1993, and more recently, Puente has expanded to three community college districts representing five colleges in the state of Texas.

Currently in its 28th year, the Puente Program at El Camino College is a model program for other community colleges across the state of California. The ECC program was established in 1985, just four years after the Puente Program was founded statewide.

PUENTE RESULTS IN STUDENT SUCCESS AT ECC

Strong Persistence Record:

- 93% of Puente's first-time freshmen students from Fall 2009 enrolled in a second year of classes in Fall 2010 compared to 76% of ECC students generally.

Strong Transfer Rates:

- 46% of Puente students who enrolled in 2002-2003 transferred by 2007-2008, compared to 26% of ECC's Hispanic students generally.
- Between 2000 and 2009 176 Puente students transferred. 22% to UC, 56% to CSU, and 21% to private or out-of-state institutions.

PUENTE BOASTS NATIONWIDE IMPACT

- In 2012 the Puente Program expanded to Texas, making it a national program
- More than 5,500 students have enrolled in the Puente community college program.
- More than 2,000 professionals donate more than 18,000 hours annually to Puente students.
- An estimated 200,000 non-Puente students have benefited from Puente's staff development programs.
- Community colleges with Puente programs transfer 44 percent more Latino students to the University of California than colleges without a Puente program.

PUENTE RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION AND EXPANDS TO TEXAS

- In 1998, Puente was one of 10 programs selected from a national pool of more than 1,400 to win the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award, a program of the Ford Foundation, the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and the Council for Excellence in Government.
- In 2004, Puente was chosen as one of six model programs nationwide to help guide policymakers to improve college access and success by the Pathways to College Network, a national consortium of educational institutions, foundations and non-profit organizations.
- In 2008, Hispanic Lifestyle selected Puente to receive its Non-profit Organization of the Year Hispanic Image Award in recognition of its work and success in promoting positive images of the Latino Community.
- Puente has been studied by numerous academic researchers, and was the focus of the entire September 2002 issue of the *Journal Educational Policy*. El Camino College's Puente Program was used in Rendon's (2002) study "Community College Puente: A Validating Model of Education."
- Puente Program has expanded to three community college districts in Texas: El Paso, McAllen and San Antonio.



28 Years at El Camino College

The El Camino Community College District is committed to providing equal opportunity in which no person is subjected to discrimination on the basis of ethnic group identification, national origin, religion, age, race, color, ancestry, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or retaliation.

For More Information, Please Contact:

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