



# EL CAMINO COLLEGE

## PUENTE NEWSLETTER

### Spring 2014

#### Puente 28

Ricardo Abreu  
Kenia Alcaraz  
Eric Alvarado  
Uriel Antonio  
Cecilia Cholicó  
Pedro Contreras  
Andrea Dardon  
Katrina Elmore  
Yareli Gutiérrez  
Christopher Hernández  
Juan Hernández  
Luis Medina  
Fiorella Messarina  
Luis Mireles  
Miguel Paz  
Eduardo Pioquinto  
Araceli Rodríguez  
Llesica Rosales  
Jeremías Saenz  
Laura Valle  
Mustafe Warsame

#### CONGRATULATIONS TO TRANSFERRING & GRADUATING PUENTISTAS!

Indira Amaya, *Puente 25*  
Andrea Cervantes, *Puente 24*  
Delmyn Conchas, *Puente 25*  
Erica Duran, *Puente 26*  
Vanessa Escobar, *Puente 26*  
Verenice Galvan, *Puente 25*  
Nevers Garcia, *Puente 23*  
Israel Garcia, *Puente 24*  
Viviana Garcia, *Puente 26*  
Osbaldo Mancía, *Puente 25*  
Areli Molina, *Puente 25*  
Julio Moraga, *Puente 22*  
Agusto Ramirez, *Puente 24*

## Puente 28 moving forward with education

By Ruben Ruiz, Puente 26; Julisa Garcia, Puente 26; and Nadia Silva, Puente 25

As the spring semester comes to an end, Puente 28 students have a lot to be proud of. In the fall, Puente students came together to help fundraise money for Puente scholarships by going to America's Funniest Videos. In the spring semester, Puentistas have successfully completed **Human Development 5**, where they distinguished their personal strengths, researched possible career goals, and developed their resumes



Puente 28 students bond while visiting the University of California at Riverside. From Left: Fiorella Messarina, Cecilia Cholicó, UCR mascot, Araceli Rodríguez, and Kenia Alcaraz

and cover letters. In **English 1A**, they are further developing their professional English skills by writing essays and reading exceptional literature such as "Night" by Elie Wiesel and "The Unthinkable" by Amanda Ripley. Some students have committed to taking the class for honor credit, so they are reading "Man Searching for Meaning" by Viktor Frankl. Furthermore, students are working hard on their argumentative research papers, which reflect many interesting and relevant issues: police brutality, the drug war in Mexico, tattoos, anorexia and bulimia, texting and driving, effects of technology on people, high kill rates in animal shelters, making smoking illegal,

gay rights and adoption, inner-city versus other schools' performances, pet adoptions, advances in aircrafts, arranged marriages in India, minimum wage, legalization of marijuana, disabilities, importance of music education in young adults, and pit bulls.

In April, Puente students visited the Museum of Tolerance for a three-hour tour given by their professor, Dr. Jaffe, who is also a volunteer docent at the museum.

In addition, students visited the University of California at Santa Barbara to get further exposure to the UC campuses, which is the focus of the Puente Program statewide.

On May 1 current Puente students will come together for one last event—the End of the Year Celebration, where they will be joined by their families and mentors. The students will celebrate their successful completion of the program. During the celebration, transferring and graduating Puentistas are awarded with the Puente graduation sash to wear as they participate in the El Camino College graduation ceremony. This year the Puente celebration will welcome special guest speaker, John Valadez, filmmaker and producer of the PBS "Latino Americans" series. His presentation is funded by the El Camino College Graduation Initiative.

## Puente Counselor Maribel Hernandez Receives Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Award

After working at El Camino College for more than nine years and being the Puente counselor and co-coordinator for five years, Maribel Hernandez was recently recognized for her hard work and dedication. By winning the Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Award, in her nomination letter, Puente English instructor and co-coordinator Rachel Ketai wrote, "Maribel's commitment to serving students is limitless. I have seen first-hand how Maribel can transform a student from at-risk of dropping out to transfer-bound through the power of her teaching. Through her one-on-one counseling sessions, she offers students invaluable advice about how to achieve educational goals, but she also provides personal and emotional guidance that many of our students come to rely on. Maribel is truly a gift to ECC students and to the campus community overall."



Puente students congratulate counselor Maribel Hernandez. From Left: Elliot Aguilar, Counselor Maribel Hernandez, and Dulce Ramirez

## PUENTE DREAMS PROFILE -By Ruben Ruiz, Puente 26

# Ricardo Abreu, high school counselor in training

Ricardo Abreu from Los Angeles, California dropped out of high school during his freshman year due to a lack of money and support, but he said that he "motivated himself to come back at the age of 15 and do both high school and adult school in order to catch up." At the age of 17, he was kicked out of his home and while sharing the news with his girlfriend, now his wife, he instead was told that she was pregnant. Having to react quickly, he bumped into a U.S. Marine Corps recruit and was given the chance to go to the Marines. After high school, knowing that his life was changing, he went into the Marines to be able to support his family. After spending four years in the Marine Corps, he returned to his wife and son.

Abreu was working as a security guard at the time his son graduated preschool. His son looked up to him and announced that he too wanted to be a security guard when he grew up. Abreu then took that as a motivation to go back to college, so that his son could have higher standards. Having El Camino College nearby, he decided that there were no excuses because distance was not a factor.



Ricardo Abreu (right) and his wife (left) and their two children at the Puente Familia Night.

He enrolled into the summer session at El Camino College with two classes, not having a sense of direction of what he wanted. In one of his classes, English 84, Rachel Ketai told him about Puente. Ketai got his attention when she mentioned what Puente had to offer. Being enrolled in Puente, Abreu says, is "more than what I imagined."

He had no sense of direction when he first started college. Because of Maribel Hernandez's support and the Puente Program, he no longer wants to settle for just any degree. He now wants to transfer to either the University of Houston, UC Berkley, or UCLA with a major in sociology to become a high school counselor.

Abreu says that he "would give high school students more precise information about college" because some high schools don't give enough information to their students to motivate them to continue their careers. He wants to "give high school students an opportunity to succeed financially through their education."

Abreu is now involved with the Hawthorne Police Department as a dispatcher. Now his son no longer wants to be a security guard, but wants to be a police officer when he grows up.

## PUENTE TRANSFER PROFILE -By Julisa Garcia, Puente 26

# Vanessa Escobar is grateful for the Puente coordinators guidance

Vanessa Escobar, Puente 26, was the average outgoing high school student who was always surrounded by friends and kept positive relationships with her teachers. She was talkative and friendly, but in her words, "I did not try, I was not focused on education."

A few years after high school, Escobar realized her mother had worked so hard and supported her through everything; she knew it was time to get an education and make her mother proud.

"I wanted to become someone, and further my education and come back and help those who did not have the guidance to get an education like myself," Escobar said.

Her plans when starting El Camino were to give it her all, earn good grades, and eventually transfer to USC.

The Puente English class really helped her in her path of education. Escobar explains, "I did not know the structure of even writing an essay; Dr. Rachel Ketai helped me to be able to be confident in writing essays."

Human Development, taught by Puente counselor Maribel Hernandez, really helped her: "I was able to find out what I liked to do; then I was able to find out my major based on the research," Escobar said. Based on the in-depth research done in the Human Development class, Escobar discovered her major, sociology.



Escobar's mentor, who was assigned to her by the program, also played a role in her education; Blanca Prado, Puente Mentor, helped inspire Escobar through her own story of triumph.

Escobar believes that having easy access to the Puente Counselor Hernandez is a great opportunity for students. She was able to be prepared for her last semester at El Camino College because of Hernandez's guidance. She encouraged Escobar to visit USC, the school she wanted to transfer to. After following Hernandez's advice she was glad she had visited the campus because after her visit, she knew that USC was not for her. Now Escobar wants to transfer to UCLA.

Escobar has applied to: UCLA, UCI, UCSB, UCR, CSULA, CSULA, CSUF, CSUDH, USC, and LMU.

After the Puente Program, Escobar now feels she is more mature and has her goals set for life. "I feel like I have a journey of dreams to achieve," said Escobar.

Her number one priority is school; there is nothing else on her mind except education. "I actually enjoy studying and going to school and doing homework, and challenging myself," Escobar said. Escobar has been on the Dean's List for two consecutive semesters and has joined the Sociology club.

Now that Escobar is transferring and is leaving Puente, she adds, "I am grateful because of all the help that was provided to me. I am thankful for the Puente coordinators. Because of Puente, I know that I am capable of succeeding at a UC."

## Rene Lozano: Puentista de Corazón

Rene Lozano, coordinator for the Transfer Center and counselor at El Camino College, inspires students to not only transfer but to believe that they can do whatever they put their mind to no matter what obstacles they face. He knows this from experience and says, “students are usually surprised when they find out how I grew up.” Not many of his students believe him at first when he tells them that he grew up as an immigrant who lived in poor conditions. His father worked two jobs and his parents struggled to get by. This motivated him to want to go to college because he knew that he did not want to live this way when he got older.

Lozano says he was always a “school boy” so his plans after high school were to go to college. His only concern was that he did not know where he was going to get into. His dream was UCLA, but he did not think he was going to get in, so when he was admitted it was life changing.

The first year at UCLA was the hardest for Lozano because even though he was accepted just like everyone else, he did not feel like he belonged. “I would get bad reactions from people when I would tell them [that] I was from Compton,” Lozano said. The main thing that helped him get over his insecurities was having mentors who had similar backgrounds to his own.

Lozano wanted to become a math teacher but changed his mind when he worked in the admissions office at UCLA as a representative; instead, he decided to become a counselor. He was introduced to El Camino College this way and was encouraged to work for the college as an advisor in the Transfer Center.



Lozano took the job and later took a leave of absence to get his Master’s of Art in Education with a focus in multicultural counseling.

While he was working for UCLA as a representative, he also found out about the Puente Program. When introduced to Puente, he thought of it as an outstanding program and wished he had been involved in a program such as Puente. It was one of the reasons he wanted to work at a community college because he saw how race was represented in the program and it made him want to help students and get involved with Puente. He has been a Puente mentor for 15 years. Not only does he attend the mentor events for Puente, but he tries to attend all events

and activities, and also gives university tours and class presentations to transferring Puentistas.

Lozano believes in his students and their ambitions. He offers his words of wisdom: “Never believe you have to do everything alone. Ask for help, go to tutoring, look for help, and accept help.” He also wants his students “to learn how to say no” to their families and not feel guilty about it. Learn how to say, “I love you, parents, but I have to focus on studying, so I can’t do these chores today or pick up my cousins. College is an investment for the whole family. Balance school and family.” Lastly, he wants his students to know there is no difference between him and them, because he and his students are “on the same road” and the only difference is he is “10 steps ahead of you. But you will eventually catch up.”

## 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

Jaime Gallegos

Juan Ramon Guerra

David Herrera

Xocoyotzin Herrera

Amy Herrschaft

Rene Lozano

Victoria Martinez

Jeff McMahon

Myrna Mendoza

Jo Moore

Christina Nagao

Julieta Ortiz

Melchicedec 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 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.

Currently in its 28<sup>th</sup> 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 STATE WIDE IMPACT

- 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

- 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 is now expanding 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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