

“To me, Puente means success. There is no doubt that joining this program has been the best decision in my academic career so far and for that I am very grateful.”

-Evelyn Serrato, Puente 31

Our Students:

- Billien Aguilar
- Jessica Aguilar
- Yadira Aguilar
- Ronald Aparicio
- Paola Becerra
- Sheila Bravo
- Monica Carranza
- Stefany Carranza
- Giselle Castillo
- Gilberto Cervantes
- Omar Chavarria
- Belinda Coronado
- Jesus Corrales
- Pedro Corrales
- Johanna Cruz
- Ricardo Elias
- Elizabeth Evangelista
- Bryanna Fernandez
- Joann Figueroa
- Astrid Garcia
- Jose Garcia
- Gerardo Garcia Selaya
- Roxanne Gonzalez
- Alejandro Gutierrez
- Cody Guzman
- Jessica Herrera
- Michael Jimenez
- Salvador Jimenez
- Nancy Laines
- Lata Lameta
- Berena Lomeli
- Bryan Lopez
- Eve Louis
- Gladis Marquez
- Yamileth Mendez
- Mirna Mora
- Gerardo Morales
- Roberto Morales
- Isabel Ocampo
- Alma Ordonez
- Angela Orozco
- James Ortega
- Marcos Paniagua
- Vivian Ramirez
- Wendy Renteria
- Bethany Rodriguez
- Yajaira Rojas
- Arturo Rosales Manriquez
- Gustavo Rosales
- Evelyn Serrato
- Stephanie Simental-Gomez
- Jaclyn Toledo
- Alan Transito
- Prisila Valadez
- Tatiana Vargas
- Jose Zacarias
- Brittnie Zarate
- Justin Zuniga



Puente 31: Growing Stronger Together

By Puente English Teachers, Erica Brenes and Beth Williams

After 31 years of serving students, El Camino College’s Puente Project has doubled in size, and our endeavor has gone even better than we had hoped! By this point in our year together, our two cohorts have successfully completed **Human Development 101** courses, they discussed self-motivation techniques, campus resources, time management, financial aid, and how to best prepare for their future majors. They’ve also met and bonded with their mentors and begun to truly transform as college readers and writers.

A special component of the Puente English classroom that helps our **English A** and **English 50 RWA** students grow and excel is the opportunity to engage with culturally relevant texts such as “My Beloved World” by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor and “Gabi, A Girl in Pieces,” a novel by local East LA College Puente mentor, Isabella Quintero.

Outside of the classroom, students traveled to UCLA to attend the Puente Southern California Motivational Conference earlier this semester. While there, they had the unique honor of listening to Pedro Noguera discuss how he became a world-class scholar despite his humble beginnings. After his riveting lecture, the students met with notable Puente alumni, toured the campus, and attended workshops that covered a wide array of topics such as: modern masculinity, financial aid, undocumented student rights, and how to study abroad!

Before the semester began, both cohorts and their coordinators attempted the ropes course at UCLA. As one Puentista describes, “The event taught me to think outside the box, problem solve as a team and find my importance or worth in a team. We are all valuable in some way!”

In December, we came together for a final fall event— Noche De Familia, where our students were joined by their families and their mentors. The students celebrated their successful completion of phase 1 of our yearlong program by each sharing a traditional

dish that their families enjoy. This tradition allowed us to bond over our different cultures and celebrate our roots. We look forward to continuing to work with these cohorts in the spring semester.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our program!



Both cohorts pose together during our first few weeks of the fall semester



Puentistas working as a team at the UCLA ropes course



Watching our students problem solve as a team was such a joy!

MEET OUR FAMILIA: Puente Profiles



Evelyn at the Puente Noche de Familia with her son.

Evelyn Serrato is an extremely motivated student who was looking for something special when she returned to college after a two-year break, and that's exactly what she found in Puente.

She explains, "After getting more information, I realized [Puente] would be a chance for me to not only become socially involved with people who have ambition, but also an opportunity to ease into such a different environment." One look at Evelyn and one can easily see it's working!

She gets along beautifully with her peers, confidently and gracefully adds her perspective to class discussion, and is never afraid to ask questions. Referring to in-class discussions in English RWA on pressing issues like Black Lives Matter, the 2016 presidential election, machismo culture, and much, much more, Serrato shows her true colors when she explains that her favorite thing about being in Puente "is definitely being able to express ourselves and our thoughts on issues that we are passionate about."

Her plans when starting El Camino College were to earn good grades, join the Honors Transfer Program, and eventually transfer to UCLA and major in business, so she can make a name for herself in the field of human relations. One semester in, and it's clear that she is on her way!



Omar recognizes Dia de Los Muertos with the Anthropology Club on campus.

Omar Chavarria was motivated to join Puente because he wants to become one of the first students from his high school to transfer to a four-year university. He says that the program has been extremely helpful in terms of assisting him with his time management and organization, and that it has encouraged him to "overcome the fear of asking for help and utilizing resources."

He explains that his "favorite thing about being in Puente is mainly the teachers and staff," and he likes "the fact that everybody in Puente is very friendly and there is always somebody ready to assist [him]." He thinks of the UCLA Puente Motivational Conference as "by far" his favorite memory of the semester: "Seeing all those Puentistas made me feel a sense of harmony and aspiration." He credits his counselor, **Maribel Hernandez**, with giving him "hope in reaching for what might seem impossible, but in reality is possible." He also notes that doing group work in his English class stands out to him, because he gets to "hear other people's opinions. Their opinions [have] helped [him] become more open-minded and... see a bigger picture."

HEAR OUR VOICE: PUENTE POETRY

"First Generation Salvi"
By Gerardo Zelaya Garcia

I am from glasses,
From crosses and rosaries,
I am from El Salvador
And the hard work of my
parents.

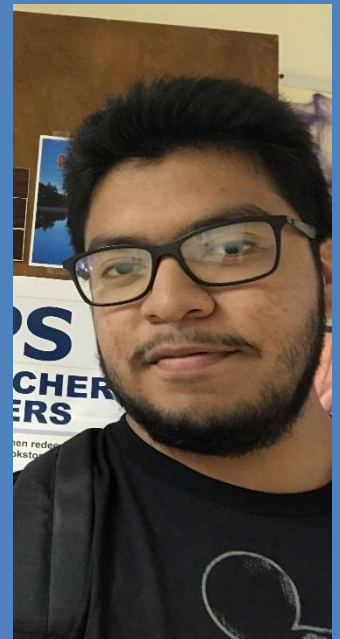
I am from the palm tree
Whose presence told where I
was truly born,
I am from a book and a game,
From Garcia and Zelaya.

I am from patience and
emotion,
And from free thinking,
From maturity.

I am from "believe in what you
want to believe."

I am from Enriquez and Preza,
From pupusas and plantanitos,
From becoming an elite soldier
And from escaping a civil war
and running across a field.

I am from those moments,
A lucky man whose life was
brought together through hard
work and sacrifice.



Gerry, photographed above, is
an excellent reader and writer,
and we are lucky to have him
in English 50 RWA.

THANK YOU TO OUR MENTORS

Lucy Alamillo
Brenda Alvarez
Argelia Andrade
Kayla Arango
Martha Arias
Ibeth Arriaga
Sandra Balbuena
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Guillermo Castro
Mercedes Chavez
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Juan Garcia
Maria Garcia
Viviana Garcia
Andres Gonzales
Britta Halonen
Deborah Herzik
Xocoyotzin Herrera
Maria Isabel Jimenez
Arnulfo Juarez
Erika Knox
Rudi Lopez
Cynthia Lopez Herrera
Rene Lozano
Darcie McClelland Descalzo
Jeff McMahon
Susana Medina
Myrna Mendoza
Daniela Messarina
Carlos Montalvan
Josephine Moore
Rosean Moreno
Veronica Munoz
Christina Nagao
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Salvador Navarro
Toni Newman
Sue Oda-Omori
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Christian Perez
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Veronica Quinonez
Thanya Rivas
Elayne Rodriguez
Mayra Sandoval
DeVon Scott
Richard Serna
Stacy Simental
Erika Solorzano
Claudia Velazquez
Carla Velasquez-Lopez
Kristell Villacorta
Vanessa Watson

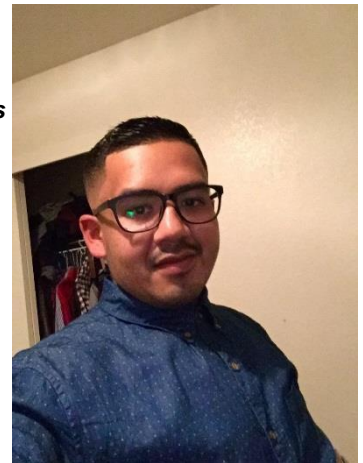
Puente Alumni Profile

Once a Puentista and Soon a Guidance Counselor: Juan Rosales

By: Laura Saavedra, Puente Cohort 29

Puente 27 student, **Juan Rosales**, is currently attending the University of California, Merced and is studying psychology in the hopes of becoming a guidance counselor. Since his arrival at Merced, he has been working as a mentor/advisor helping countless students with financial aid applications and tutoring children of migrant farm workers. His goal to become a school counselor “drives [him],” and he describes himself as “highly motivated” when it comes to building the resume needed to make a difference. Rosales can relate to many of the students he one day hopes to help. He enrolled at El Camino College because he did not feel ready to make the transition to a university straight from high school. Thankfully, his parents encouraged him to work hard in school: “Coming from a low-income household filled me with dreams and ambitions [...] and my parents motivated me to pursue a career, which would not only assure me financial security but would allow me to positively impact others.”

When he first enrolled at El Camino College, Rosales was unclear what that path would be, but in Puente and with the help of Puente counselor **Maribel Hernandez**, he found his calling! He is also extremely thankful for Puente English professor **Dr. Rachel Ketai** for helping him grow as a writer. Rosales continues to use those skills at UC Merced and has been recognized multiple times as a result: “I have received laudatory praise from professors here for my writing. In addition, my research poster was selected to participate in a research symposium. I attribute that accomplishment to Dr. Ketai.” Rosales also appreciates the Transfer Center counselor and advisor, **Rene Lozano** and **Blanca Prado**, who he met during the Northern California College Tour, which led him to find his ideal school. The Puente Program opened many doors for Rosales and he cannot thank everyone enough for helping him along. Rosales adds, “I feel extremely grateful that I was able to join a program that prepared me to be where I am today. My peers and I are proof that Puente continuously succeeds in their mission of increasing the number of students who transfer to four-year universities.”



Puente Mentor Profile

From Puente Student to Mentor to Future Teacher: Mayra Sandoval

By: Nirvana Mendez, Puente Cohort 29



Mayra and her mentee Stefany Carranza

Walk around campus and you are likely to find Mayra Sandoval, in the Puente office lending a hand. Just a few years ago, before graduating from California State University, Dominguez Hills, Sandoval was a Puente student and is now giving back to her community as a mentor.

Born and raised in Compton, Sandoval graduated from Centennial High School. After that, Sandoval planned on becoming a teacher but did not attend college immediately: “I always wanted to be a teacher, but my senior year of high school I got pregnant and took a year off.” Sandoval was encouraged, however, by one of her sisters to attend college and to join Puente once her daughter was old enough. “I was nervous to come back to college [however] joining the Puente program helped,”

Sandoval explains. Her parents were so proud when she returned to school: “[they] were excited for me,” and her being successful “really meant a lot to them.” Once at El Camino College, Sandoval took Liberal Studies 101, and it opened up her mind. She decided to major in psychology because she enjoyed talking about how to cope with major life issues. However, the transition from high school to college was not easy. “Growing up, I always struggled in every subject, especially writing,” says Sandoval. Thankfully, whenever Sandoval needed help with her essays, she would go to the Puente English professor, **Peter Marcoux** for help. “I struggled with writing, but being part of the Puente program helped me develop my writing skills,” she said, “The Puente English professor I had made sure that I learned how to properly write a paper. Struggling to juggle school and parenting, Sandoval would leave her daughter with her sister while she was in class; “the hardest part was to let go of her, but I knew I had to.” Despite her struggles, she did not let any of it stop her from accomplishing her dreams. Sandoval credits much of those accomplishments to **Griselda Castro**, one of the current Puente counselors. “She has helped me navigate my way through undergraduate school and career planning” she says. Now the only question is: What’s next for Mayra? Perhaps one day, she’ll be a Puente teacher!

WHAT IS THE PUENTE PROJECT?

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/RWA in the fall and 1A in the spring), counseling (Human Development 101 in the fall and 105 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.



Above: Both cohorts of Puente 31 in front of UCLA's iconic Janss Steps, proudly wearing their matching shirts designed by **Marcos Paniagua**.

PUENTE HISTORY

In 1981, co-directors Felix Galaviz and Patricia McGrath founded Puente at Chabot College in Hayward. 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 31st 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 enrolled in 2002-03 transferred by 2007-2008, compared to 26% of ECC's unaffiliated Hispanic students.
- 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 STATEWIDE 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.
- Note: The Program has now expanded to three community college districts in Texas and also one in Washington.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

- 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.
- In 2008, Hispanic Lifestyle selected Puente as its Non-Profit Organization of the Year Award recognizing its work in the Latino community.

The El Camino Community College District is committed to providing equal opportunity in which no person is subjected to discrimination on the basis of national origin, religion, age, sex (including sexual harassment), race, color, gender, physical or mental disability, or retaliation.

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