



# EL CAMINO COLLEGE

## PUENTE NEWSLETTER

### Fall 2017

#### English RWA Cohort

Clarisa Amaya  
Melissa Anaya  
Allison Avila  
Wendy Barrientos  
Amor Bernui  
Jeselyn Castillo  
Michelle Ceballos  
Carlos Cerna  
Priscilla Escobar  
Jose Garcia  
Roberto Garcia  
Hazel Godinez  
Gleenix Guevara  
Sarainy Hernandez  
Andres Herrera  
Frida Linero  
Melva Lopez  
Areli Martinez  
Mia Martinez  
Daniel Morales  
Randy Muniz  
Alejandra Nunez  
Alejandro Nuno  
Brenda Pineda  
Dulce Puente  
Jorge Ramirez  
Ana Ramos  
Desiree Rodriguez  
Estefania Romo  
Martin Saavedra  
Ashley Sanchez  
Kathy Sanchez  
Angie Vargas  
Nicholas Zaragoza

#### English 1A Cohort

Victoria Aguilar  
Daniel Andrade  
Naidelyn Buenostro  
Christian Carrillo  
Mariajose Castellanos  
Elizabeth Cotto  
Samantha Cruz  
Matthew Enriquez  
Carlos Fraire  
Salvador Fraire  
Carolina Galvis  
Emiliano Garcia  
Jose Garcia  
Janett Gutierrez  
Maria Hernandez  
Christopher Herrera  
Gerardo Lopez  
Erick Luna  
Daniela Mejia  
Natalia Moreno  
Jose Nieves  
Eduardo Padilla  
Diana Rivera  
Giovanni Sanchez  
Eric Sosa  
Cristian Torreblanca  
Bruno Tovar  
Mayra Vasquez

## Puente 32, bigger and better

By Rachel Ketai and Erica Brenes, Puente English instructors



Two cohorts of Puente 32 students gather for a group picture on campus. Finding a space big enough for the whole familia is a new and welcome challenge now that Puente has doubled in size.

After 30 years of serving one cohort of students at El Camino College, the Puente Program is now barreling through its second year of being supersized. With 62 new students, 63 mentors and over 200 continuing Puentistas on campus, the transfer program is thriving at ECC.

Students have already traveled to UCLA for a team-building ropes course activity and UC San Diego for the Puente Motivational Conference. Students have each been matched with professional mentors who are committed to guiding them on their college journeys. They have bonded with their *familias*, groups of four students who act as support networks both in and outside of Puente classes. They have studied transfer requirements and campus resources, and reflected on their pasts and made plans for their futures in Human Development classes. They have read Latino/a literature and researched and proposed solutions to problems in the Latino/a community in their English classes. They have juggled family responsibilities, jobs, and the transition to college.

If they can accomplish all of this in 14 weeks, what might they achieve next semester and in the coming years while they complete coursework at ECC before transferring? What might they accomplish when they transfer, and when they graduate with four-year degrees? Only time will tell, but with this growing, vibrant group, the future looks bright indeed.



Puentistas gather at the Transfer Motivational Conference at UC San Diego. Each fall, cohorts from all over Southern California convene to tour a campus and learn about how to turn their transfer dreams into realities.

#### PUENTE VOICES: POETRY SPOTLIGHT

##### Lyricz So Fat You Might Gain Weight

By Clarissa Amaya, Puente 32

I am from the streets of my land,  
From hip-hop records and the underground.  
I am from the educated projects,  
The fly, the hip, and the funky beats.  
I am from a bright red rose,  
The prickly stem and gusty blows.  
I am from education through art, Mexico  
From Mama y Papa Perfecto.  
I'm from the hip hop, rockers, jazz and Selena  
From musica romantic y la cultura Azteca.  
I'm from Popocatepetl, Iztaccihuatl,  
From Hawthorne, Inglewood, Lennox, Compton  
Menudo y pozole.  
From the trips to the swapmeets for big gold hoops  
My brother's bright red suede pumas,  
Durango, Tijuana, Guadalajara.  
I am Chicana, Americana,  
Chillona Pero Chingona.

## A Stand-Out Student: Jose “Albert” Garcia

Two days before our motivational conference at the University of California, San Diego, while most of his peers are complaining about how early our bus is planned to leave, Jose Garcia, known by his Puente familia as “Albert” and by his English professor, Erica Brenes, as “The Grammar Ninja,” can be heard hollering across the room, “Who wants to meet at Denny’s before we get on the bus?”

This is typical Jose. This is a first year college student organizing a way to spend more time with his classmates, unphased by the challenges of being a student-athlete. This is Jose, someone uniquely ignited by challenge, delighted to be at school, chasing after his dreams and doing well.

When I ask him what drew him to our program, he remarks, “I heard that Puente helps young students transfer and it is up to us to work hard, and I love to work hard.” That’s clear in everything he does. Inspiringly, he keeps his eyes glued to both his roots and his future, and that helps him confront challenges, stay grounded, and inspire his peers.

In high school, Jose struggled academically and he never liked English, but thanks to counselor, Griselda Castro, he’s learned how to better manage his time, apply a growth mindset, and really grow as a writer. Motivated by his dream to one day be a detective who keeps his community safe and kept inspired daily by his eagerness to make his father proud and to one day provide for his future family, Jose reports that he wants to “be a man for others.” In fact, that’s his personal motto. Organizing regular get-togethers after class, Jose loves being a part of something bigger than himself, and he has been an integral part of our classroom culture: “I feel like this is my second family and in high school I didn’t have that. Now this feels special to me and everyone in Puente is like a brother or sister to me.”

Always happy to check in on Puentistas who may be absent and eager to volunteer his time and peer-review rough drafts in our writing lab, Jose enjoys reminding his friends about the little things, like italicizing book titles and also the big things, like staying focused and earning good marks. For him, Puente means “a family that bonds together.” In Spanish, “puente” may translate directly to “bridge,” but Jose gets sentimental when he explains that it’s much, much more: “We are a group of people on that bridge and we are all there for the same reason, to achieve our goals in life.”



Jose Garcia (far right) is motivated to succeed in college and make his family proud



Mayra Vasquez, Puente 32, has tackled her first semester of college with optimism and determination

## Mayra Vasquez, first-year student with a plan

Puente 32 student Mayra Vasquez enrolled at ECC this fall with a mission to excel in school and transfer to an elite four-year university for her nursing degree, but she needed the help of Puente counselor Maribel Hernandez, her Human Development 101 class, her Puente familia, and mentor to make the plans necessary for that dream to become a reality.

Mayra graduated North High School with acceptance letters to three area California State University campuses, but she wasn’t satisfied.

“[In high school,] I didn’t even attempt to apply to any UCs,” she said. “I tried enough to pass, but I didn’t put my 100 percent into it. I had a lot of family stuff going on in the beginning of high school. My focus wasn’t really on school...Once I saw a lot of my friends get into UC schools and go off to college. I really wanted to be them...I decided to come to El Camino [College] and work my butt off so I could go to one of the UC schools.”

And work hard, she has. Mayra has excelled in a full load of courses. “I’ve really been putting school first,” she said.

But transitioning to college has not come without its challenges, and she is grateful for the support the Puente program offers her. “Puente was like being greeted with open arms and being really comfortable in the classroom setting with my peers,” she said. “In my other classes it was like everyone doing their own thing, but in Puente people are always asking, ‘Are you OK? Do you need help with something?’”

Mayra appreciates the emphasis on Latino/a culture and literature in her Puente English 1A class. “Reading about people who look like you, knowing their stories,” is a powerful reminder that “[if] these people have done it, so can you,” she said.

But she credits her Puente Human Development 101 class with Hernandez as the key turning point in her path as a college student, because she arrived to college with aspirations but no clear plan. “[Instructor and Puente counselor] Maribel would go into how we have to transfer, all the research that goes into transferring...how to choose between a UC and a Cal State, and what each school requires. If I had to figure it out on my own, I would have been completely confused.”

With the help and encouragement of Hernandez, and the new knowledge she gained from the course, Mayra recently revised her educational plan to transfer to University of California, Irvine and is even looking into declaring an English minor.

“I want to transfer to UCI because they have a really great nursing program. I’ve been to that campus before and it’s really nice,” she said. “If you ask me what the American dream is, that’s what it is—going off on your own to college. No one else in my family has gone to college, so I

### PUENTE VOICES: POETRY SPOTLIGHT

#### Who Tells Your Story?

By Naidelyn Buenrostro, Puente 32

Like a dandelion that is freshly blown  
We float off with the wish into the unknown  
As the wind takes each seed off to sprout  
So many questions, so much to doubt  
We will prepare for the worst but hope for the best  
As the wind takes each seed away from the rest  
These will float to be scattered all around  
Some will land far some will land near  
We might not ever see each other again over the years  
And even though we might float off in different directions  
Know that we will always have this connection  
These memories of growing up together  
These memories will bond us forever  
All the life lessons we learned right here  
We learned to be confident and to face our fears  
And even though the future might seem unclear  
We will keep the lessons we learned very near  
No matter where we end up or where we go flyin  
We will always remember we all came from the same dandelion

## Nadia Silva, UC Davis success story

Puente 25 student Nadia Silva currently double majors in psychology and Chicano/a studies at the University of California, Davis and she got there by taking advantage of the second chances that community colleges like ECC and transfer programs like Puente provide.

Nadia was the first in her immediate family to attend a college or university. She wanted to be a good role model for her sisters and make her parents proud. Nadia states, "I have seen how hard my parents have had to work all their lives to provide a better life for me and my sisters, [and] I want to eventually pay them back one day by providing a more financially stable situation for them. College was one of the ways that I knew I would be able to do so."

Nadia was disappointed when she graduated from California Academy of Mathematics and Science without the GPA she would need to attend the college of her choice. ECC provided her a second opportunity to raise her GPA, attend a University of California institution, and earn her bachelor's degree at a lower cost. As she processed her ECC application, Puente was introduced to her. She felt motivated to join Puente because she saw that Puente was made for Latino students to help transfer into a four-year university and that it provided benefits like priority registration, mentors, culturally relevant English instruction, and dedicated counselors.

Puente was also a support system throughout Nadia's college career because she had many obstacles in her life that prevented her from reaching her goals. She notes, "Life hit me hard my first year in community college. I was diagnosed with major depression and anxiety, which affected not only my grades...but also my personal life. I had to take a semester off to take care of myself mentally so that I could continue to be a successful student in college."

Nadia returned to school with the support from the Puente Program's two counselors, Maribel Hernandez and Griselda Castro, and her mentor, Myrna Mendoza. Nadia is grateful for the role Puente played in helping her overcome her setbacks. She explains, "Being able to have the support system and having people that believed in my ability to succeed in higher education was the most important thing that Puente has done for me that has led to my success today."

Puente helped Nadia during the hardest period in her life and gave her the necessary tools to transfer to a four-year university. She states, "Now looking back at it and knowing what I know now about the educational pipeline and how few Latino students actually do transfer, I feel proud of myself. It also makes me feel grateful and proud to have been part of the Puente Program, because programs like these were made to help retention rates of disadvantaged students of color to succeed and me being part of this success is proof that it is working."

### Special Thanks to our 2017-2018 Puente Mentors

Each Puente student is matched with a mentor from the business or professional community who can offer guidance on the path to a college degree. ECC is fortunate to have a rich pool of mentors, many of whom are Puente alumni themselves, volunteer to share their time and wisdom with students each year.

Indira Amaya	Arnulfo Juarez
Argelia Andrade	Jhania Lantan
Julieta Aramburo	Philip Lantz
Martha Arias	Cynthia Lopez-Herrera
Ibeth Arriaga	Edgar Lopez
Marian Rose Bagamaspad	Rene Lozano
Maria Barrio De Mendoza	Araceli Martinez
Thania Bogarin	Myrna Mendoza
Giovanni Bohorquez	Daniela Messarina
Masiel Calderon	Lesley Meza
Ronald Calderon	Carlos Montalvan
Veronica Casillas	Josephine Moore
Carlos Castro	Jeffrey McMahan
Guillermo Castro	Christina Nagao
Jessica Cifuentes	Salvador Navarro
Gilmer Contreras	Toni Newman
Odette Cook	Sue Oda Omori
Todd Crabtree	Oscar Ortiz
Katya De Los Rios	Veronica Palafox
Eileen Del Pino	Edith Parra
Darcie Descalzo	Blaine Pearce
Graciela Diamante	Christian Perez
Rocio Diaz	Blanca Prado
Vanessa Escobar	Jesica Quezada
Vilma Fuentes	Veronica Quinonez
Jaime Gallegos	Dulce Ramirez
Erika Gavitt	Johanna Silva
Bernice Gonzalez	Jennifer Valdez
Ricky Gonzalez	Carla Velasquez-Lopez
Cesar Jimenez	Kristell Villacorta
Maria Jimenez	Breanna Von Stein
	Vanessa Watson

Nadia Silva poses proudly as a UC Davis student. She thanks Puente for helping her achieve her transfer goals.



## Martha Arias gives back

What is a mentor? To most, it's having someone to help with internships and career-related activities, but to Puente students, it is much more. In Puente, becoming a mentor means taking on the task of being a leader in the community. It is someone who volunteers his or her time to help someone in all aspects of his or her life without asking for anything in return. The Puente model dictates that each student be paired directly with a professional like Martha Arias, a director of Human Resources.

Being a source of motivation, dedication, and support are just a few characteristics that represent Puente mentors. Martha first became involved with Puente through counselor and Human Development professor, Griselda Castro. When first approached, Arias says she "excitedly jumped at the opportunity."

She decided to become involved because her "hope and goal is to make a positive difference in the life of others" as well as encouraging and motivating others to "discover and reach their full potential through education." Arias was a first-generation college student herself, so she finds it easy to connect with her mentees as she herself has overcome obstacles many Puente students face during their educational journey, such as finding it difficult at times to "[believe] in [herself and finding] her own self confidence." It is easy to tell how much Martha enjoys giving back to her community, not only through Puente, but also through other various non-profit organizations that focus on education. She believes it is her responsibility to give back and sees these programs as a chance to "[say] thank you for the opportunity [she] received." She hopes that by the end of the year her mentees will leave with "confidence and a greater sense of [belief] in themselves." Martha's continuous hard work and dedication to the program definitely does not go unnoticed. Puente thrives thanks to the "support, guidance,

# WHAT IS PUENTE?

The Puente Project is an academic preparation program for educationally disadvantaged students that is co-sponsored by the University of California and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and is housed at the University of California, Berkeley. 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, counseling, 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 35 years. It is currently implemented in 38 high school and 65 community college sites throughout the state. Puente is open to all students.

## PUENTE HISTORY

Co-directors, Felix Galaviz and Patricia McGrath of 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 65 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 32nd 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. ECC expanded to serve two cohorts in 2016.

## 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 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.
- In 2009-10, the transfer rate of Puente participants was 56%, compared to 44% for all CCC students and 34% of educationally disadvantaged students.

## 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 has now expanded to three community college districts in Texas: El Paso, McAllen and San Antonio.



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.

### For More Information, Please Contact:

Griselda Castro and Maribel Hernandez – Puente Counselors  
[gcastro@elcamino.edu](mailto:gcastro@elcamino.edu) 310-660-3593 ext. 3403  
[mhernandez@elcamino.edu](mailto:mhernandez@elcamino.edu) 310-660-3593 ext. 6568

Erica Brenes and Rachel Ketai – Puente English Instructors  
[rketai@elcamino.edu](mailto:rketai@elcamino.edu) 310-660-3593 ext. 3191  
[ebrenes@elcamino.edu](mailto:ebrenes@elcamino.edu) 310-660-3593 ext. 3175