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THE MERRITT CONNECTION

President's Message

Today we are halfway through our Accreditation journey! The Board of Trustees will read the second draft of the Self-Evaluation Report tonight and, if all goes well, it will then be finalized, printed, and shipped off to the hands of the ACCJC.

This has been no small job. While the purpose of this self-reflection process is to examine the effectiveness of the college's processes as it supports student learning, much can also be said for the internal process that enabled this accomplishment.

With only 18 months to work on what should have been a 2-3 year project, the ever-growing Task Force spent months writing and

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Office of the President
Editor/Writer: Susan May
Contact: smay@peralta.edu

Fruitvale Center: Serving the ESL Community for Nearly Three Decades

In the mid-1980s, when Brenda Mora was an infant, her Mexican-born parents were among many enthusiastic students attending the new Fruitvale Education Center to take ESL classes.

Now age 30 and a UC Davis graduate, Brenda oversees the Merritt-sponsored center and the programs which have grown to include bilingual and transferable Child Development and Psychology classes.

But besides the classes, the program also prides itself on the support it offers students of all ages and backgrounds to help them succeed. "One of the most important things the center does is serve as an introduction to what it's like to take a college course and also what it's like to be a student," says Brenda. "I try to prepare them for the shock of going into a class and finding out what is expected of them."

Brenda is most proud of students like Yacqueline Martinez who came to the Center in 2011 and today has completed all levels of Peralta's ESL classes, is enrolled in English 1A at Merritt, and has a just completed all the requirements for a business certificate.

"The faculty and staff at the center were crucial in helping me achieve my goals," says Yacqueline. "The staff provides support to get us through the process, and faculty, like ESL instructor Carolyn Lake, provide the education we need. Together, with patience and care, they teach us how to be successful college students."

For more info and the Spring schedule, call Brenda at (510) 536-1830 or go to www.merritt.edu/wp/fruitvalecenter.

President's Message

(continued)

editing, sifting through endless drafts, and sitting through late-night meetings to reach the project's deadline.

Now, as we await the ACCJC's visiting team in March, we will begin the next steps: updating the Merritt College Governance Handbook as well as beginning the process to update the Educational Master Plan.

I hope you will all take the time to look through report draft that I emailed to you just before Thanksgiving break and plan to come to the educational forums to learn more.

Thanks to everyone on the Task Force and to all who play a role in supporting this most important responsibility of Merritt College.

—Dr. Norma Ambriz-Galaviz

Flex Days: Jan 15-16

The Professional Development Committee, chaired by Audrey Trotter, has been working diligently to plan Flex Day activities. "We have designed a program to improve institutional climate, culture, and student success," she says, "and given it the theme, "Equity: Better Together.'" She encourages faculty and staff to submit individual workshop proposal forms and send them by Friday, Dec. 12, to atrotter@peralta.edu. More details are forthcoming. (The Merritt activities will coincide with the District's Flex Day on Jan. 14 with a keynote speech by Kevin Powell on "Equality in America" at Laney.)

Students Win Scholarships Big-Time!

Maria Fernandez and Drew Beesley (left) were two of 11 Merritt College students to receive nearly $16,000 in Peralta Foundation Scholarships awards for Fall 2014. Maria, a business administration major planning to transfer, received a total of $1,500 and is very grateful to the Peralta Foundation. "Actions like this inspire me to put my heart into my studies," she says, "and eventually give back to other students who are in search of a better future. "

Debra Jacks, Merritt's coordinator of scholarships, is also pleased with the results. "I'm very excited for the number of our students who both submitted applications and were awarded scholarships. Congratulations to all."

She adds that there will be more scholarships in the spring, including some from the Faculty Senate and ASMC (Associated Students of Merritt College). She encourages all eligible students to apply when they are announced.

New CIS Program Offered in Cybersecurity

A new program leading to the in-demand career of cybersecurity will be offered through Merritt College's Department of Computer Information Systems starting in Spring 2015.

Cybersecurity focuses on protecting computers, networks, programs, and data from unintended or unauthorized access, change or destruction.

The five-course Infrastructure and Application Security Program can be completed in the spring and the summer. The summer semester will include a paid internship at a local Bay Area company.

Students will be able to choose among two career pathways: hardware (Infrastructure) or software (Applications). Before enrolling in the program, students must have successfully completed beginning classes, CIS 1 or CIS 5.

The program will include team-taught classes with industry professionals and Merritt faculty; virtual labs assignments using NET Labs; initial accelerated class schedule to "kick-off" programs; and employment workshops to prepare for internship interviewing and placement.

NEWS BRIEFS

Standing Ovation!

President Dr. Norma Ambriz-Galaviz poses with Dolores Huerta after hearing the civil rights activist's lecture, "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community," on Nov. 15 at Mills College. The talk, which also included Ret. Senator Art Torres, is part of the college's Barbara Lee and Elihu Harris Lecture Series.

Soccer Update

A big thanks to Coach Zach Sullivan and the Men's Soccer Team for a great season! They finished 9-9-3, narrowly missing a playoff birth. Congratulations!

Welcome to Lilia Bello who will be coaching Merritt's new Women's Soccer Team! She's asking interested students to attend a meeting on Dec. 12, at 1 p.m. in the Bldg. F Conf. Room and sign up for KIN 103A. Questions? Call her at 510-338-8451.

Employee Spotlight

CalWORKs Assistant Inspires Other Parents

When new students come into the CalWORKs office to apply for benefits to help them succeed in college, there could be no better person to empathize with them than Sheiba Boissiere.

In 2008 Sheiba was pregnant and in a drug treatment facility program, and she saw no way out. Then her son came along, and it changed her life. "Damarcus was born with breathing difficulties and had to be on life support for two months," says Sheiba, with tears in her eyes. "He was my miracle of joy, and I began a whole new life because of him."

It was later at a residential facility that that one of the counselors recommended that she start college at Merritt. "She said it would be the perfect place for me, up in the hills where I could have choices and dream big about a bright future," says Sheiba.

That counselor would be one of several mentors throughout the next five years who would help Sheiba, starting with a friend who led her to the CalWORKs office where she met counselor Claire Crosetti. Claire saw something special in the CalWORKs recipient and hired her as a student worker and subsequently as a full-time clerical assistant.

"Sheiba is a dedicated worker who is passionate and effective in helping the single parents on welfare in our program," wrote Claire, when she recommended Sheiba for a profile in *The Merritt Connection*. "She does a beautiful job of supporting our students while upholding the integrity of the program."

Damarcus is now a healthy 7-year-old, and Sheiba strives to make him proud of her. She accomplished that in 2013 by graduating with six associate degrees which she hopes to use to become an entrepreneur to help others who may be in a difficult situation like hers. For now, she loves her job, which she says inspires her every day.

"The CalWORKs program has allowed me to become an advocate for others, to understand their situations, and to shine a light on them," says Sheiba. "My message to them is, 'When you have struggles, you need to keep moving forward. The reward will be much greater than you'll ever expect."