



# THE MERRITT CONNECTION

## President's Message



As we all know, accreditation is vital to any institution. So the fact that the ACCJC put Merritt College on probation for not meeting specific standards is a serious concern for which we all must now play a role.

The Accreditation Core Team, co-chaired by Dr. Audrey Trotter and Dr. Mia Kelly, has outlined a guided process for participants to follow to take corrective action to meet the ACCJC standards for which we are out of compliance. The first draft is due on December 1. At this point, the team is in urgent need of help from staff and especially from faculty.

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## The Merritt Connection

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Peralta Community College District  
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## Dual Enrollment Program is a Win-Win for Merritt and for High School Students

Keith Dobbs, a 1981 graduate of McClymonds High School, is proud to be back on campus. Now a retired Oakland Police Officer, he is teaching Community Relations, one of Merritt's Administration of Justice classes, as part of the college's growing Dual Enrollment Program.



Along with the program's benefit of giving students college credit and collecting FTEs for Merritt, Dobbs sees his roles as giving important lessons to the impressionable Oakland teens.

"This class starts a dialogue about relations between the police and the community so they can more critically examine situations by getting all sides, not just what they observe which is not always positive," says Dobbs. "We hope that this class can bridge that gap and help build trust in the community."

In planning for the Dual Enrollment Program, says Dr. Tina Vasconcellos, Dean of Academic Pathways and Success, it is key to pair up meaningful classes like Community Relations with the most appropriate instructors who are motivated to teach high schoolers. This helps assure that the class is successful in combination with the high school's support.

Others of the 16 classes being taught in seven high schools this semester include Racism in America, Medical Assisting, Career Exploration, College Preparedness, College Success, Business, Financial Literacy, African-American History, Communications, Psychology, and Anthropology. For the Spring semester, the District has received 64 requests from high schools for classes.

"While these partnerships are not new, we are now looking more strategically at how we can work to round out the high schools curriculum in terms of being part of their career pathways

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## President's Message

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If you haven't yet joined any of the nine recommendation sub-committees, please contact Dr. Mia Kelly (510-508-6686) or Project Manager Dinh Truong (510-209-7471) to find out where and how you can help. The team has created a newsletter and a website to keep you up to date.

*Division II News:* One of the newest developments that occurred in late Spring and was confirmed in the Summer was the allocation of more than \$2 million dollars in grants for academic and related career pathways. Thus another sense of urgency was created to have someone administrating these dollars immediately.

In the effort to get ahead of the challenge, I successfully identified a candidate with prior career pathway experience. The grant dollars allowed us to hire Rachel Antrobus as Interim Dean of Academic Pathways and Student Success while we conduct the posting and selection of this temporary administrative position. You will read more about Rachel in the November newsletter.

*Grand Opening:* Be sure to help celebrate the opening of the Barbara Lee Center for Science and Allied Health on Friday, November 6, at 11:30 a.m.!

Stay healthy and, as I learned the hard way, don't procrastinate: get your flu shot!

Dr. Norma Ambriz-Galaviz  
President

program," she says. "We are still considering this a pilot program and have to work out some glitches, but it is really exciting. It's a win-win program for us all."

Overall, says Dr. Vasconcellos, the focus is on the high school students who will now graduate from high school with college credit to give them the incentive they might not have had to go on to further their education.

"Once students know they are successful at taking college classes, we're hoping there is that shift that changes their academic expectation," she says. "They may never have thought they could go to college, but now they might think, 'Maybe I am college material after all.'"

## There's an App for That!: Students Learn Interview Skills on Their Smart Devices

Long-time Merritt counselor Steve Pantell has spent decades teaching students interview skills, something he considers the most important part of landing a job. But working one-on-one with students has always been extremely time consuming. Now he is thrilled to have found a much better, high-tech solution that this generation of students will feel comfortable with, and he wants to let everyone at Merritt know.



"I discovered an app called InterviewStream which allows students to take practice employment interviews on the web through their iphones or other electronic devices," he says enthusiastically. "It cuts down on the labor-intensive part of having to schedule mock interviews with individual students. Now when they are done, the interview goes immediately to their instructor for feedback and can be sent to whoever else they want to review it."

The InterviewStream app has actually been around since 2003 and, according to its website, is used at more than 500 campuses, including Harvard and Penn State. The app has other great features, like suggestions for more than 7,000 questions and the ability for instructors to record their own discipline-specific questions for their students.

Thanks to Pantell, the college is now running a one-year pilot program for all Merritt instructors and getting enthusiastic responses from a number of departments eager to use the service with their students.

For more information, contact Pantell at [spantell@peralta.edu](mailto:spantell@peralta.edu).

## Long-time Saturday Art Instructor Dies

Michael Dee Burnett

Cookinham, 73, a beloved art instructor who taught the Saturday Painting class since 1999 and was dedicated to his students



and their success, passed away on October 16 following a brief illness, reports Sheila Metcalf-Tobin, Art Department Chair.

“Michael faithfully supported his students’ self expression and creative process in many ways, including organizing an art show and sale of the students’ work to celebrate the end of each semester,” says Sheila. “He and his students also created a Facebook page, *Michael Dee Cookinham’s Painting Class*, where you can see some of the shows.”

In the posting of the art work below, Michael commented, “*Thanks so much to my wonderful painters, makes it all worthwhile.*”



Michael is survived by his wife, two stepsons, and a brother.

For information about plans to honor Michael’s life and service to the college, contact Sheila at [smetcalf@peralta.edu](mailto:smetcalf@peralta.edu).

### Student Profile

## Soledad & Max: A Surprise Proposal!

When Soledad Martinez was asked to go for a walk on the grounds of the beautiful Landscape Horticulture Department and later have lunch with a District administrator, she didn’t think anything of it. As Secretary of ASMC, she is very active and enjoys her many roles.



But when she arrived and saw the father of her boyfriend, Max Leung, she got suspicious. Then she noticed the interlocking hearts formed with red and white rose petals and she knew. “My heart was beating so fast and I started shaking,” she says. “I knew that this was the day I had been waiting for.”

A few minutes later, Max was on his knee proposing to his girlfriend of four years as tearful friends, relatives, and colleagues came out of their hiding places to celebrate the joyous occasion.

This match made at Merritt actually started four years earlier at Sears where they were both working. Max had his eye on Soledad but she said she just wanted to be friends. “I had never had a boyfriend before, and I just wanted to focus on school,” she says. But when she got to know him better, she knew that he was the one for her.

At the time, Soledad was transferring from CCSF to Merritt and after realizing how much better it was, convinced Max to attend as well. So he followed her lead and joined her as a member of Puente (one of the few Asian “Puentistas”), excelled in his classes with her help, and followed her and now is ASMC Chief Justice. It was there that they met Dr. Lilia Chavez who would play an important role in their lives. “We got to know Dr. Chavez, and she became our role model and practically a family member,” says Max. “She was our inspiration to move forward and meet our goals. She’s always there to support us.”

And now they have their whole future ahead of them. Max, who is studying criminal justice, hopes to someday become a homicide detective. Soledad, whose love of learning led her mother to enroll her early in kindergarten, is studying communication and wants to continue to the doctorate level and return to work at Merritt. (“Actually,” she says jokingly, “I want to come back and take Dr. Cedillo’s job!”)

What is the key to Max and Soledad’s relationship? “Communication,” says Soledad, as Max shakes his head emphatically. “We never argue, we never keep anything bottled up. If there is a problem, we talk about it and fix it right away.” They plan to marry in May of 2017.

Congratulations to Max and Soledad! May they have a prosperous marriage, and may we all be inspired by their simple life lesson!

## SLOAC News

by Jennifer Shanoski

The Merritt College Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (SLOAC) has undergone some drastic changes recently. Instead of one coordinator, we now have four!

Susan Andrien and Ann Elliott (English) will be working with Division 1, Heather Casale (Nutrition) will lead Division 2, Marty Zielke (Counseling) will support students services, and I (Chemistry) will work on the Institutional Learning Outcomes.

We are here to support the college's assessment work and will be holding weekly Taskstream & Assessment Workshops in L-132 on Tuesdays 12-1, Tuesdays 6-7, and Fridays 11-12. Stop in, say hello, and get your assessment plans in top shape for the fall semester.

If you can't attend a workshop, please be sure to check out our website ([www.merritt.edu/wp/slo](http://www.merritt.edu/wp/slo)) which has a variety of support materials including the current status of the college, assessment rubrics, examples of quality assessment, word documents to outline your assessment, and more!

## Barbara Lee Intern



Congratulations to My Williams who is now an intern in Congresswoman Barbara Lee's office. It's no wonder she was chosen with her leadership qualities as ICC chair and BSU officer and her excellent grades, all while being the head of her household. She is passionate about social justice and minority issues and hopes to make a difference in the world. We're sure you will, My!

## Classified Staff Profile

### Debra Jacks: A Fulfilling 36-Year Career

When Debra Jacks got a call in 1979 from then-Peralta District Chancellor Donald Godbold, she thought it was a prank. She had worked at Merritt in a grant-funded, student services-related position for two years. But when the grant wasn't renewed, she got a job in private industry and had been in it for six months.



"I didn't know why he would be calling me," says Debra, "and it took awhile before he convinced me it was really him. It was so embarrassing!"

In fact, Chancellor Godbold was calling to offer her an opportunity to work on a pilot project at Merritt to assist matriculating students called the Student Accountability Model. She accepted the offer and never left. Until now.

After 36 years of helping students fulfill their educational dreams, Debra will retire on October 30, leaving behind decades of a truly gratifying career. "I get thank-you cards and letters and I run into students all the time who I've assisted and they tell me how they attribute their success to our relationship on one level or another. It's a wonderful and satisfying feeling."

Though Debra claims she doesn't really want to retire, the broad smile she's walked around with for the past few months belies that statement. Ask her what she's going to do when she retires, and she reels off a long list without hesitation.

"I love to cook, and I have a folder of recipes I want to test out on my friends and family," says Debra, who has seven brothers and sisters-in-law, multiple nieces and nephews, and a 94-year-old father she is looking forward to seeing more often. "I want to have time to spoil them all with my pies and cobblers because I am overdue. They are always saying, "You owe me a cheesecake, you owe me a sweet potato pie." Debra says she will also find time to exercise, garden, read, and take the time to pamper herself.

But she will never forget about Merritt. In fact, she'll soon be back to volunteer two days a week helping with in-reach services and then work part-time to help support Sankofa's efforts.

"I've had some awesome opportunities at Merritt both professionally and personally," says Debra, who has done everything from edit and proofread catalogs to write press releases for events. "I've had wonderful administrators and supervisors, and I've learned a lot from my colleagues. "My position through my entire career has always been, whatever needs to be done, as long as I have the skill set, I will do it, and it makes us all look good."