



The Merritt Connection

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Dr. Norma Ambriz-Galaviz, President

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President's News & Notes



Chancellor Laguerre to Deliver Gift of Soccer Balls to Haitian Children

The athletic departments at Merritt, Contra Costa, and Solano colleges teamed up to provide soccer balls to Haitian children to be delivered by PCCD Chancellor Jowell Laguerre. They recently joined together on the soccer field of Merritt College for a photo shoot to show off the shiny new balls. "We all believe it's our mission at the community college level to reach out not only in our neighborhoods, but to globally assist young people and build goodwill," said John Wade, Contra Costa's athletic director, who added that the gesture was purely voluntary with no college funds involved. "We are extremely fortunate that Chancellor Laguerre will be able to transport the soccer balls to Haiti for the children." **Pictured: President Norma Ambriz-Galaviz, Chancellor Jowel Laguerre, and representatives from the athletic departments at Merritt, Contra Costa, and Solano Colleges.** (Photo credit: Birhon Quizhpe)



PTK Member from Merritt Honored Among 93 Statewide for Scholarship and Leadership



Merritt PTK member Xiaokai (Kaiey) Zheng, who moved to the U.S. from China just three years ago with plans to pursue a career in health, was among 93 members in California to be named to the Phi Theta Kappa All-California Community College Academic Team. This annual event to recognize scholarship, leadership, and community service was held on March 24 at the Sacramento Convention center, hosted by the Community College League of California. President Norma Ambriz-Galaviz and Faculty/Chapter Advisor Barbara A. Dimopoulos attended.

"Kaiey is a full-time student studying to be a Diagnostic Medical Sonographer and is dedicated to women's health issues and education," says Barbara. "She volunteers her time at Kaiser Hospital where

she uses her native language to facilitate communication between patients and hospital staff. We congratulate her on her outstanding achievements and thank her for representing Beta Theta Lambda Chapter at Merritt College. **Pictured: Kaiey Zheng with Merritt President Norma Ambriz-Galaviz.**

Green Job Center Offers ENVMT Students Chance for Experience and Income



In an effort to help Environmental Management and Technology (ENVMT) students find employment to get experience in jobs related to the environment and to earn money, program faculty initiated a Green Jobs Center this semester. Wendy Wheeler, ENVMT adjunct faculty member, along with Beth Teper, ENVMT coordinator of the project, find that many students with a passion for learning in environmental fields need to work to allow them the financial ability to continue their education. "These opportunities provide students with key skills and references to add to their

resumes and often lead to full-time employment down the road," says Wheeler. "Additionally, our environmental classes benefit when students bring real-world examples back into the classroom!"

Beth Teper actively connects with local employers and organizations in the community to expand the opportunities for students to find success and implement environmental solutions in our area. The East Bay Regional Park District recently began offering paid internships to Merritt students that have traditionally been allotted to four-year college students because of the quality and relevance of Merritt's ENVMT courses and the caliber of the students. Several Merritt students have already been hired as Student Aids, Recreation Leaders, Field Interns, and Ranger/Naturalists. "When students help build an environmentally sustainable, socially just, community for all to live in," says Teper, "we all benefit."



For more info or referrals to the Green Jobs Center, contact Beth Teper and Wendy Wheeler at merrittgreencareers@gmail.com. **Pictured: Top left, Watershed Restoration class at Leona Canyon Trail (off Merritt Parking Lot E); right, Wendy Wheeler and Beth Teper**

—Nancy Cediwyn

Now You Can Request a Professional Development Book from the Library's New Collection

The Library is welcoming requests and recommendations to augment its new collection of professional development books recently created to provide practical information resources to administrators, faculty, and staff interested in improving teaching and learning at Merritt.

Using \$7,000 in Student Equity funding to meet this goal, the first round of print and electronic books focuses primarily on issues of student access and achievement, including assessment, online education, pedagogy, public policy, social justice, and student success.



Chemistry Chair and instructor Jennifer Shanoski recently took advantage of the opportunity after participating in a weeklong workshop on Food Chemistry sponsored by the National Science Foundation and funded by Merritt's PDC committee. "I had wanted to develop a general education food chemistry course with the ultimate goal of encouraging a wider audience to learn about and love

chemistry,” says Jennifer (pictured with students) “I requested the book, *Modernist Cuisine: The Art and Science of Cooking*,” a six-volume encyclopedia-type series of books that covers the techniques ,history, and science of cooking. I will use these books to help develop my curriculum.”

Check out the collection and speak to a librarian to find out more! (**Pictured: Lots of new books and Dr. Jennifer Shanoski with students**).

–*Nghiem Thai*

Career Classes and the Beauty of the Science Building Attract Tour Goers

March 4 - Merritt hosted more than 40 high school seniors from Oakland Unified School District who explored our programs and saw our beautiful campus. This tour was a unique format, as it was in partnership with Student Services and Division II with the morning filled with mini lectures from Dr. Jennifer Yates (Radiologic Science), Demond Simmons (EMT) and Brian Rowning (Biosciences) who highlighted the skills and benefits of our programs and later discussed the matriculation process. Students explored the campus and were warmly welcomed by staff and faculty across the campus (thanks, Coach McMiller)! By the afternoon, over half of the students were ready to become Merritt Thunderbirds. A warm thank you for all of those who were a part of the effort. We are excited to continue this partnership. There will be many more tours scheduled this spring to bring more of our local youth onto our campus, so please tell me if you are interested in getting involved in this effort! **Pictured: Demond Simmons presenting the benefits of Merritt’s EMT program to the group.**



–*Rachel Antrobus*

March 16 – An inquisitive group of Chabot College science faculty, staff, and administrators made an exploratory visit to our Barbara Lee Science and Allied Health Center, conducting research and gathering information for the design and construction of their own new science building. The group, led by Dr. Stacey Thompson, formerly Merritt’s Division I Dean and now Chabot’s Vice President of Academics, spent a considerable amount of time observing many of the building’s unusual features and details, as pointed out by Dean Rosemary Delia and Biosciences instructor Hank Fabian, who gave them a comprehensive tour of the classrooms, labs, and state-of-the-art equipment.

One-Day College Workshop and Tour Given to Lead to Fall Peralta Registrations

For the third year in a row, Merritt partnered with the Transition Partnership Project and the Resource Teachers of Oakland Unified School District to provide a comprehensive Orientation, Assessment, Campus Tour, and Student Educational Plan for students coming from Castlemont, Oakland High, Oakland Technical, Skyline, and Sojourner Truth High Schools. With assistance from Maria Spencer of the Welcome Center and the staff of Disability Services from Merritt and Berkeley City College, 34 students participated in Orientation, 26 student participated in Assessment, and 23 participated in the development of their Initial Student Educational Plan for the Fall Semester.

The students were able to individually meet with a Disability Services Counselor in order to identify courses that would be most appropriate for them for their first semester. We are proudly offering new courses which would be most appropriate for those with needs for additional help in the basics of Math and English, and we anticipate that these courses would provide pathways for success in either Certificate or Degree programs for the future.

The coordinator from the Transition Partnership Project, pleased with the tour, said, “We had a great turn out for the One-Day College Workshop at Merritt College. The staff welcomed us all with open arms!! It was a very productive day for our students.” Thanks to Leslyn Henry who headed up the OUSD staff which included Lakisha Beverly, Carmen Buenger, and others. This program will ensure that these students will have completed the necessary steps to register for classes for the Fall and be successful in the Peralta Community College District – no matter which school they attend.

Next we will be offering workshops to help students register on Wednesday, May 4 and Wednesday, May 11, from 2 to 5 p.m. in P-306.

–Mary Ciddio

Campus Easter Egg Hunt Brings Holiday Fun to Local Children—and Adults!



Thanks to coordination from several student organizations, Spring Break got rolling on March 19 with a first-ever Easter Egg Hunt for Merritt families which brought nearly 60 adults and children to the Merritt campus for the event. What was so special about it? My childhood memories of Easter egg hunts never included indoor bowling with bunny pins, miniature golf, musical chairs, the game ‘Simon Says,’ hula-hoops, flying saucer toss, jump rope, soap bubbles, paddle ball and music from favorite children’s songs. After the traditional egg hunt on the front lawn, the children were treated to freshly grilled hotdogs and hamburgers, drinks and other goodies. Some of the adults reconnected with their

“inner child” and joined in some of the games.

Students from Ability Counts, Street Scholars, Unity, and ASMC/Inter-Club Council, and ASMC/Inter-Club Council, came together to fund, organize, prepare and host this magical event. Also participating were Michael Price, a community member who donated his grill master skills and time to provide a hot lunch for everyone, and Merritt staff: Ability Counts advisors Mary Ciddio and Barbara Dimopoulos, Dean Romeo Garcia, and Dr. Arnulfo Cedillo, Vice President of Student Services. Randy Dillard set the venue in the Student Lounge which was decorated by Merritt students, and Ron Perez provided technical support.



It sounds like the Easter Egg Hunt may become a new Merritt tradition, according to Jennifer Hughes, Ability Counts Founding President, “Next year’s Egg Hunt will be bigger and better! **Pictured: Top left: Children**

hunting for Easter eggs, Bottom right: Ability Counts Club with faculty advisor Barbara Dimopoulos.

–Barbara Dimopoulos

Puente Team Returns from Regional Training Energized to Teach & Learn!

Last month I attended the Puente Northern Regional Training with new Puente counselor Jose Salceda and returned energized and eager to share our new knowledge with Merritt College colleagues, administrators, and students.

A highlight for me was meeting world-renowned journalist, Sonia Nazario, author of *Enrique's Journey*, a mesmerizing non-fiction book I use in my English classes that tells the harrowing trek that thousands of unaccompanied minors from Central America and Mexico take in search of their mothers who work in the U.S. This book has had a transformative effect on my students' perceptions of immigrants. Many of them have cried because they now see day laborers through a very different, much wider lens. *Enrique's Journey* has really helped students make visceral connections between their own experiences and our changing society."



Also during the conference, the Puente Statewide Office provided the community college and high school teams a report of the latest Puente data. Overall Merritt's data continues to reflect significant positive impact on retention, persistence, and success for Puente students despite the fact that state funding has dropped from \$85,182 in 2000-2001 to \$24,557 in 2014-2015 for Student Academic Preparation and Educational Partnerships. Says Jose, "It is validating and encouraging seeing that the hard work and dedication of the Puente Team at Merritt College is truly making a difference."

One of the most inspiring components of these kinds of Puente Trainings is seeing what other Puente Teams are doing at



their campuses. One English instructor presented a dynamic workshop titled, "Conceiving Another World: Developing a Counter Narrative Through Art." Counselors and instructors viewed films on engagement, and we had a discussion on how to work together to support students through emotionally charged material. These kinds of trainings play a tremendous role in my professional development and commitment to education as I'm always changing things up and trying not to be complacent.

Puente has demonstrated such remarkable results in California that other states such as Texas and Washington are now establishing Puente Project programs at some of their community colleges campuses. One such college, Highline College in Des Moines, Washington, visited Merritt's Puente team this week to learn more about the program, its curriculum, and the symbiotic relationship between the College and the Puente Project which promotes our student success. ***Pictured: Isela Santana with author Sonia Nazario.***

–Isela Santana

Announcements & Events

- **Friday, April 1** – 1:30-3 p.m. Master Plan Town Hall Meeting
- **Sat., April 9** – Track & Field Annual Home Game (see season schedule at merritt.edu/wp/track/schedule)
- **Fri., April 15** – 6-8 p.m., Opening Reception, 17th Annual Merritt Art Show, S Building.
- **Tues., April 26**, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Quad – Community Health Fair, sponsored by Health Services
- **Fri., April 29** – 7th Annual Achievement Awards Celebration, Scott's Seafood Restaurant
- **Wed., May 11** – ASMC Scholarship Awards

Share Your News with the Merritt Community

Please send your suggested ideas, articles and/or photos to Merritt Connection Editor Susan May at smay@peralta.edu.