



# The Merritt Connection

Sept. 6, 2016

Dr. Marie-Elaine Burns, Interim President

## Inside this Issue:

- ❖ *President's Message*
- ❖ *Reaching Out to the Community*
- ❖ *Get the Word Out About Late-Start Classes*
- ❖ *Social Media Reaches Far and Wide*
- ❖ *MLK, Jr. Freedom Center Youth Go on Trip*
- ❖ *Welcome to New Faculty & Staff*
- ❖ *New ASMC Leaders Get to Work*
- ❖ *Profile: Meet Margie Rubio*
- ❖ *Students Return from China*
- ❖ *Dr. Chavez Speaks at SF State Graduation*
- ❖ *Basketball Coach Among Top Ten*
- ❖ *Sankofa Students Visit Eastern HCBUs*
- ❖ *RadSci Graduates Get Pinned*
- ❖ *Share Your News/Deadlines*

## The Merritt Connection Returns; Share Your News, We Want to Read About You!



Welcome to the Fall Semester and *The Merritt Connection's* first issue for 2016-17. I've been here just about a month and I've enjoyed getting to know so many of you and hearing about the good work you've been doing. I look forward to working with you all in the coming year. There's so much that has happened already as you'll read below—from the new employees who have joined us and the new inspirational banners beautifying the campus, to our new ASMC leaders and a new big push for community outreach and for marketing through social media. I hope you will take advantage of the newsletter to let us know of your accomplishments as well as news about your departments and programs. Please send your articles (or ideas) and photos to Susan May at [smay@peralta.edu](mailto:smay@peralta.edu). (See deadlines below). Thanks for all you do!



## Merritt Reaches Out at Street Fairs and Super Saturdays

You couldn't miss Merritt College these past few weeks as faculty, staff, and administrators joined Outreach Coordinator Maria Spencer at local Oakland fairs while others helped several hundred students who took advantage of registration on Super Saturdays. "It was fun to work the booth and interact with the crowd," says Physics/Astronomy Instructor Tom Renbarger. "We should encourage more people to do this!" Check with Maria at [mspencer@peralta.edu](mailto:m Spencer@peralta.edu) if you'd like to join her.

## Get the Word Out: 60+ Late-Start Fall Classes Available

Although enrollment period for full-term classes has passed, there are more than 60 late-start classes in everything from Anthropology to Math to Small Business Management (including 20 online) that students can register for now. Please encourage students to check the **Late-Start Class List** on the website, social media, Student Service bulletin boards, and on flyers available at Admissions or from [smay@peralta.edu](mailto:smay@peralta.edu).



## Merritt's Social Media is a Great Way to Get Your News to the Community



Merritt College  
@merrittcollegeofficial

Did you know that Merritt College has a Facebook account? And Instagram? And Twitter? With nearly 1,000 followers and growing every day, Merritt's Facebook page (merrittcollegeofficial) has become one of the best ways to get the word out about the college's classes, events, and people, and the other social media platforms aren't far behind. Check them out by going to [www.merritt.edu](http://www.merritt.edu) and clicking on the appropriate icons pictured in the left column. If you'd like items posted, send to [smay@peralta.edu](mailto:smay@peralta.edu) with a photo or flyer if possible (it will be posted on all social media outlets and the website as well).



## Youth from MLK, Jr. Freedom Center Learn About Civic Engagement on 30-Day Trip

Interim President Marie-Elaine Burns met with the youth, interns, and staff of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Freedom Center upon their return from spending 30 days in intensive civic engagement in homes and community settings in the Central Valley. Over the month they knocked on 7,000 doors, registered 254 citizens to vote, and attended 98 hours of civic engagement classes. The Freedom Center, a partner of Merritt College, is located on campus. **Pictured with Dr. Burns: Peralta Trustee Linda Handy; Dolores Huerta, United Farm Workers Co-Founder; Assemblyman Sandré Swanson; and Mel King, Associate Vice Chancellor for Workforce Development and Continuing Education (WDCE).**



*Above: New employee orientation during Flex Day.*

### Administrators

Dr. Marie-Elaine Burns, Interim President  
Dr. Siri Brown, Interim Dean, Division I  
Dr. Lilia Chavez, Dean of Special Programs & Grants  
Dr. Herbert Kitchen, Interim Director of Student Activities & Campus Life  
Roberta Kunkel, Dean, Division II  
Dr. Jeffrey Lamb, Vice President of Instruction

### Welcome to New Faculty, Staff, and Administrators!

Some faces are new, some have been around but in different capacities, but they all deserve a big "Welcome" for joining Merritt College in their new roles.

### Counselors

Mary Ciddio, Disabled Services  
Stefanie de Vito, Veterans Services  
Derrick Ross, Sankofa  
Jose Salcedo, Puente

### Faculty

Brock Drazen, Head Track & Field Coach  
Andrew "Evan" Nichols, English  
Dr. Maria Suarez, Biology  
Nghiem Thai, Library

### Staff

Pauline Pang Sagara, Financial Aid Specialist  
Margie Rubio, Student Services Specialist  
Daraja Wagner, CAFYES Project Manager

## New ASMC Leaders Get Right to Work After Being Inspired and Sworn In at Retreat



Congratulations to the new leaders of the Associated Students of Merritt College (ASMC) who were sworn in on August 16 and got to work immediately! Prior to their official appointments, they participated in the Third Annual ASMC Student Leadership Retreat on August 15 and 16 where they were welcomed and encouraged by Merritt's administrators and faculty, presented with workshops on Title IX and the budget, and inspired by past ASMC presidents Marquita Price and My Williams.

"The main focus of the Student

Leadership Retreat is to ensure our new student leaders have the tools necessary to equip them to govern the 6,000+ students enrolled at Merritt," says Dr. Herbert Kitchen, who gave the opening remarks. "It's a roadmap where our student leaders can learn, grow and succeed in their new leadership roles at Merritt."

The next day, after intensive training of Parliamentary Law and Procedure and Robert's Rules, President Burns gave the oath of office to the 2016-2017 ASMC Leadership team, followed by an installation lunch, and the group's first official council meeting.



## Sankofa Students Expand Their Educational Vision During Summer Tour of Ten East Coast HBCUs

Ten Sankofa students had the opportunity to visit ten Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in five states on the East Coast over the summer thanks to Dr. Charity Clay, Sankofa program director and sociology professor, who helped organize the trip with Stepping in the Right Direction Tours and also accompanied the group.

Staying at hotels and traveling by bus, the students toured the campuses, spoke to admissions counselors and students, and even applied for some of the schools and got conditional admission, much to their surprise and delight. For some, it was a thrilling experience just to be out of the state or even on a plane for the first time, but for all of them, visiting the HBCUs opened up a new world.



"I wanted to take students on the trip to expand their vision," says Dr. Clay. "Many students are just pushed into the UC and CSU system, but there are HBCUs that are equally great academically and significantly better culturally for Black students in terms of their support."

For Rashidat Umar, the trip was truly inspirational. "It was an amazing experience to know that I can push myself beyond what I thought as far as my education," she says. "Also the history and foundation that I learned as a person in the Black community made me really want to learn more about our people."  
*(Pictured: Caleb Mahlangu, Rashidat Umar, Chioma Nwachukwu and Ajari McCaster.)*

**(For more details, photos, and student testimonials, go to [www.merritt.edu/wp/sankofa](http://www.merritt.edu/wp/sankofa).)**

## Radiologic Science Pinning Packs the House with 200 Guests Honoring Students' Achievement



More than 200 guests, including friends and family from as far away as Vietnam, came to campus on August 4 to celebrate the pinning of the 16 students who graduated from the prestigious Radiologic Science Program. Among the in-house guests were Division II Dean Rosemary Delia, Vice President of Student Services Dr. Arnulfo Cedillo, and Vice President of Instruction Dr. Jeffrey Lamb.

Dr. Jennifer Yates, Program Director, officiated at the ceremony where Lyndi Buchanan received the Marion Petrecca Tadlock Scholarship and four additional outstanding graduates received the Roentgen Alumni Award: Herlyne Kaur, Maria Delgado, Justin Tarnowski, and Tommy Chan. During the candle lighting ceremony, the graduates, faculty, and Radiologic Technologists in the audience recited "The Radiographer's Oath" together.

"It was a 'goosebumps' moment," says Dr. Yates, who then concluded the honors with the Pinning Ceremony and Certificate Award for each of the graduates. "The amount of energy and excitement in the room made the graduates feel like rock stars!" she says. "First-year students helped with tickets at the door and did food service and clean-up. They are looking forward to their turn next year!"

## Merritt Flex Days Succeed in "Strengthening OUR College Together" Drawing Record Attendance



After a welcome by Chancellor Jowel Laguerre and Merritt leaders, *Flex Days 2016: Strengthening OUR College Together: Time for Action* was led off by dynamic keynote speaker Helen Benjamin, Chancellor of the Contra Costa Community College District, who gave a powerful presentation and exercise about inclusion. All agreed that the event was a big success with record attendance and just the enthusiasm and participation needed to start off the new semester.

The two days of activities planned by the Professional Development Committee, chaired by Jason Holloway, offered informational sessions on everything from Communication, Moodle, Institutional Research, Smart Classrooms, ASMC, Assessment, InterviewStream, Tobacco Prevention, Conflict Resolution, and orientation for new faculty. On Friday, the day started with a presentation and slide show from two of the Merritt students who went to China, Disabled Services information, a Title IX update from President Burns, and the latest information on Accreditation, Budgets, and Institutional Research. A break for lunch included a delicious barbeque before the Divisions and Student Services got together to plan the year ahead.



"It was an extremely successful two days of activities," says Jason. "There really was something for everyone, and the evaluations were very positive. Thanks to the committee for helping make it so successful."

*(Professional Development Committee members: Jason Holloway, Chair, Dr. Arnulfo Cedillo, Nghiem Thai, Samantha Kessler, Margie Rubio, Maria Spencer, Charity Clay, and Tom Renbarger)*

## Returning from China, Merritt Students Say the Trip Changed Their Lives

“We are here to attest to the fact that Merritt College really does change lives,” began My Williams as she and fellow student Shadie Lee gave a presentation during the August 19 Flex Day about their two-week trip to China in June. The students showed more than 100 photos. The trip took 21 Peralta District students to three cities: Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai, where they attended classes at local universities and did lots of sightseeing. The trip was a partnership between the Peralta Community College District and the China-United States Exchange Foundation and Wanxiang Group Corporation.



“This experience was a milestone in my life,” said My, who, as a 6’2” Black woman got lots of attention and was in awe of how much respect their entire group got from the Chinese people. “It took me to the next level—the memories I created, the friendships we shared, and my development as a leader and a scholar. It had so much impact on my life.” And for Shadie, who herself is Mien, one of the 55 ethnic minorities in China, it was the first time she had ever been out of the country. “It was so amazing to learn about the history, the economic development, and the culture of the country,” she says. “It was the experience of a lifetime.”



## Bridge to Health Care Program Offers Options to Careers

After six weeks of gaining information and hands-on experience about potential careers in healthcare, a group of 25 participants in the “Bridge to Healthcare Careers Summer Program” celebrated their successful graduation with speeches and certificates—and the knowledge of career choices as they make decisions about their future. “This experience helped me reinforce that I wanted to be in the medical field,” says Ashley Tejada, 19, (below), a sophomore at UC Merced majoring in human biology. “I just didn’t know there were so many options!”



Discovering those options was precisely the point of this innovative program. The participants had the opportunity to learn about Merritt’s health and science programs from Merritt instructors who talked to them about such fields as

Medical Assisting, Radiologic Science, Nutrition and Dietetics, Nursing, Emergency Medical Technician, and Biosciences.

The program was co-sponsored by Merritt (thanks to the efforts of Division II Deans Roberta Kunkel and Rosemary Delia, and others) along with the SF Foundation, the Unity Council, the Alameda County Health Pipeline Partnership, the Workforce Investment Board, Work-Based Learning, and Career Ladders Project.



## **Coach McMiller Named Among Top Ten in Northern California**

Congratulations to Head Basketball Coach Keenan McMiller who was ranked among the top 10 Northern California Community College Men's Basketball Coaches by NorCal Prep and Juco Basketball. As was written in his commendation, "McMiller and his Merritt Thunderbirds are coming off a 15-14 season and 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish in the Bay Valley Conference. McMiller has made one State Final Four appearance and an additional State Final Four as the Associate Head Coach...Merritt is known for its athleticism and defense."

As for Keenan, he is honored and also grateful for the support he has received from the Merritt community.

"I want to give thanks to the Merritt College administration, faculty, staff, current students, and alumni who have given me the ability to learn, work, teach and coach around so many wonderful people." Go T-Birds!



## **Dr. Lilia Chavez Spoke About Healing Through Education at SF State La Raza Graduation**



As the keynote speaker at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Noche de La Familia at San Francisco State's La Raza graduation last May, Dr. Lilia Chavez, Merritt's Dean of Special Programs and Grants, gave the graduating class some words of wisdom to lead them toward the future. "Education helps us understand and confront the injustices we face," she began. She went on to talk about what she calls life's 3 T's: Triumph, Transition and Transform. "The Triumph requires that you remember your feelings and emotions and hold on to them...when we Transition, our spirit and souls are announcing an ending, but a new beginning is at the door...and to Transform yourself,

you have to continue to hold your integrity, trust, and respect for yourself..."Many people believe that knowledge is power, but I believe that if you do not use what you have learned, it is nothing...Obtaining an education is a fundamental aspect of one's life in order to change yourself and make a difference in your communities. Don't be afraid to step through and continue on your journey."

## ***Classified Staff Profile***

### **New Student Support Specialist Margie Rubio Came Up the Hill and Set an Example for All**



It is most fitting that Margie Rubio was chosen for a position that includes overseeing Merritt's Welcome Center, a place where students can feel comfortable asking for the help they need to succeed in their educational goals.

It was 17 years ago that Margie herself came to Merritt to change her life. Raised in a low-income, single-parent home in Oakland, she attended Fremont High School and soon was swept into a drug-selling lifestyle. But in 1995, two years after she had graduated, and because of the influence of her sister who had gone to Merritt, she found herself heading up the hill to make a change. "I came up and brought one of my friends from my 'hood and said, 'let's make something of ourselves before we go to jail or get killed,'" says Margie. "But when we got there,

we didn't have a good experience, and we didn't feel like we would fit in." So they went back down.

*(continued)*

It wasn't until 2009, when Margie became pregnant, that she knew she had to give it another chance. "I didn't want to raise my son under those conditions, I didn't feel like I was educated enough to raise a child," she says. "I prayed and said no matter what opposition comes my way I have to stay this time."

This time she stayed. The first person she met was (retired Dean) Horace Graham. "Dean Graham not only assisted me with registration and financial aid, but he offered me a job in Student Services as a work study student. All through the process I got moral support, I couldn't believe it. My past kept saying, 'you're not worth it, you're not going to make it.' After the first semester, I was able to take a breath and say, "Let me see if I can do another one."

Margie never forgot those who led her in the right direction, from Dean Graham and the Learning Center staff to Claire Crosetti, Stefani De Vito, Allyson Hunter, Rose Allen, Margaret Dixon, and many others. She graduated from Merritt with an A.A. in Administration of Justice and went on to earn her B.A. from Cal State East Bay in Criminal Justice. Now she's aiming for a master's degree in Educational Leadership.

While she is not proud of her past, she sees her new role as a way to be an example of how to turn your life around. She wants to help the students who might be in the same position—and she is now in the perfect position to do it. "I work here with such gratitude," says Margie. "I owe it to the Merritt community for finding my way. Now I am able to really help someone who is coming up the hill that has the same doubts I had. I can say, 'I went through the same process, and if I can make it, you can.'"

As Student Support Specialist, Margie is excited to be among the first faces new students see when they come to Merritt and the last as they graduate at the Commencement ceremonies she helps to organize. She sees it as part of her job to keep them there from start to finish. "I'm glad to be able to provide the steps to success to make sure they follow through. I have an open door policy to welcome them and give them the motivation and encouragement to get them through. I genuinely love what I do."

But what Margie is most proud of is the example she has set for her son, now 8, and to be his role model. "Jabez was born and raised at Merritt, and he really wants to go to college, even if he just wants to play basketball for now," she says with a smile. "I feel especially proud when I overhear him bragging to his friends, "My mom works at Merritt College."

—*Susan May*

## **Share Your News with the Merritt Community!**

### **Suggested Topics for Sharing**

Announcements or Reviews of Events  
Awards and Achievements  
Division and Department News  
Community Outreach Activities  
Community Partnerships/Internships  
Committee Highlights  
Innovative Class Projects

Alumni News  
New Employee Announcements  
Campus Visitors/Tours  
Student Achievements/Highlights  
Student Activities  
Athletic News/Highlights  
Travel Conference/News

### **The deadline for the October issue is: September 27.**

*The Merritt Connection is published from the President's Office the first week of every month except January, June, July, and August. Deadlines are on Tuesdays as follows: Sept. 27, Oct. 25, Nov. 22, Jan. 24, Feb. 21, March 28, and April 25. All past issues can be found on the Merritt College website homepage.*