

To: **Dr. Mike Kasler**, President, Cypress College
Paul de Dios, Dean, Counseling Division
Eldon Young, Dean, Language Arts Division

CC: **Dr. Bob Simpson**, Vice President, Cypress College
Adela Lopez, President, NOCCCD Latino Faculty and Staff Association
Julia Vergara, Assistant Director, Puente Project, University of California, Office of the President
Josefina Canchola, Regional Coordinator and Associate Director of the Puente Project, University of California, Office of the President
Dr. Richard Fee, Dean of Science, Engineering, Math
Steve Donley, Dean of Tech Ed II

From: **Dr. Randa B. Wahbe**, English instructor
Dr. Therese Mosqueda-Ponce, Counseling instructor

Date: December 10, 2009

Re: Fall 2009 Puente Program Report

The Puente Program is pleased to report that Class #14 is finishing the fall semester with 100% retention in Phase I: English 60 and Counseling 60 and 140. Although over 60 students submitted information packets indicating their interest in joining the Program, only 30 students could be enrolled. All 30 students remained enrolled for the entire semester.

We have had a very successful and busy fall semester. Below are some of the highlights:

- September 1: The coordinators held the first Peer Mentor meeting of the semester. Peer Mentors are Puente Program graduates who have volunteered their time to tutor current Puente students in English, Counseling, and other subjects at which they excel, as well as assist with Program activities. Peer Mentor meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month.
- September 3: Students toured the Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens in San Marino. Many were surprised by the beauty and serenity of the grounds and were pleased to see the collection of American history and art.
- September 8: The Puente Club held its first meeting of the semester. The Club is comprised of Puente Program graduates, Puente Program Peer Mentors, current Puente Program students, future Puente Program students, and non-Puente students. The Puente Program coordinators serve as advisors for the Club and meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month.
- September 15: The coordinators held their first monthly meeting with Paul de Dios, Dean of Counseling and newly assigned Administrator of Puente. These meetings have been very beneficial and allowed the coordinators to communicate the strengths and needs of the Program. Meetings were held on the third Tuesday of every month.
- September 16: In coordination with the Language Arts Division, Puente Program and Puente Club students supported the Cypress College Hispanic Heritage Month celebration with the band Ollín. Many took part in the dancing and singing, and the Puente Club was able to recruit some new members.

- September 18: The Puente Program coordinators facilitated the annual Peer Mentor and Mentor Training at Dr. Ponce's home in Anaheim Hills. Participants were provided with the mentoring handbook and delicious lunch.
- September 18: Current Puente students and Peer Mentors, cabinet members of the newly formed Puente Club, participated in the Bolsa Chica Bonfire. Students provided food, drinks, snacks, games, music, and more. It was a wonderful team-building activity that allowed the students to bond.
- September 23-25: The coordinators attended the regional Puente Project Training in San Diego. The three-day conference provided best practices, poetry readings, and workshops designed to strengthen the Puente model and student success.
- October 1: Thanks to a special grant through the South Coast Repertory (SCR) Theater, Puente Program students and Peer Mentors and Mentors attended *The Happy Ones*, a new play that takes place in Orange County. This was the first theater experience for most of the students, and thanks to SCR's student access program, many of the students will be returning for future shows.
- October 10-11: Puente Program students enjoyed the Latino Book and Family Festival at California State University, Los Angeles. Many bought autographed books from the featured writers, attended lectures by various authors, and met Lalo Alcaraz, a syndicated cartoonist.
- October 15: The coordinators facilitated the annual *Noche con los Padres y Mentores* (Parent/Mentor/Student Night). In addition to dinner and entertainment, the evening consisted of a bilingual overview of the Puente model and time for students to meet with their mentors. The administrators, mentors, and Puente coordinators enjoyed meeting the student's parents. Many parents commented on how appreciative they are of such a supportive program.
- October 24: The Puente Club held their first fundraiser at the Cypress College Swap Meet. Several of the current students also participated in this activity.
- October 29: Puente Program students took part in the *Dia de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) celebration at Olvera Street in Los Angeles. They had the opportunity to tour Adobe de Avila, the oldest house in Los Angeles, and neighboring Chinatown.
- November 2: The Puente Club and current Puente students created an altar for *Dia de los Muertos*. Thanks to the efforts of Paul de Dios, the students were able to pay their respects to their deceased loved ones on the display they created in the Student Center Lobby.
- November 12: Puente students toured Cal State Fullerton. In addition to the campus tour, they were met on campus by a Cypress College Puente Program graduate, a recent transfer student from Rancho Santiago College, and a Cypress College graduate and current SI leader. All three students were able to share their experiences as transfer students and Cal State Fullerton students. The Puente students enjoyed seeing Cal State Fullerton and many commented on the size and food options.
- November 14: The Cypress College and Fullerton College Puente Programs shared a big yellow school bus to attend the annual Puente Motivation and Transfer

Conference, this year held at University of California, Riverside. Over 850 Puente students from the Southern California community college Puente Programs were in attendance. There were two keynote speakers: Judge Hernandez (the second Latino to be appointed to the Riverside Supreme Court) and Victor Villasenor (author, perhaps best known for *Rain of Gold*). Ollín, the Latino folk-punk band that performed on our campus for Mexican Independence Day and Hispanic Heritage Month, also performed at the event and served as speakers on a panel informing students how to create social change through music. All of the students who attended the conference spoke to the emotional impact it had on them. Recognizing how vast the Puente familia is really motivated the students to reach their goals and gave them a sense of pride for being involved in such a respected community as Puente.

- November 18: The coordinators and several Puente students attended the Tim Wise lecture at Fullerton College. His presentation on racism was enlightening and served to reinforce much of what Puente is all about.
- November 19: In English 60, Erik Sorto, Los Angeles Valley College Puente Program graduate and author of *Payback*, was a special guest speaker. Students had just finished reading his memoir and were thrilled to meet him and ask him questions about his gang experiences and the writing process.
- November 19: In Counseling 60, Dr. Mike Kasler was a special guest speaker addressing the students on the value of a higher education, delayed-gratification. Many of the students were inspired by his presentation, especially because of his effective breakdown using dollars and cents.
- November 20: The Puente coordinators participated in the Leadership Team Meeting at Cypress College.
- November 22: Puente students participated in the Snow Goose Global Thanksgiving at the home of author Victor Villasenor. Villasenor, author perhaps best known for *Rain of Gold*, opened his home to the public for a special ceremony at which food and entertainment was provided. Students were also able to have their books signed.
- November 24: Three Cypress College Puente Program graduates were guest speakers in Counseling 60. Many of the current students commented on how inspirational it was to meet students who had been in the first Puente class fourteen years ago. All three graduates have met their academic goals and are established in their careers, which served to motivate the students.
- November 26, Thanksgiving Day: The Puente Club volunteered to feed the homeless at the Honda Center. Over 16,000 people were fed that day.
- December 1: Gil Contreras, Director of EOPS, was a special guest lecturer in English 60. He spoke to the students about urban planning and development, with an emphasis on community assets and deficits. Students had already completed an inventory of their own communities, so many were interested to learn about the opportunities available to them and the restrictions placed on them as a result of urban planning.
- December 8: The Puente Club hosted a holiday party and toy drive. The event was open to the campus and homemade tamales, *posole* (pork and chicken soup), *champurrado* (Mexican hot chocolate), and other treats were provided.

- December 10: The Puente Program held its end-of-the-semester potluck and gift exchange. The students were grateful for the opportunity to wrap up the semester. Many expressed appreciation for the Program and looked forward to the coming year.
- December 29: The Puente Club and current Puente students plan to volunteer as float decorators for the Rose Parade.

The students have a strong sense of *familia* in this cohort and exhibit this by working together on class assignments and outside activities.

Because 40% of the Puente Program students are science majors, the Program was able to qualify for the STEM grant, which will cover the cost of transportation for the spring 2010 three-day University of California Tour. The coordinators have already begun planning for this life-changing trip by arranging for presentations and tours of University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Berkeley.

As the year comes to a close, we are looking forward to what next semester will bring. A classroom designated for the Puente Program has been on our wish list for over a decade and to finally see it come to fruition is exciting for everyone involved.

We look forward to working with all of you again next semester and wish you very Happy Holidays!