Justice, voting rights and social equity highlight CCA’s Spring Conference

Discussions center around advocacy

ACTIVISM

AS THE NATION OBSERVES the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, faculty attending CCA’s Spring Conference were reminded of their role in preserving and advancing voting rights – and citizenship – among their students.

The theme of the spring conference, “Advocacy: Bending the Arc Toward Justice,” was a tribute to those who fought for, and in many cases, died for the right for all citizens to vote. CCA members attending the conference were reminded they not only teach economics, or nursing or English, they teach citizenship by preparing their students to participate in a democracy.

Voting Rights Act
CCA activists Dorothy Reina and Ed Gomez penned a history of the Voting Rights Act for CCA’s program brochure, and during lunchtime remarks, Gomez, a history professor at San Bernardino College, detailed the continuing attacks on voting rights for his colleagues. Gomez highlighted the 2013 Shelby v. Holder Supreme Court decision. In a 5-4 vote, justices struck down Section 4 of the voting rights law, clearing the way for states to make changes to their election law or district maps without approval from the Justice Department. The justices ruled the act was outdated and no longer needed though civil and voting rights activists maintain the decision will allow further erosion of voting rights.

“As educators, we have taken a stand that this is not acceptable,” Gomez said.

While commemorating the past 50 years of the voting rights act, “it is time to engage ourselves in the present… and to work with our students and communities” so that our voting rights are preserved, he said.

Conference-goers participated in workshops that included: “Building Power at the Community College Level,” “Advocacy at the Grassroots,” “Introduction to Unconscious Bias,” and others.

‘Just’ economic growth
Conference-goers also heard from economist Chris Benner, professor of environmental studies at UC Santa Cruz, who shared his research about how greater social equity leads to “just” economic growth, and particularly how community colleges play an important role in creating that future. Community colleges are poised to provide training to a workforce that has been displaced and overlooked by the age of technology.

“We should be paying attention to careers and not just jobs,” Benner said.

In other conference news, CCA President Lynette Nyaggah and CCA Vice President Brad Reynolds were both elected to a second two year term during CCA’s Spring Conference.

Please see Justice, page 5

Siskiyous faculty mobilize to prevent district from cutting Spanish program

Latest attempt to limit student access

FACULTY AND STUDENTS at the College of the Siskiyous in northern California are mobilizing to prevent the administration from eliminating the college’s Spanish program by laying off its only full-time instructor.

Trustees don’t care
“A sizable number of faculty, students, and members of the local community have spoken at two Board meetings in an effort to point out to the district that reducing our Spanish offerings and eliminating the Spanish degree program are detrimental to the college, its students, and the local community,” said Michael Tiescher, president of the faculty association at College of the Siskiyous. “However, what everyone needs to understand is that our Board of Trustees doesn’t care about any of that, nor does our administration. The college is regarded as a ‘business’ not as an educational institution.”

Although the district indicated it may offer Spanish next year, depending on class enrollment, the faculty association has cried foul, and said the real intent of the district is to lay off the full-time instructor to escape paying for health benefits.

The faculty association is seeking legal assistance to prevent the lay-off. “There are serious consequences to this action,” said CCA President Lynette Nyaggah. “In California, taking away the opportunity for students to learn Spanish is just short-sighted.”

“In California, taking away the opportunity for students to learn Spanish is just short-sighted.”

Showdown at board
COS faculty and students aren’t waiting to find out. More than 50 of them descended on the Board of Trustees meeting earlier this month in protest.

Please see Siskiyous, page 5
Reflecting on where we’ve been and where we’re going
What’s meaningful to you?

By Lynette Nyaggah, CCA President

AS I END MY FIRST TWO-YEAR TERM

As your president and embark on my second term, I wanted you to know a little bit about where I come from — my educational genealogy, so to speak.

My father came from the Pennsylvania Dutch community which migrated to central Ohio. His grandparents spoke only German and although my grandfather worked as Insurance Commissioner for the state of Ohio, no one in the family had more than a high school diploma. My father served in the Navy and never thought of going to college until one of his officers told him he should take the exam to qualify for the GI Bill. He passed with flying colors. When the Navy asked him where he wanted to go to college, he told them somewhere near Great Lakes in the Midwest so they sent him to U.C. Berkeley.

Family of teachers

My mother was accepted at Mills College in Oakland. She found a teaching job in elementary school and stayed there. She met my grandfather in Oakland, where they settled. My father graduated from the University of California at Berkeley, where there was no tuition. Obviously, he passed the exam to qualify for the GI Bill. He attended what is now known as the ‘California State University System’ and was accepted at Mills College in Oakland, where he could not pay for the tuition by waiting tables at the college, so she transferred to U.C. Berkeley, where there was no tuition. Obviously, my parents met at Berkeley.

My grandmother migrated to California as a young woman to attend “Southern Campus,” the precursor to UCLA, and got her teaching credential from there. She met my father while she was teaching while he was a student. They married and stayed on the West Coast. My father got his degree in aeronautical engineering, he gave up his engineering job to teach math, physics and English at Jefferson High School in Daly City. He also taught part-time at the College of San Mateo until he was 85 years old. My mother got her teaching credential after my brothers were in high school and taught in San Mateo until she retired. This is my background — the kind of education I received.

Union genealogy

I also have a union genealogy. When I was growing up, most industries and retail establishments were unionized. My parents told me, “We never cross a picket line.” This is the spirit that led me to union membership in CCA/CTA and to leadership.

My goal is to involve you in our association in ways that are meaningful for you. That motivated our current CCA leadership to ask you, our members, what your priorities were and what direction we should go. We have incorporated your feedback into our goals and plans.

You said you wanted greater visibility for CCA. We have already revamped our website, initiated an online newsletter and changed our logo to the symbol of California history, the oak tree. We have created a new membership brochure and Membership Handbook.

Promoting unionism

We have also promoted unionism. We no longer stay at non-union hotels so that we can honor our sisters and brothers in the hotel industry who struggle to keep their unions strong. We use only Made in U.S.A. union vendors. We remind ourselves of the history of unionism with our Book Club, and take advantage of the expertise of our own faculty in sharing important insights into our union genealogy.

This past year, we brought CTA President Dean Vogel to our conference and included him in a rendition of “Solidarity Forever.” We are also offering three-year grants to a number of our chapters who choose to join their County Labor Federation, so that we can become a significant contributor to the general labor movement. And we listened in smaller, more specific ways. One of you asked for an explanation to go with the State Council and RA ballots that are mailed out to members. Thank you for that — we have followed your wishes and we will continue to listen.

We have many accomplishments to be proud of over the past two years, but the most critical is our commitment to building new leadership. Leaders should always prepare the next generation of leadership to take over. Each leader has strengths and talents which build the organization, but no leader remains effective forever. There comes a time when we have to pass the torch to new leadership. For that reason, we are very excited to have not only the Academy for Building Strong Locals but also the CCA California Leadership Academy for training new statewide leadership. The inaugural session took place at the Spring Conference in April, and we have a powerful group of potential leaders who are preparing for the complexities and responsibilities of statewide leadership.

Please join us in contributing your ideas and talents to the growth and direction of CCA. 

CCA Calendar of Events

CCA Advocates

The Community College Association exists to protect and promote the well-being of its members through collective bargaining, lobbying and representation activities, thereby advancing universal and quality public education.

It is an affiliate of the California Teachers Association and the National Education Association.

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The CCA Advocate is published by the Community College Association and the Communications Department of the California Teachers Association, 1705 Murchinson Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010, (650) 697-1400. Publication of advertising in CCA Advocate does not indicate CCA or CTA approval of the advertised product or any of the companies who purchase advertising.

The CCA Advocate is also available online at the CCA Web site: www.cca4me.org

Advocate Staff
Former students-turned-colleagues thank professor for his mentoring
They’re now paying it forward

VVC couple finds union in the union
CCA brings them together

**SPRING CONFERENCE**

**THERE’S NOTHING QUITE LIKE** having a former student publicly thank you for all that you’ve done for them.

Unless it’s two former students, who have themselves followed your footsteps to become college faculty.

**No dry eyes**

That’s what happened when Sad-
dleback College faculty Lee Hag-
gerty, was honored with CCA’s 2015 Mary Ann Pacheco Ethnic Minority Award. Two of Haggerty’s former students were on hand to both introduce the award and thank their professor. By the end of their pre-
sentation, there wasn’t a dry eye in the house.

“His thoughts, his process, his influence has significantly shaped and formed my life so that as a professor, I relay and spread his message of social responsibility, diplomacy, tolerance and the simple idea of uplifting humanity,” said Narges Rabii-Rakin, a profes-
or of history and political science at Rancho Santiago Community College who has been teaching 15 years.

Coming from a more traditional Middle Eastern family, Rabii-Rakin said she was intim-
itated when she entered Saddleback College.

“I did not have a voice until I took Political Sci-
ence 1 and Lee, you set my voice free,” she said.

Another former student, Kendra Webber, the daughter of Saddleback College counselor Loma Hopkins, is now teaching at Saddleback College while earning her doctorate in politi-
cal science at UC Riverside. She recalled how Haggerty talked about his own background and difficulties on the first day of class.

**Anything is possible**

“As a young adult, he thought he was destined to a life on the streets. But instead, he went to com-
munity college and then he went to Harvard… he did this to show us that anything is possible through community college,” Webber said.

“As an instructor myself, I try my best to incorporate these lessons into my teaching – instilling confidence in my students, sharing with them my own story to show that often times community college is the best choice….”

CCA President Lynette Nyaggah was respon-
sible for initiating the invitation to the two for-
mer students. Nyaggah already knew Webber, and she became acquainted with Rabii-Rakin after hearing her speak at a memorial service for another Saddleback instructor, Micael Mer-
rifield. While there, she learned that Rabi-

Rakin had also been a student of Haggerty’s.

“It hurt me that Micael wasn’t there to hear Narges. It’s great to be appreciated by your colleagues, but it’s really quite special to hear it from your students,” she said.

Lee Haggerty couldn’t agree more.

“I was really very touched by the whole thing,” Hag-
gerty said. “And the fact that both of them are my col-
leagues means so much to me. I guess I did my job.”

The Mary Ann Pacheco Ethnic Minority Award, named for a Hispanic professor at Rio Hondo College, is given to faculty who pro-
mote equal access and treatment for minori-
ties on campus.

CCA makes time each year during its Spring Conference to honor faculty members who have made a difference on their cam-
puses. Others honored were Victor Valley his-
tory professor Lisa Ellis who received the CCA Jerry Brown Advocacy Award for 2015; Hon-
ored with the 2015 David B. Milroy Part Time Faculty Award was John Sullivan, part-time English professor at Riverside City College. Jan Mutto, a speech communications professor at Norco College was honored by CCA with the David A. Sanchez GLBTQ Award for 2015. To read more about the honorees, see www.cca4me.org/Awards.

**MANY WHO HAVE ATTENDED**

CCA Conferences have found great trainings. Michael Butros and Tracy Davis-Butros found each other.

That was almost 10 years ago, and both have maintained their marriage and their union activism. If anything, they say their union activity has only enhanced their relationship.

Who knew when the two first joined CCA, they would meet, fall in love and get married?

In truth, Butros and Davis initially met in 2004 when they became involved in the Victor Valley College Faculty Association. Tracy was soon elected trea-
surer and Michael joined her as secretary during the following election.

Tracy relates, “I was interested in him, but he was clueless.”

Isn’t that often the case?

**Friendship grew**

Over the years, their friendship grew while both took on more responsibilities in their chapter and college. Tracy began serving on the Academic Senate while Michael continued with the union.

Tracy began serving on the chapter’s negotiating team. Both were friends.

Their fate was tied, however, in 2006 dur-
ing CCA’s Fall Conference in Burlingame. Tracy accompanied Michael on a BART ride to San Francisco to visit his sister.

“We couldn’t figure out how the ticket machine worked,” Michael recalls. He also recalls that’s when he knew he wanted to spend the rest of his life with Tracy.

They married a year later. Tracy, a history and theater instructor, has continued to work within the Academic Senate and the CCA chap-
ter. Michael, a math and physics instructor, took on more responsi-
bilities in the union, as chapter president, a delegate to CTA’s State Council, and a CCA board member and CCA Secretary. The Senate and Victor Valley College Faculty Association have both benefited from their involvement.

“The union and the Academic Senate is the closest it’s been in years,” said Tracy. So, apparently, is their marriage.

“We’re in it for better or worse,” Butros chuck-
les. “I couldn’t do any better and she couldn’t do any worse.”

**Who knew when the two first joined CCA, they would meet, fall in love and get married?**

CCA, they would meet, fall in love and get married?

**INSIDE CCA**

**MAY / JUNE 2015 CCA Advocate**

VVC couple finds union in the union
CCA brings them together

Who knew when the two
first joined CCA, they
would meet, fall in love and
get married?
CTA State Council elects new officers; Higher ed faculty to join the team

New Leadership Team Takes Office June 26th

TEAMWORK

FOR THE FIRST TIME in recent memory, a higher education faculty member has been elected to the leadership team of the California Teachers Association. CTA Vice President-elect Theresa Montaño, current CTA board member representing higher education, will join President-elect Eric C. Heins and Secretary-Treasurer-elect David Goldberg as CTA officers beginning June 26. The three incoming officers were elected at the April 12 meeting of the CTA State Council of Education.

Unprecedented change
“We are on the verge of a precipice of unprecedented change in California public education and it will take all of us—educators, parents and the community—working together if we want to keep moving in the right direction. It is up to us as educators and unionists to take the lead, to transform our profession and to create a brighter future for our students and our state,” said President-elect Heins.

A 24-year teaching veteran, Heins has taught kindergarten through fifth grade, including music in the Pittsburg Unified School District, and is a member of the Pittsburg Education Association. As Vice President, Heins, 56, chaired the CTA Teacher Evaluation Workgroup, which developed evaluation guidelines focusing on strengthening the knowledge, skills and practices of teachers to improve student learning. He also guided CTA efforts to support at-risk students through the implementation of the Quality Education Investment Act and served on CTA’s Long Term Strategic Planning Workgroup that developed a comprehensive strategy to move CTA forward around the goals of organizing, advocacy, community engagement and social justice.

Vice President-elect Montaño, 62, is a Chicano Studies and Education Professor at the California State University, Northridge. She currently sits on the CTA Board of Directors as the higher education representative. Her many years of experience as a middle and high school teacher in Los Angeles and Denver, Colo., has given her a special understanding of issues facing all students and educators in California’s public schools and colleges. Montaño, fluent in Spanish, served for six years as an NEA board director and as the president of the National Council for Higher Education. She also served on the board of directors for the California Faculty Association and was past president of her local faculty association. At CTA, Montaño serves the board liaison to Student CTA and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, and is a member of the Strategic Planning Group and the Teacher Evaluation Workgroup.

Secretary-Treasurer-elect Goldberg, 43, an educator for 19 years, has spent most of his career as a bilingual teacher at Murchison Elementary in the Los Angeles Unified School District. He is a third-generation teacher and is fluent in Spanish and American Sign Language. Goldberg has deeply engaged in coalition building around the struggles in public education. On the CTA Board of Directors, Goldberg represents NEA affiliate members of the 35,000-member United Teachers Los Angeles. He also served as treasurer of UTLA. At CTA, Goldberg serves as the board liaison to the Teacher Evaluation and Academic Freedom Committee, is a member of the Budget Committee, and played an active role in the adoption of the Strategic Plan. He is a member of the Strategic Planning Group and the Teacher Evaluation Workgroup.

New FACCC president seeks alliances with CCA and other faculty groups

Resources are a priority

SHAARON VOGEL LEARNED the importance of teamwork from her days as a nurse. Now the Butte College nursing instructor is applying the lessons she learned to her new role as president of the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC) where she plans to team up with CCA and other organizations to advance community colleges.

Teamwork
“It’s that teamwork idea that inspired her recently to ask FACCC and CCA to jointly sponsor a daylong rural college conference at Butte for her colleagues and faculty from Shasta, College of the Siskiyous, Sierra, Lassen and Feather River Colleges. The joint conference allowed the chance to network with one another as well as the opportunity to hear from FAAC and CCA/CTA leaders and staffers like CCA Vice President Brad Reynolds, CCA Secretary Michael Butros and Alan Frey, who provided valuable information on legislation, the state budget, retirement issues and member benefits.

“I saw it as a way for us to connect and not feel isolated,” Vogel said, noting that not everyone is able to devote a three-day weekend to travel to some of the larger statewide conferences.

“We are small colleges up here but we need to have a voice and a united front,” she said.

Vogel, who is also vice president of the Butte College Education Association, has been actively involved in her campus Academic Senate and as a representative to the statewide Academic Senate. While serving there, Vogel served as a liaison to FACCC, a professional association that advocates for community college faculty at the state Capitol. Through her liaison appointment, Vogel discovered she loved working with legislation and became active on the FACCC Board. Now, as the newly elected president of FACCC, she hopes to continue building relationships between FAAC, the faculty unions and the Academic Senate.

“I’m a collaborative person. I believe in relationships. I want to build a united front,” she said.

Funding is a priority
Vogel’s number one priority naturally is funding.

Our colleges have never been brought back to where they need to be, and without new hiring, we are being asked to do more with less,” she said.

She would also like to see more resources going to part-time faculty for offices and benefits, and into professional development and training for new faculty.

Vogel says she is thrilled to be working with CCA, though she is aware that there have been some disagreements between the various faculty organizations in the past.

“There may be times when we have different positions,” she acknowledged. “But if we stay united, it will make a difference at the local level.”

CTA Secretary-Treasurer-elect David Goldberg, Vice-President-elect Theresa Montaño, and President-elect Eric C. Heins.

Shaaron Vogel and Lynette Nyaggah.
CCA co-sponsors new legislation to create minimum standards for part-time faculty

Bill provides senority rights

**ADJUNCT RIGHTS**

**THE “LEGISLATION SEASON”** is in full-swing in Sacramento and CCA’s legislative advocates are pounding the pavement between CTA’s Governmental Relations building in Sacramento and the state Capitol to make sure lawmakers do what’s best for community colleges. In addition to co-sponsoring legislation, CCA has taken positions on nine other bills.

Among the important pieces of legislation this term is AB 1010, a bill authored by Assembly member José Medina (D-Riverside) and co-sponsored by CTA and the California Federation of Teachers that creates minimum standards for part-time faculty. The bill specifies minimum standards for how part-time faculty should be treated in regard to evaluations, workload and seniority rights and urges districts to collectively bargain these issues. The bill received the support of CCA’s Council during its meeting April 26.

**More security**

“AB 1010 will provide more security for part-time faculty by creating standards for evaluation procedures, workload distribution and seniority rights, all of which will impact student success,” CCA Vice President Brad Reynolds said. “It is a priority for us this legislative session.”

Many faculty are aware that the landmark bill, AB 1725, establishing shared governance in 1988 intended that each California community college district achieve a full-time/part-time faculty ratio of 75:25. Instead, the number of part-time faculty has exploded on California’s community college campuses, while these instructors are often exploited. Not only have they had to fight for office hours, office space, pay equity and health benefits, they have precious little job security. Over the years, part-time faculty were often the first to be laid off or have their assignments cut to fallling budgets. Many have had the experience of finding out their classes were cut when they showed up for the first day of the semester to find a note on the door.

“The author of the bill, Chair of the Assembly Higher Ed Committee, José Medina, used to be a part-time faculty member. He remembers a time he got a call canceling his summer class as he was pulling out of his driveway to go to the first meeting of the class. Experiences like this motivated him to work for justice for community college part-time faculty.”

In the meantime, Governor Jerry Brown’s revised state budget, presented on May 14, proposes an additional $75 million to hire an estimated 600 full-time faculty. Education leaders and experts hailed the governor’s continued commitment to higher education in California. “We are hopeful that with additional dollars flowing into education, we can help even more students reach their goals,” said CCA President Lynnette Nyagagha. “We will be working with the Governor’s office and the Department of Finance to fine-tune the distribution of the additional dollars. This is only the initial salvo in the May Revise battle. Stay tuned.”

With an increase of $619 million above the January budget proposal, the $1 billion over the 2014 Budget Act level, community colleges will have the opportunity to provide significantly more support to students through the increase of faculty and programs. The May Revise also increases funding for California State Universities and the UC system, ending a battle over tuition hikes at the University of California. The budget earned high marks from CTA President Dean Vogel, California Community College Chancellor Brice W. Harris. “The governor’s revised state budget plan keeps the promise to California’s students and the promise of Proposition 30 as approved by voters,” said CTA President Dean Vogel. “His continued commitment and repayment of the debt owed to California’s students, schools and colleges keeps us on the road to recovery.”

**Justice**

Continued from Page 1

Newly elected to the Board of Directors were Elias Escamilla, Director District F; Randa Wabbe, Director District 1-1; Sherry Miller-White, Director District 3; and Kristie Iwamoto, Women’s Director.

Re-elected to the CCA Board of Directors were: Josie Malik, Director C-1; John Sullivan, Director District E; Phyllis Hall, Director District H-1; Dorothy Reina, Director District I-3; and John Martin, Director Part-time NorCal.

CCA’s new California Leadership Academy (CLA) also had its inaugural meeting during the Spring Conference. The purpose of the Academy is to impart knowledge and develop leadership skills for those wishing to assume leadership roles beyond their locals, in CCA, State Council, or in other venues. Participants in the Academy include seasoned local leaders, CCA Board members, and those who will make significant impacts to the teaching profession well into the future.

**Siskiyou**

Continued from Page 1

The move by the administration is the latest attempt to weaken and reduce full-time faculty and limit student access to academic classes and programs. The administration for the past few years has engaged in a variety of alleged cost-cutting actions to contract out programs including basic English skills and police academy courses to outside agencies and move them online.

Faculty at the College of the Siskiyous have had a rough go of it over the past few years. They have taken on the administration recently over its use of Instructional Service Agreements, in which the district gains enrollment by providing educational programs to out-of-district students through outside agencies. The faculty association maintains that there has been a lack of transparency and oversight in the administration of the contracts.

“In addition to taking away work from faculty in other districts, it doesn’t even appear that there is any evaluation process in place. It’s a concern for us,” Tischler said.
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Teaching along the border has its challenges

JOSE OBESO ISN’T QUITE SURE yet whether he will become a teacher, or a social worker or a psychologist when he graduates from Imperial Valley College (IVC). But he does know that next year he will be transferring from IVC to the CSU San Diego satellite campus in Calexico to complete his bachelor’s degree. For that, he is thankful to have been a student at IVC, where he has received instruction, support, counseling and financial aid.

Obeso was also lucky to have been enrolled in English as Second Language courses when he lived in San Jose in his earlier years. “If I hadn’t learned English, it would have been a lot harder. It’s one of the things people really struggle with here,” he said.

Ten miles to Mexico

The 10-mile proximity of Imperial Valley College to the California-Mexico border is reflected in the school’s demographics. Hispanic students comprise almost 90 percent of the college’s enrollment. One would have to travel to Texas or even Puerto Rico to find American colleges with a higher percentage of Hispanic students. In fact, Imperial County, with its two-hour distance from San Diego, is isolated enough that its large Spanish-speaking community does not have to be English-proficient to get by.

“One of the biggest challenges is that this is not a typical ESL (English as a Second Language) area. It’s more like an English-as-a-foreign-language area,” said Sydney Rice, chair of the ESL department. Here, you can leave the classroom and you don’t have to go into an English-speaking world. We have 99.9 percent Spanish speakers in our ESL classes. Our students struggle with learning English. It takes a lot of moxie to finish the program.”

Rice said students who do stick with their ESL studies may take five to seven years to become proficient in English.

The language barrier is real,” said Beatriz Avila, a counselor with EOPS. “I can see it in the students’ faces when they don’t understand. It’s about practice and responding in English. In this community, (English proficiency) is much more complicated.”

High-poverty area

For students at Imperial Valley College, English proficiency is just one of many challenges. Imperial Valley continues to have a 20 percent unemployment rate, which largely affects its high-poverty Hispanic community.

Many, if not most students have financial difficulties paying for the college fees, books and materials they need. Thankfully, they are eligible for Board of Governors grants, and many sign up. But just getting to class is difficult, instructors say. Although the students are either U.S. citizens or residents, many go home to their families in Mexico, across the border. It can be a two-hour journey on the bus getting to school.

“When I first moved here, I had to adjust to the heat, the wind and the landscape,” said Lisa Solomon, a history professor. “But the biggest adjustment was having to tune in to the border crossing announcements to know how many students would be late to class that day.”

Obeso understands that. When he lived in Mexicali, he recalls crossing the border to get a 6:20 a.m. bus to get to school for one class.

“Selling tortas and menudo I have students who sell tortas and menudo to buy gas to get here,” said ESL instructor Leticia Pastrana. “But they are so determined, whatever little bit they can get out of it is worth it.”

Pastrana, like many IVC faculty and staff, knows exactly what her students have to overcome. She grew up in Imperial County, attended IVC, transferred to UC Riverside and was the first in her family to obtain a bachelor’s degree. She is now working on her doctorate in higher education administration.

Along the way, she was mentored by Martha Garcia, economic development program coordinator for the college, who shares a similar history.

“The faculty at IVC is so feeling because they know the challenges our students face,” Garcia said.

Much of Garcia’s work has been to obtain grants for college programs that will strengthen the local economy. While Imperial County is heavily agriculture, it has been able to bring a variety of renewable energy projects to the area which will need skilled workers. The construction industry is also coming back and the college has developed its Building Construction Technology Department with it.

Jose Velasquez teaches his building construction classes in English but his limited English-speaking students may stay after class to ask him questions in Spanish. Still, he finds he has to bring some of his students up to par, both in math and English.

He currently has students ranging in age from 18 to 65 who are working to obtain a certificate in building construction. Students have had to be put on a wait list now that a new facility is drawing record enrollment.

Completion rates increased

Because the Career Technical Education students don’t always seek out assistance, the college makes sure they have counselors assigned to them. As a result, completion rates have increased, according to Garcia.

“It benefits the student and the program as well,” she said.

Despite the odds against their students, IVC faculty remain committed to their success.

“I taught at the University of Missouri before coming here,” said ESL department chair Sydney Rice. “There, I knew my students, but here we get involved in their lives. We know their names, we celebrate their birthdays. We are trying to prepare them here so they can go out and get a career.”

“Our students struggle with learning English. It takes a lot of moxie to finish the program.”

“We are trying to prepare them here so they can go out and get a career.”

AROUND THE STATE

JOSE OBESO ISN’T QUITE SURE

Beatriz Avila

Jose Obeso

Leticia Pastrana

Marta Garcia and Jose Velasquez.