

Inside SFCC

Key to Student Success is Involvement

Fidel Zuniga could never imagine himself speaking publicly and feeling comfortable doing it. “Absolutely not. I was afraid to be in front of a crowd,” he said.

But when staff members at Santa Fe Community College asked the 24-year-old computer science major to give presentations about life as a college student, Zuniga timidly agreed.

“It was good way to lose the fear. I started doing tours on campus and then I was asked by SFCC to go to the high school and talk to students there. Last semester I was the main presenter at the SFCC Student Expo,” he said, proudly.

His presentations were part of a leadership-building program at SFCC called Student Ambassadors in which selected students serve as representatives of the college. The idea behind the ambassadors and other activities in college’s reconfigured Student Development Office is to create an ethos on campus that keeps students engaged and motivated.

Not only did the program help Zuniga build self-esteem and communication skills, he says his involvement on campus has unmistakably kept him in school.

“If I wasn’t involved, I would have dropped out a long time ago,” said Zuniga, who is also the vice president of the student government association,



Student Ambassador Carmen Rodriguez, at left with Molly Judd, the former secretary of the Student Government Association and Ivan Cornejo, a fellow Ambassador, emphasizes the importance of her campus involvement. “Student Ambassadors are more than just a group to me,” Rodriguez said. “It’s a family. If I’m having personal problems I know I have someone to talk to and they will support me.”

a member of three student clubs and a part-time student worker. “Being in all these clubs is like having a family on campus. If you need support or help, they are always there to help you.”

Making Personal Connections

The SFCC Student Development Office was born out of concept that students are more likely to flourish and graduate when they feel connected to campus in purposeful ways and can easily interact with other students, instructors, advisers and staff to get the emotional encouragement, academic support and financial backing they need they succeed.

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By the Numbers

- Number of clubs at SFCC: 10
- Percent of first-year fall SFCC students who return for spring semester: 79
- Approximate amount of financial assistance awarded to SFCC students each year: \$4 million
- Approximate number of scholarships available to SFCC students: 400
- Number of full and part-time staff devoted to tutoring, mentoring and working with student organizations: 12
- Number of credit-seeking students at SFCC: 5,450 per semester

Student Success (continued)

“Students get have a wealth of experience and networking on and off campus just by connecting to us here in the office of student development,” said Ernest Kavanaugh, cohort specialist at SFCC. “The interesting phenomenon is students are studying together joining clubs, eating together, celebrating and learning from one another as to how to balance life, school and work.”

Studies nationwide have found that students are more likely to achieve their educational goals if they are supported, challenged and given the opportunity to explore, take initiative and develop the goals themselves. They are also more likely to become civic minded, volunteer in their communities and become good students, citizens, parents and employees.

The Student Development Office at SFCC is working to offer this type of affirming environment and introduce students to support services on campus such as tutoring, counseling, advising, scholarships, financial aid, student employment and career development.

“The staff is very open, honest friendly and each time a new person comes into the office, they greet them, welcome them to campus, ask them where they are from and get them connected with other people,” said Liz Bahe, director of the student development office.

“A student may be having a bad day or they come to campus and have a difficult experience. If you are smiling and ask them how their day is going and you are interested in them as a person, that’s a retention effort. We are a fun office and our interactions with students reflect that.”

“Being involved in clubs and organizations keeps me motivated to continue my schooling because I have support and help in tutoring and from other students in the clubs.”

— Jennifer Zuniga, 19
pre-nursing student, Student Ambassador



Fostering Student Success

These simple steps go a long way in fostering student success and breaking down the barriers that lead students to drop out. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, enrollment in higher education is expected to increase from 15 million students in 2001 to 18 million in 2012.

An article in the Journal of Instructional Psychology noted that “these students bring an increasingly diverse set of experiences and expectations to campus, in addition to representing a much broader spectrum of diversity.” The article said colleges are responding with sophisticated marketing strategies that highlight the lifestyle and the college experience as well as academia. And today, when 87 percent of all students in the United States commute to their campuses, these connections pose a new challenge. Intervention strategies, orientation programs and online and mentoring and support programs like the ones at SFCC are being implemented at colleges across the country.

“There are lots of initiatives happening across the country and ours is one example of trying to increase student engagement through student organizations and leadership opportunities,” Douglass said. “But we are also developing a retention program that takes cohorts of scholarship recipients, which are either first-year students or students with the highest unmet financial needs, and providing a structure to assure they access campus resources and utilize support services that are available to them.”

Clubs and Creativity

Achieving the Dream, a national grant that promotes change to improve student success in community colleges, is a long-term initiative at SFCC that focuses on measurable outcomes, particularly closing achievement gaps. Participating colleges are committed to using data to drive strategies, monitor progress and evaluate outcomes.

Helping students solve problems is also part of mix. Staff members help students gain the college survival skills they need to navigate the educational system, set academic goals, get financial aid as needed and manage their personal lives.

Many times the dream of a college degree and with it, a profitable, meaningful career can vanish under the weight of life’s responsibilities — finding day care, fixing a broken car,

“If you don’t know what students like or what engages them, you are not going to be able to provide effective services for them.”

— Liz Bahe, director of student development

attending to family obligations, coping with illness or finding housing. The office coordinates a scholarship program titled "Contract for a Better Tomorrow" that provides financial assistance and cash bonuses for high-grade achievement and for staying in school.

"We are coordinating services for them and doing intervention to be sure they are getting all the support they need," said Jill Douglass, assistant vice president for academic services and student retention.

"We constantly have to be creative to meet the students where they are and not expect that just because we have a tutoring center that they will or can come to it," Douglass said. "It's one thing to say we offer career services. It's another thing to get students lining up their academic goals, honing in on career opportunities and developing their resumes."

Through the office, students are encouraged to create new clubs based on their interests or join more than two dozen existing clubs, which range from the Muslim club to promote friendship between Muslim and non-Muslim students to the Cuisine Club for culinary arts students to practice their skills.

"We have a ping pong club. We have an interior design club, a Smiles club for dental hygiene students and a Spanish club. We also organize popcorn day, Frito pie day, cookies and fruit day and pizza day," Bahe said. "We are looking at developing activities that are fun and engaging for students to give them a break from their coursework."

The challenge involves engaging students with different ages and from a variety of cultural and economic backgrounds in a way that enhances their academic experiences.

"If you don't know what students like or what engages them, you are not going to be able to provide effective services for them," Bahe said.

Overcoming Barriers

Douglass said SFCC has always had comprehensive support services, but



Student Ambassadors Erica Serrano, Maytê Garcia and Cindy Nava, clockwise from top, spend time in the SFCC computer lab. The idea behind the ambassadors is to create an ethos on campus that keeps students engaged and motivated.

Students Mentoring Students

Student Ambassadors are selected to serve as representatives of Santa Fe Community College. Ambassadors organize campus events, participate in new student orientations, provide peer support to new students and involve themselves in college activities that encourage student success. Ambassadors receive training in leadership, team building, public speaking, networking and problem solving. As a group, they offer a peer-support system while encouraging members to be positive, self-motivated, disciplined and creative. In return, ambassadors earn a scholarship as they "Gain Experience. Give Perspective. Get Involved." For information, call (505) 428-1681.

that there was a gap in terms of the how the college structured these services and opportunities that really supported its retention goals.

"Now we feel the Office of Student Development will be able to do it," Douglass said.

SFCC falls in the national average but is seeking to improve its graduation rates, which reflect first-time, full-time degree-seeking students who graduate within three years of entry to two-year schools or six years at four-year schools.

And SFCC has improved its average fall-to-fall retention rate for first-time,

full time degree seeking students at two-year schools to the national average at about 50 percent.

Zuniga said he wouldn't have known about scholarships or clubs if the staff in the student development office had not introduced him to them.

"It's my second semester and already a lot of people on campus know me," he said. "Because I'm involved and on student government and I go to the board meetings, even the president of the college knows who I am."

And that is exactly the type of connection that has kept Zuniga in school.

INSIDE BRIEFS

SFCC Students Finalists in National Photo Contest

Santa Fe Community College students Amber Schoch and Mark Fresques were named as finalists in "Photographer's Forum" 27th Annual Student Photography Contest sponsored by Nikon, USA. Photos by Schoch and Fresques were selected among more than 28,000 entries submitted by student photographers from across the country. The winning photos, including those by students who received honorable mentions and were finalists, will appear in the "Best of College Photography Annual 2007."



SFCC culinary arts students prepared and served lunch to legislators and staff at the Roundhouse including chicken mole with crema, portabella mushroom fajitas, green chile chicken enchiladas, red chile cheese enchiladas and a dessert of brownies and Mexican wedding cookies.

Spotlight on College at Day at the Legislature

While exploring the state Capitol on Wednesday, Feb. 28, visitors got a close-up look at Santa Fe Community College and at the same time watched government in action. During SFCC Day at the Legislature, the college showcased its students, faculty and programs while students spent the day shadowing individual legislators to learn more about the political process.

Exhibits featured information about SFCC Adult Basic Education, Continuing Education and Customized Training, Counseling Services, the Dental Program, Early Childhood Development, Financial Aid, Literacy Volunteers, the Planetarium, Service Learning, the SFCC Small Business Development Center, Student Ambassadors, the Student Government Association, Student Development, Teacher Education and the Wellness Center.

A highlight of the day occurred when SFCC culinary arts students and instructors served a sumptuous lunch to legislators and legislative staffers.



Pictured with Senator Bingaman and SFCC President Sheila Ortego are (L-R): students Tammy Gallegos, Cindy Nava, Consuelo Walker, Carmen Rodriguez, Erica Serrano, Fidel Zuniga, part-time SFCC instructor Helen Helfer and student Jamie Garcia.

Senator Makes Campus Visit

SFCC hosted U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman's 19th annual Student Leadership Institute Feb. 21, 2007. The institute is an opportunity for students to attend policy seminars led by the Senator and his legislative staff from Washington, D.C.

About 300 area high school joined SFCC students to discuss far-ranging issues and propose solutions to problems facing the country. One seminar was titled "Crime: Punishment & Prevention, What Works for Youth?" while another session examined "Education: Solving the Dropout Crisis in our Schools." Several other discussions centered on the role of the United States in Iraq, healthcare and the economy.

Students not only contributed their thoughts during the policy discussions, they left behind written ideas for solving problems. The input and wisdom gained from the Leadership Institute helps Senator Bingaman and his staff make decisions affecting the state and country.

SFCC and UNM to Develop Joint BFA Program

Santa Fe Community College and the University of New Mexico have agreed to develop an innovative program that will allow SFCC students to obtain a bachelor of fine arts degree in studio arts from UNM. The program will offer SFCC students the upper-level classes needed for a bachelor degree traditionally available only at four-year institutions. Although students will complete the majority of their coursework at SFCC, UNM's College of Fine Arts and Extended University will oversee the upper-level classes and grant the final degree. The program will allow students to remain in the Santa Fe area while completing their degrees.



Tax Help staff member Peter Doniger, right, assists with the preparation of taxes during this year's opening of Tax Help at SFCC.

Thousands Receive Tax Help

Free income tax preparation is being offered at Santa Fe Community College through April 17 through a partnership of the City of Santa Fe, the IRS, New Mexico Taxation and Revenue, SFCC, United Way of Santa Fe County, Tax Help New Mexico, AARP Tax-Aide and 211 Santa Fe. This is the fourth year that Santa Fe Community College has hosted the program. A growing number of people have taken advantage of this service, from 135 the first year to approximately 3,300 last year. More than 4,000 people are expected to use the service in 2007.

In its first year, this service helped generate approximately \$2 million in returns to Santa Fe residents and last year, an additional \$3.7 million was returned to Santa Fe residents. To be eligible for this free service, you must be a senior, an SFCC student, faculty or staff member, a city or public school employee or have a household income that is less than \$39,500. This free service will be offered in the West Atrium – Room 313 on Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. from Feb. 1 through April 17. For information, call United Way 2-1-1 or visit www.taxhelpsf.org.

Entrepreneurship Focus of New Online Program

Santa Fe Community College has launched a pioneering new online program dedicated to empowering students to create and build successful businesses on their own. The Entrepreneurship Institute at Santa Fe Community College will develop and offer an entirely online and accelerated certificate program that students can complete in six months without putting their jobs or families on hold.

As a changing global economy emphasizes the Internet and franchises, entrepreneurial opportunities have become a driving force of the world market. Students will learn how to plan an entrepreneurial venture, create a business model, operate in a global setting and harness the advantages and far-reaching impact of e-commerce.

Exhibit Juxtaposes Beauty and Conflict in Oaxaca

The convergence of colorful splendor with civil unrest is explored in a photo exhibition that runs through March 12 in the main entry of SFCC. "Oaxaca: Beauty in Turmoil" features two collections of photographs including work by Oaxaca-based photojournalist Antonio Turok and work by Santa Fe Community College photography students, who traveled to Oaxaca, Mexico, as part of an SFCC photography class.

A collection of powerful black and white images about the civil unrest in Oaxaca taken by Oaxaca-based photojournalist Antonio Turok also are included as part of the exhibit. The exhibit is free and open to the public. Exhibit hours are 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturdays. For information, call (505) 428-1230 or visit www.sfccnm.edu.

What's in a Mission?

The college's governing board recently adopted purpose, mission, and vision statements, along with seven core values. These statements are at the heart of strategic planning and help drive the decision-making process of the college. Here is the mission statement:

Santa Fe Community College is the gateway to individual and community success by providing affordable, high quality educational programs that serve the social, cultural, technological and economic needs of the diverse Santa Fe community.



Providing a wide range of educational programs to meet the needs of the community is SFCC's core mission. The Governing Board approved new mission, vision, purpose and values statements in 2006.



SFCC

SANTA FE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

6401 Richards Ave.

Santa Fe, NM 87508

SANTA FE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Inside SFCC

DISCOVERY DAY SFCC

COME SPEND THE DAY WITH US
AT SANTA FE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Saturday, April 21

**FOOD, FUN AND ACTIVITIES
FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY**

Enroll and register for classes, meet faculty members,
staff and students. Enjoy live entertainment, explore
exhibits and tour the campus.



Nan Keegan

“Oaxaca: Beauty in Turmoil” features work by SFCC photography students who traveled to Oaxaca, Mexico, as part of an SFCC photography class. The exhibit also includes work by photojournalist Antonio Turok and will be on display at SFCC through March 12. See Page 5 for more details.