



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Santa Ana College Transfer Rate Jumps 19 Percent ****Dance Department Boosts Student Success****

(Santa Ana)—As many families still grapple with the impact of a depressed economy, they wonder how they can afford college tuition for their sons and daughters. And if they opt for community colleges, will this choice represent a dead end? The story of one department at Santa Ana College proves that community college can indeed be a pathway to success.

Last year, college and university transfers from Santa Ana College increased 19 percent, according to the National Student Clearinghouse. A total of 2,096 students transferred to the California State University system, the University of California system, or private or out-of-state institutions.

The SAC Dance Department is a reflection of just how diligently community colleges work to get their students coveted transfer spots. This year, those efforts paid off in a big way. The department’s transfer rate skyrocketed some 133 percent. The number of transfer students may seem small at seven, but their success rate is high considering that there are about 30 dance majors at the college.

“Our students are focused and ambitious,” said Eve Kikawa, chair of SAC’s dance department. “As a department, our philosophy is to encourage our students to transfer and to complete a B.F.A. (Bachelor of Fine Arts) and a M.F.A. (Master of Fine Arts).”

To encourage student success, the SAC Foundation helped get students to the American College Dance Festival (ACDF). The ACDF provides the venue for students of dance to participate in performances, workshops, panels, and master classes taught by instructors from around the region. It also gives the students an opportunity to be seen.

Such was the case for 20-year-old Gabriel Mata. For him, this spring’s ACDF at Modesto Junior College also served as an audition for the San Jose State University (SJSU) dance program. And, fortunately, SJSU liked what they saw. So much so, that Mata has secured a full tuition scholarship for the fall. Without the scholarship, transferring would have been very difficult for the high-energy dancer who lives with his mother in one room in Santa Ana.

Mata started dancing in high school. He remembered going to a dance audition with a friend who told him he couldn’t dance. He tried out anyway. Although his audition was not successful, he was inspired to begin taking dance classes at Santa Ana High School in his junior year. In his senior year, he auditioned again for the Santa Ana High School Dance Team and was accepted.

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“Back then, I wasn’t expecting to do much after high school,” he said. “My parents didn’t graduate from high school and so I couldn’t see much past it either.”

Nevertheless, he made his way to SAC where he has been encouraged and motivated by the faculty. “The professors are like my second mothers. They’ve even paid for my summer programs,” he said.

He carries a 3.62 grade point average. In addition to dance, he has studied biology, chemistry, political science, and psychology, as well as other general education requirements.

Although his main passion is modern dance, which he says has helped bring him out his shell; he is looking forward to taking a double major at SJSU in dance and nutrition. Why nutrition? A high school dance teacher emphasized how important good nutrition is to good dance performance—a lesson that has stuck with him. As such, he doesn’t indulge in soda, junk food or coffee and he starts the day with a nutritious breakfast to get him through his dance moves. And he is hungry for more knowledge in the field.

“From where I was back in high school to where I am now, it’s the polar opposite. I still can’t believe that I’m transferring,” said Mata.

After finishing his higher education, he said he might return to Southern California. At the same time, there was a twinkle in his eye when he talked about the possibility of New York City.

The following SAC students—all Santa Ana residents—have been accepted as transfer students to the following dance programs:

- Sara Arvizu: California State University, Fullerton
- Fidel Beltran: CSULB
- Angelica Camacho: CSULB
- Evelyn Cortes: CSULB
- Rocio Cruz: CSULB
- Leticia Garcia: San Jose State University
- Gabriel Mata: San Jose State University

For more information on the Santa Ana College dance program, contact Eve Kikawa at (714) 564-5641 or visit www.sac.edu/dance.

About the Rancho Santiago Community College District

The mission of the Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) is to respond to the educational needs of an ever-changing community and to provide programs and services that reflect academic excellence. Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College are public community colleges of RSCCD, which serve the residents of Anaheim Hills, East Garden Grove, Irvine, Orange, Santa Ana, Tustin and Villa Park. Both colleges provide education for academic transfer and careers, courses for personal and professional development, customized training for business and industry, and programs to train nurses, firefighters and law enforcement personnel.

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