

VIEWPOINTS

Editorials • Opinions • Letters to the Editor



The mission of the Southwestern College Sun is to serve its campuses and their communities by providing information, insights and stimulating discussions of news, activities and topics relevant to our readers. The staff strives to produce a newspaper that is timely, accurate, fair, interesting, visual and accessible to readers. Though The Sun is a student publication, staff members ascribe to the ethical and moral guidelines of professional journalists.

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AWARDS/HONORS

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| National College Newspaper Hall of Fame
Inducted 2018 | San Diego County Multicultural Heritage Award |
| ACP Pacemaker 100 An Outstanding Student Publication of the Century
2022 | California Newspaper Publishers Association California College Newspaper of the Year
2013, 2016, 2020, 2021, 2023 |
| Student Press Law Center National College Press Freedom Award
2011, 2018 | Student Newspaper General Excellence
2002-23 |
| National Newspaper Association National College Newspaper of the Year
2004-2022 | Society of Professional Journalists National Mark of Excellence
2001-22 |
| Associated Collegiate Press Pacemaker Awards
2003-06, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012-2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 | First Amendment Award
2002, 2005 |
| General Excellence
2001-23 | San Diego Press Club Excellence in Journalism
1999-2022 |
| Best of Show
2001-23 | Directors Award for Defense of Free Speech
2012 |
| Columbia University Scholastic Press Association Gold Medal for Journalism Excellence
2001-23 | Journalism Association of Community Colleges Pacesetter Award
2001-18, 2022-23 |
| College Media Association National College Newspaper of the Year
2020, 22 | Newspaper General Excellence
2000-2023 |
| California College Media Association Outstanding College/University Newspaper | American Scholastic Press Association Community College Newspaper of the Year |



ILLUSTRATION BY DE LUNA / STAFF

UNWISE TO OPEN DURING STORM

and its damage reached far and wide. Tijuana, Rosarito and other Baja California cities populated with Southwestern College students took a beating.

So did the students.

Heavy rain that flows smoothly down San Diego streets into well-maintained drainage systems can cause deadly flooding, mudslides, road collapses and chaos in Mexico's unpaved hillside *colonias* and poorly maintained roadways. Flooding and chaos on August 21 was an epic nightmare south of the border.

And then, on top of all that, we were summoned to school, even though almost every other K-12 district in the county closed for one day. (South County's elementary districts, Sweetwater and Southwestern engaged in hurricane force finger pointing, but that's a story for another day.)

Southwestern needed to lead, but punted and endangered its students, particularly its vulnerable *transfronterizos*. We were forced to drive through flooded areas, ford streams, dodge fallen trees and *diablito* power lines wiggling near puddles, and trudge predawn miles in downpours. La linea was, of course, a ghoulish marathon of unstaffed lines, surly agents and flickering power.

Believe it or not it could have been much worse. The San Diego-Tijuana region caught a huge break when category 4 Hurricane Hilary wobbled eastward about 120 miles south of Ensenada and crossed over the Baja Peninsula, causing it to lose strength. It jiggled north again and slid east of our mountains, averting the head-on collision with San Diego County sensible people were bracing for.

Our amateur meteorologists in the administrative suites had no way to know this would happen, which makes the decision to stay open even more reckless and arrogant. We shudder to think what could have happened with a direct hit.

President Dr. Mark Sanchez and Governing Board President Roberto Alcantar like to boast that they are homeboys who understand the borderlands culture and the *transfronterizo* community. Maybe they do, but they seem to have forgotten that 30-40 percent of Southwestern's students live in Mexico and cross *la frontera* to attend college. (By the way, almost 40 percent of this newspaper staff lives in Tijuana, Puerto Nuevo and Rosarito.) This was a tone deaf decision and very disappointing for those of us who cross the border daily. *Los jefes* failed us that stormy day.

Southwestern College would have suffered no harm to its academics or its funding by delaying the start of school one day. We could have tacked on a day to the end of semester or found another creative way to catch up. Putting students' lives at risk was entirely unnecessary.

We were lucky we did not have a repeat of Raj Chopra's disastrous decision to keep the college open during the 2007 wildfires. A student died that day. Thank God no one died this time, but it was dumb luck. Really dumb.

Hurricane Hilary caused a massive mess in the California deserts and mountains in late August.

It also wreaked havoc for Southwestern College *transfronterizos*.

College leadership blundered badly when it decided to keep its campuses open on the first day of school this semester in the middle of a fierce tropical storm that a day earlier was a category 4 hurricane. August 21 was a once-a-century storm

THINKING OUT LOUD

COMPILED BY CAMILA A. GONZALEZ

How did the storm affect your commute over the border?



JANESSA ORTEGA
Biology major

"Tijuana gets nasty when it rains, there are a lot of accidents. I think the decision to remain open was wrong because there are tons of binational students."



DANNY JR. RODRIGUEZ
Business major

"I was very appreciative of the school remaining open because I was able to access the resources on campus like the gym and the Wi-Fi."



YVETTE RAMIREZ
Liberal Studies

"I live near the Otay border and I had no problem crossing. I think it was a good thing that the college remained open."



ERICA ORTIZ
Photography

"It was an inconvenience for me because I do not have a car."