

Viewpoints

Students Need Debt Relief

College students and graduates are counting on Biden to stand up the GOP and pass meaningful relief.

Story Page 5



Sports

RECORDS TUMBLE

A resurgent swim team smashed 11 school records and won four conference championships in a meet hosted at the new aquatic center.

Read the full story, Page 10



Arts

Wondrous Wings

SC alum who studied dance at Julliard returns to choreograph stunning performance of "The Winged."

Story Page 8



THE SUN SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE

AN ACP HALL OF FAME NEWSPAPER

MAY 2022 ISSUE 5

A NATIONAL PACEMAKER AWARD NEWSPAPER

MEChA FIGHTS ON FOR CHICANO STUDIES

BY EWAN TOLEDO

El Plan de Southwestern College has not gone as planned. Time for *El Plan B*.

MEChA's 10-point proposal to create a Chicano Studies department got the "once over lightly" from college administrators and faculty leaders, according to MEChista Julia Woock, one of the student leaders who advocated for the plan.

Based on the seminal *El Plan de Santa Barbara*, the Southwestern College proposal outlines a vision for a modern Chicano Studies program for a *fronteriza* campus — America's closest college to Mexico. Student leaders have argued that colleges and universities around America already have modern Chicano Studies programs and curriculum, but not their own college that is between 65 and 70 percent Latino.

During the pandemic, SC student Myriam Ortiz collaborated with MEChA (*Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan*) on the plan. Ortiz said she was motivated when she discovered she had to take an additional class at Mesa College not offered at SC to fulfill her degree requirements as a Mexican American Studies major. She said she created *El Plan* as an assignment at Mesa College and presented her outline to former SC MEChA advisor Dr. Francisco Fuentes. With his support, MEChA finalized *El Plan de Southwestern College* and collected 1,347 signatures on a student petition.

In March 2021, members of MEChA presented the plan to

MEChA • PG 7



MISER OF MEXICO RICHLY FUNNY

Director Sandra Cortez deftly leads a talented cast through Carlos Morton's tragi-comic tale of lust and greed. Page 8

Image Courtesy of Daren Scott



HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENT

Sandra Scheller, the tireless Holocaust educator and human rights activist, was presented the Southwestern College Honorary Degree for her decades of service. Her mother, Holocaust survivor Ruth Goldschmiedova Sax, was the recipient in 2018. Scheller's latest exhibit will be hosted for one year at the Rancho San Diego Library in El Cajon.



CONGRATS GRADS!

Record numbers of students earn certificates or transfer

Southwestern College's new and greatly improved stadium still could not fit all the 2023 graduates and their cheering sections, so for the first time ever the college held two celebrations.

More than 800 students were split into morning and afternoon ceremonies, both of which drew near-capacity crowds to DeVore Stadium. Students were sorted by the schools their presenting professors belonged to.

Among the special guests were Latin Grammy-winning guitarist and Spanish knight Pepe Romero (a friend of honorary degree recipient Sandra Scheller) and Chula Vista Mayor John McCann, a former student and adjunct instructor.

ASO Vice President Imani Drew gave an inspiring commencement address that encouraged her classmates to be persistent and to use their educations for the betterment of the nation.

— Sun Staff



PHOTOS BY CHERI-ANN INOUE

CROSSING THE STAGE — Ngoc Phu Xinh Nguyen, who goes by Sally, was one of about 800 students to participate in commencement. For the first time ever SC split the event into morning and afternoon sessions.

A LARGE RETIREE COHORT DEPARTS

BY CHERI-ANN INOUE

Fueled by an early retirement offer from the college, more than two dozen senior faculty and staff will retire at the end of this academic year on June 30. It is one of the larger retirement cohorts in recent years.

Beverly DeLara is the longest-serving of the group at 37 years, followed by Mary Jo Horvath and Margarita Andrade-Robledo with 33 years. Diane Edwards and Julieta Hatz both compiled 30 years of service.

Diana Avila, Sylvia Banda-Ramirez, Adam Cato, George Essex, Michael Gargano and Edmund Guerrero all completed 26 years of service.

Serving 20 years or more are Pila Aleman-Taijeron, Bruce Boman, Carmen Cortez, Josefina Flores, Al Garrett, Nora Guido and Richard Hettich.

RETIREES • PG 2

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REMEMBERING DAVID LYNCH

HUMANITARIAN FOUNDED SCHOOLS IN TIJUANA DUMPS

BY CAMILA A. GONZALEZ

COLONIA PAN AMERICANO, TIJUANA

When David Lynch told a friend that the Tijuana school he taught in was a dump, his friend assumed it was a rhetorical flourish.

No, Lynch literally taught in the dump.

A humble humanitarian



DAVID LYNCH

LYNCH • PG 2

RETIREES • CONT FROM PG 1 *Early retirement incentive contributes to exit of large group of senior employees*

Retirees with 11-18 years of service include Dr. Clarence Amaral, Felipe Ballon, Margarita Barrios, Joyce Bayles, Johnny Blankenship, Jose Ibarra, Lillian Leopold and Joel Levine.

Several of the retirees were eligible for a Supplemental Early Retirement Plan (SERP), which

pays up to 80 percent of a year's salary upon retirement. The SERP is paid in installments over a period of eight years. Sometimes a SERP allows an employee to retire a year early by offsetting early retirement costs and purchases of service time. Southwestern College can save sizable

amounts of salary payments if enough of the higher-paid senior employees leave the district and are replaced by younger, lower salaried personnel.

Faculty members and administrators acknowledge that a SERP means tradeoffs. A large retirement group often means sizable

losses of experience and institutional memory, as well as a year or more of a retired professor's classes taught by several part time instructors. On the plus side, the college can save millions in salary over time and has the opportunity to reassess the type of faculty the college requires. Some

argue that it also brings a new energy to the faculty and staff.

SERPs are only offered periodically and only pencil out if enough senior employees accept them. Many eligible faculty declined their SERP offers and decided to continue their teaching careers.

LYNCH

• CONT FROM PG 1

'Saintly' humanitarian dedicated his life to educating poverty stricken children in three countries

and revered figure at Southwestern College, Lynch died recently but not before educating at least 12,000 desperately poor children in Mexico, Nicaragua and Uganda.

"Earth has lost a saint and Heaven has gained an angel," said his friend Enrique Morones, founder of Gente Unida. "He is a hero. David Lynch, presente!"

When he was 27 Lynch worked as a special education teacher in Philadelphia. In 1980 he volunteered to teach for a month during the summer in Tijuana. He was shocked by what he saw. A teeming mountain of garbage piled at the edge of a settlement of desperately poor people. Every day swarms of filthy men, women and children would dodge dump trucks and graders as they scrambled like ants over the wretch-inducing hills of daily garbage drops.

Lynch's "classroom" was a blue tarp that served as rudimentary shade on the edge of the municipal dump in Colonia Pan Americano. As goats, dogs and chickens meandered through his "school," basureros (trash pickers) scavenged through the dump for anything of value, including food.

"The smell is unbelievable and there are billions of flies, clouds of them," Lynch said at a 1999 fundraiser attended by dozens of SC colleagues. "I remember being shocked that entire families lived in cardboard boxes in a massive city dump with no electricity or water. It was horrifying but the kids were just like any other kids, running about and trying to have fun in the dump."

His first students had never been to any kind of class and did not know what a school was.

But they learned.

When the month was up Lynch left, relieved to be away from the squalor and filth. Philadelphia seemed like paradise after that, he said.

Lynch left the children of the dump behind, but they never left him. Tijuana's urchins of Colonia Pan Americano had burrowed into his mind and heart. His view of life and the broader world would never be the same.

Each time he heard a Philadelphia parent or student complain he would think of the destitute but cheerful kids in El Dompe. Same when he took a new job in New York.

He returned to Tijuana for a second summer, then a third. After six weeks during his third summer he asked his New York school district for a one-year leave of absence. He was granted a second year, then a third but with the proviso that he had to return after that year or resign. Lynch did not wait a year. He resigned on the spot and decided to dedicate his life to the children of the dump.

An adjunct teaching position at SC's San Ysidro Higher Education Center gave him enough income to pay for his \$55-a-month Tijuana apartment and a meager existence. He also met his friend and great supporter Araceli Moreno, an ESL instructor.

"I was born in Tijuana, so I loved the project," she said. "I immediately started helping him. One summer, I taught English and participated in tasks like providing clothes and occasionally toys."

Moreno said she and Lynch were friends for 29 years before he died.



Photo Courtesy of Responsibility

NEVER DOWN IN THE DUMPS — David Lynch (above) writes an inspirational message to his students in Matagalpa, Nicaragua to mark the start of construction of a new school for children previously excluded from education by abject poverty. His uncle Bob Keenan donated the money to build the school. (below) A humble but modern and clean classroom for children who live and scavenge in filthy dump sites. The Southwestern College adjunct devoted his life and all his earnings to serving the poorest of the poor in Tijuana, Nicaragua and Uganda.



"I was intrigued by what I heard about his school and wanted to visit. I am very moved by the people who work here, everyone who has dedicated their lives to work here with these children. You can forget how much you have and it's good to be reminded that there are others less fortunate."

SUSAN SARANDON
Academy Award
Winning Actress

Susan Sarandon Photo Courtesy
of Responsibility



Photo Courtesy of Responsibility



Photo Courtesy of Responsibility's Facebook

She said his love and generosity were superhuman.

"He resigned from his job in New York as a teacher in a good school to do what he was called to do here," she said. "He never left. That is the beauty of this remarkable human being. He believed in this project."

Tijuana's crushing poverty was not limited to Colonia Pan Americano. Not too far away los pobres who lived near Colonia Fausto Gonzalez, a sprawling dumpsite in Tijuana, worked as pepenadores (scavengers) to collect aluminum and glass. Children often would accompany their parents to

the mounds of trash where oblivious dump trucks would unload near them. Pepenadores were often injured or killed by the trucks or the falling loads of refuse.

Lynch convinced parents their children would be safer with him under the blue tarp than dodging dump trucks. His school was born and later his support organization, Responsibility. He had success writing grants and partnering with churches and charitable organizations, but his biggest support came from a Hollywood superstar. Academy Award winner Susan Sarandon visited Lynch's school in Tijuana and was amazed.

"David asked me if I would donate something for an auction for a fund raiser he was holding," Sarandon said. "I was intrigued by what I heard about his school and wanted to visit. I am very moved by the people who work here, everyone who has dedicated their lives to work here with these children. You can forget how much you have and it's good to be reminded that there are others less fortunate."

Sarandon said Lynch was one of the most selfless people she had ever met in all her years as an activist.

"He volunteered here and then came back," she said. "And he inspired others to come back. This is a hard place, but there is a joyfulness here that these people have created."

Lynch also attracted support from an unlikely source on the other end of the political spectrum. Conservative commentator Bill O'Reilly was also a financial backer of Responsibility and

the Tijuana school.

Eventually, Lynch turned the elementary school over to Mexico's Secretaria de Educación, the federal government authority that oversees the development and implementation of the national educational policy and school standards. Lynch and his team had by this time given thousands of Tijuana children an introduction to education and a roadmap out of the dump.

Lynch and his team followed a guidepost philosophy.

"If you want to help someone for a day, give them food," he said. "If you would to help someone for a year, give them a tree. But if you want to help someone for a lifetime, give them an education."

One of the beneficiaries of the Tijuana school is Felipe Gonzalez, 52, a physical education teacher. He was a nine-year-old basurero when he meandered into the school near the dumpsite and met Lynch.

"My parents did not let me study," he said. "For them, work was the priority. I had to help them support and feed my younger siblings. Education was not in my future. It was difficult to get to school, work, collect material from the dump, pay for my school supplies and to find something to eat."

Gonzalez began his education late, but Lynch provided language and writing lessons to help him build an academic foundation. Gonzalez said Lynch transformed his life.

Morones said he met Lynch through his older brother Luis Morones, who volunteered regularly for Responsibility.

"He showed that children can blossom even in terrible situations when a loving adult helps them," he said. "David was a miracle worker. He was also tireless and generous to a fault. He led a very ascetic life, sacrificing for others."

Lynch and Responsibility opened a school in Matagalpa, Nicaragua in 2008 when he saw a documentary by filmmaker John Sheedy about a community living in a dump. Before he started the school, however, he determined that he needed to help the people of dump to secure clean water. He watched in horror as a mother with a days-old infant put the baby in a cardboard shoe box to carry it to work with her in the dump.

Soon his new school was booming with 560 students ranging in age from 6 to adult. Later he raised money to take them on field trips to museums and the beach.

"For a lot of them, it's their first time leaving the dump," he said at the time.

His next mission was to Uganda, where he worked with orphans in a war torn society with a kleptocratic government that did not adequately fund a school system, much less a social services safety net.

"Education is the only way to help poverty-stricken people help themselves and improve their lives," Lynch wrote shortly before his death. "English classes, in particular, can teach important skills that can mean gaining entrance into institutions of higher education or gainful employment."

Lynch saw horror and despair, but also redemption and joy during his 40 years of service to some of the world's poorest people. He was never down in the dumps.

"He was special," said Moreno. "There was no one else quite like David. He was a blessing from Heaven."

Sarandon agreed.

"Imagination is the greatest gift we are given," she said. "If you can imagine your life different, you can make it happen. Our ability to dream is what makes change happen. David can dream."