

Special Section

ROSIE AND THE ORIGINALS



Photo Courtesy of rosieandtheoriginals.com



RACHEL AVENUE ROYALTY—Rosie Hamlin “cracked the tortilla ceiling” and created an opening for Latinas in popular music.

ROSIE AND THE ORIGINALS
NATIONAL CITY TEENS WHO CHANGED AMERICAN MUSIC

NATIONAL CITY'S
IMMORTAL 'ANGEL BABY'

Brilliant 15-year-old created the 'Chicano National Anthem'

BY ALEXA LIMA

Love can transcend race, distance and time. Rosie Hamlin proved that love can even transcend death. Her music has. Rosie and the Originals have entered immortality. Hamlin died in 2017 in remote Belen, New Mexico, unleashing an outpouring of grief and nostalgia among older Chicanos and undying gratitude among younger ones who believe Rosie paved the way and made so many things possible for *la raza*. Not bad for a 15-year-old National City girl who kicked around Rachel Avenue with the rest of *los chavalitos* on the northeastern edge of town watched closely by the cops but no one else.

CHICANO NATIONAL ANTHEM
Rosie and the Originals were one hit wonders who blazed

across the pop charts as teenagers then disappeared from radio like a fading comet melted by the sun. It was a hit, though, that changed popular music and reshaped Chicano culture. Rosalie Hamlin Mendez, a preternaturally talented 15-year-old singer-songwriter, recorded “Angel Baby” during the summer of 1960 in a makeshift studio stuffed into the corner of a ratty recording studio in rural San Marcos. Her teenage friends who huffed through 30 takes had no idea they were making history. “‘Angel Baby’ is the Chicano national anthem,” said Herman Baca, the 81-year-old chairman of the seminal Committee on Chicano rights. “Rosie was the first Chicana to have a hit record and the first Chicana in the Rock-n-Roll Hall of Fame.” Baca – a Southwestern College Honorary Degree recipient – is one of two living people painted on the iconic Founders Mural in Chicano Park. (The other is fellow SC Honorary

CONT'D • PG B2





ROSALIE HAMLIN

Former Su-Hi Student to Star In Revue Here

NATIONAL CITY — A former Sweetwater High School student will head an all-star revue that will appear tomorrow and Saturday night in the Balboa Park Bowl at 8 p.m.

She is Rosalie Hamlin, 15, whose first recording, "Angel Baby," is now reaching the one million mark in sales. She is billed as Rosie and Her Originals.

Also on the program will be Ronnie and The Premiers, whose recording of "Sharon" is on the top 20 list locally.

Don Bowman, who will serve as master of ceremonies, also has a top selling record, "Coward of the Alamo."

Two bands, The Kingsmen and The Rhythmairs, will also be on the program.

Image Courtesy of the National City Library

The band met with Highland Records and gave up the skipping master but left without a contract. Three weeks went by without any contact from the record company.

Then, unexpectedly, the most blessed sound. They heard "Angel Baby" on the national broadcast of K-Day Radio with Allen Freed – the legendary DJ who in 1964 would ignite Beatlemania in America.

Freed could smell a hit like *cempasuchil* on a Dia de los Muertos altar.

"This is by a 15-year-old girl from National City, California named Rosie," barked Freed. "This is going to be a hit guys and gals!"

Freed, as usual, was right. He put "Angel Baby" into his regular rotation. DJs from San Ysidro to New York City, from Seattle to Key Largo joined him.

Freed often played "Angel Baby" 10 times during his show.

"Angel Baby" rocketed up the charts. It hit #5 on the Billboard Hot 100 and was a staple on jukeboxes, at high school dances and radios from coast to coast. It was loved by truck drivers and lowriders, Latinos and gringos, mods and rockers, teens and adults. It was also a Top 10 hit in Canada, England and Australia, and a Top 40 hit in much of Europe.

Baca said "Angel Baby" hit him "like

a tsunami" and stopped him in his tracks.

"Whoa! That's Rosie!" he said he recalled. "My classmate at Sweetwater High School!"

Chicanas did not sing rock-n-roll at the dawn of the 1960s, Baca said. Except for Rosie.

Solemente Rosie.

The Chicano national anthem stirred to life.

So did another episode of the sorry history of the mistreatment of Latinas. "Underage" Rosie, now 16, had to bring her mother to sign a contract. The record label listed bandmate David Ponci as the writer of "Angel Baby" rather than Hamlin because he was the oldest member of the group.

"I guess they figured young Chicanas couldn't write songs," said Baca. "Reminds me of the old saying, 'Professionals built the Titanic, amateurs built Noah's Ark.' 'Angel Baby' and the ark outlasted the so-called professionals."

It took Hamlin nearly 20 years and a string of lawsuits to collect royalties due her.

ROLLING WITH THE ROLLING STONES

In 1960 Hamlin was the first Latina ever invited to perform on the legendary Dick Clark program,

WEDDING BELLS

Rosie married Originals guitar player Noah Taffola. They had two children, but divorced after three and a half years.

"American Bandstand." She sang "Lonely Blue Nights." Rosie and the Originals performed a series of shows with Jackie Wilson at the Brooklyn Paramount Theatre in New York City and other lustrous shows in the early 1960s, but nothing like a November 1964 gig just a few miles up the road from National City. Rosie and the Originals shared the bill with the Rolling Stones.

With the British Invasion of rock bands like The Beatles, The Who and The Kinks striding across the Atlantic and conquering the radio airwaves, scores of American acts with their roots in the 1950s were being pushed aside. Rosie and the gang, however, were embraced by the Brits and found new audiences performing with English rock acts who loved the do-it-yourself vibe of "Angel Baby" and Rosie's transcendent singing.

It was the Stones' first San Diego appearance and a historical event for the Balboa Park Bowl, a small concrete stadium on what is now the football field at San Diego High School. Tickets were \$3.50 to hear the lineup of



THE ORIGINAL ROSIE

The recording of "Angel Baby" was legendary in its folksy backstory. Recorded in an airplane hanger in San Marcos, it featured a sax solo by the bass player when the real sax player had to stay home and mow the lawn.



“‘Angel Baby’ by Rosie and the Originals should be the official song of National City, California the way states have flowers and universities have mascots. For generations of kids who grew up in neighborhoods like mine, ‘Angel Baby’ will always be the anthem of our childhood and an indelible part of the soundtrack of our lives. ‘Angel Baby’ is, without a doubt, number one.”

JENNIFER COOKE
Writer

Rosie and the Originals, Joel Scott Hill and the Invaders, The Misfits and Mick Jagger and the boys.

Promoter Danny Millsap, who ran a local record store, told the San Diego Reader in an April 1998 article that he paid the Stones \$400 and Rosie and The Originals \$500.

“Why not? Rosie was more popular then,” said Baca.

Hamlin toured and did special engagements with and without The Originals into the 21st century – including a memorable 2002 series of appearances in Hollywood and New York’s Madison Square Garden. She said she was blessed to have performed with Fats Domino, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Freddy Fender, Johnny Otis, Big Joe Turner, Big Momma Thornton, Thurston Harris and many of the talented East Los Angeles groups like Malo, Tierra and El Chicano.

GOLDEN YEARS OF AN AMERICAN ORIGINAL

Hamlin said she always wanted to record a bilingual version of “Angel Baby” to honor her Chicano roots. In 1998 Rosie and the Originals recorded a Spanglish version that became a classic. She released it on her 2001 album “Angel Baby Revisited” which features studio recordings and live performances. The Spanglish version became America’s #1 cruising song and can be heard even in White bastions of the United States like Idaho and Kansas on cruising nights.

Mexican superstar Jenni Rivera recorded the Spanglish version with a Banda arrangement that appeared on her best selling album “*Se Las Voy a Dara Otro*.”

Hamlin’s concerts tailed off as painful fibromyalgia sapped her energy and forced her off her feet. She moved to New Mexico to be near her children. She also struck up a close friendship with her former junior high bandmate John Chavez, who coincidentally lived about an hour away in Santa Fe.

“We were very close,” he said. “We were two San Diegans living in New Mexico. When we renewed our friendship Rosie would still go out on tour, but she was fading out of the music business.”

None of her friends or biographers can say for sure when her last performance was, but it was likely shortly after the Madison Square Garden extravaganzas. Fibromyalgia finally drove Hamlin off the stage and into her retirement life of painting and gardening, said Chavez.

“Rosie was an avid gardener and a prize-winning painter,” he said. “Her paintings are amazing.”

Hamlin was able to see Rosie and the Originals portrayed by Jeanette Jurado of the band Expose in the 1995 Chicano film “My Family/Mi Familia” directed by Gregory Nava starring Jimmy Smits, Edward James Olmos, Esai

Morales and Jennifer Lopez. Jurado performed “Angel Baby” in its entirety in the film.

Hamlin became the national spokesperson for the Fibromyalgia Foundation and a cherished if low-keyed member of her New Mexico community.

“Everybody loved Rosie,” said Chavez. “She was always sweet and kind to everyone.”

Hamlin died in her sleep in Belen, New Mexico on March 30, 2017. She was 71.

“I spoke with Rosie the day before she passed away in the spring of 2017,” said Chavez. “She really struggling with the fibromyalgia. It was her time.”

Chavez, even seven years later, said he is still heartbroken by the loss of his dear *comadre*.

“I miss my best friend,” he said. “She is now truly an Angel Baby.”

Even after Hamlin died, “Angel Baby” lived on in recording studios, oldies radio programs, lowrider rallies and in concert venues from the Arctic Circle to Oaxaca. In the summer of 2018 “Angel Baby” found its largest audience ever when the Spanish version recorded by Rosie and the Originals was featured in an El Pollo Loco commercial for its *Te Amo* sauces promotion. New generations watching large screen, wall-mounted televisions heard the signature guitar opening and Hamlin’s soaring soprano almost 40 years after their parents and grandparents heard them on their AM radios and black and white TV sets with rabbit ear antennae.

ROSIE OPENED DOORS FOR LATINAS

Dr. Gerardo Rios, 47, professor of Mexican American Studies and History, said the 1960s were a time of awakening for Latinos and Chicanos. It saw the beginning of the United Farm Workers, the emergence of great leaders like Cesar Chavez and Huerta, and demands for voting rights and civil rights. Chicanos started to advocate for themselves and push back against systematic inequalities. Rock music provided the soundtrack.

“Rock and Roll was the expression of rebellion,” he said. “It was a youthful expression of energy. Let me shape this world! Let me be a part of this world. Let me live in it as well.”

Rosie and the Originals are iconic for Chicanos because people of color finally saw a Latina on the record charts and on television performing alongside White musicians.

“For Chicanos it was an awakening,” he said. “For Chicanos it meant so much. It meant visibility for the community.”

Revered San Diego County Chicana leader Rachael Ortiz, the 83-year-old executive director of San Diego’s iconic Barrio Station, was Hamlin’s cousin and grew up with her in National City.

“I am so happy that someone is finally acknowledging her,” Ortiz said



JENNI RIVERA



TOM WAITS



NORMA HERNANDEZ



Photo Courtesy of San Diego Union-Tribune



Photo Courtesy of San Diego Free Press

RACHEL ORTIZ

The iconic civil rights activist and founder of Barrio Station was Rosie’s loving cousin. They often played music together. Ortiz’s sister is said to have sat on the piano bench next to Rosie while she composed “Angel Baby.”

Baby” is one of the greatest and most important artistic creations ever to come out of San Diego County.

“‘Angel Baby’ by Rosie and the Originals should be the official song of National City, California the way states have flowers and universities have mascots,” she said. “For generations of kids who grew up in neighborhoods like mine, ‘Angel Baby’ will always be the anthem of our childhood and an indelible part of the soundtrack of our lives. ‘Angel Baby’ is, without a doubt, number one.”

Cooke said only locals knew that Hamlin attended Ira Harbison Elementary School, National City Jr. High and Sweetwater High School. “It was a point of pride for anyone in our much-maligned little suburb of San Diego,” she said. “We have Tom Waits and we have Rosie.”

John Lennon and Robert Plant “have good taste,” Cooke said.

“I will never forget listening to Art Laboe’s oldies show on 92.5 where all the girls would dedicate ‘Angel Baby’ to their boyfriends in jail or hearing the song pump out on loudspeakers of the lowriders that cruised down Highland Avenue on a Saturday night.”

“Angel Baby” burned itself into the hearts of her generation, Cooke said.

“I listened as I cried my pre-teen heart out about my beloved Albert who liked Martha better than me, and I scribbled furiously in my Hello Kitty diary about the injustice of it all,” she said. “There seemed to be no song in the world that could adequately capture the excruciating poignance of adolescent love the way that Rosie Hamlin did in those simple lyrics: When you are near me, my heart skips a beat/I can hardly stand on my own two feet.”

Cooke said she and her friends were amazed to learn later in life that John Lennon was such a Rosie Hamlin fan.

“If one of the world’s greatest ever songwriters called ‘Angel Baby’ one of his all-time favorites...well, that’s really saying something for a little girl from National City.”

choked with emotion. “I’m crying because I could not be with Rosie when she was dying because I was with my sister at the end and then Rosie died right after. I lost them both. I loved them both. Rosie loved my sister and my sister loved Rosie dearly.”

Ortiz said her sister sat next to Hamlin at the piano for stretches as she composed “Angel Baby” in 1960.

“We all loved music,” Ortiz said. “We all sang in church. We sang gospel music and rhythm and blues.”

Barrio Station, the 54-year-old service organization in Logan Heights, has been honored locally and nationally for its altruistic work in disadvantaged communities. Ortiz is a 2004 Southwestern College Honorary Degree recipient.

“Rosie worked with me at Barrio Station for a while,” Ortiz said. “She helped a group called The Loganettes, which sang oldies. They learned a lot from her and she loved teaching. She was very gracious to give back to the community.”

Hamlin also helped with fund raising at Barrio Station, Ortiz said.

“I loved having her here with us,” she said. “It was a special time. She was the pride of National City. My angel baby.”

Former Southwestern College President Norma Hernandez said she worked at Barrio Station with Hamlin “around 1972” before starting her career at the college as a counselor.

“She was very sweet and nice,” Hernandez said. “A joy to be with.”

Writer Jennifer Cooke said “Angel

Sports

Double teaming hoops coach



Tyrone Shelley juggles men's, women's basketball teams

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Community

INSPIRING CEREMONY CELEBRATES KUMEYAAY

Native Americans gather at Southwestern to mark an upbeat new relationship

Story Page 12



Arts

Otherworldly dance 'Global Rhythms' a four-day festival of earth's best dance

Story Page 8



SOUTHWESTERN SAVIOR ANGELINA STUART HONORED WITH AN HONORARY DEGREE, STORY PAGE 2



AN ACP HALL OF FAME NEWSPAPER

DECEMBER 20, 2024 / ISSUE 2

A NATIONAL PACEMAKER AWARD NEWSPAPER

ZERO COST TEXTBOOKS ELIMINATE FINANCIAL BARRIER

State-supported program helps students to afford more classes, transfer sooner

BY MAYA GUERRERO-IBARRA

That thundering sound thousands of students are hearing in their imaginations is the cost of books falling like the Berlin Wall.

That other sound is students exhaling in relief.

Sky high textbook costs that were ruinously expensive for generations of college students have, in some cases, come down. In many cases all the way down.

Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) is a California program that allows legions of students to take courses without buying expensive texts. Southwestern College recently got on board.



CASSANDRA EVANS

Evans, an assistant professor of philosophy, said her enrollment grew after she started to offer ZTC. She is one of the growing number of professors offering ZTC, which currently covers more than 400 courses.

Southwestern librarian Margaret Dreihobl said the savings have been substantial. According to the California Student Aid Commission, she said, a typical two-year college student spends nearly \$1,000 per academic year on books – and most students are part time.

“Since the fall semester of 2023 we’ve saved Southwestern College students \$3,768,000 with the ZTC courses,” said Dreihobl. “(Savings) will increase as more students discover the program.”

ZTC could float a lot of boats, she said, by encouraging more students to enroll at Southwestern and enabling existing students to take more classes.

Cassandra Evans, an assistant professor of philosophy, said her enrollment grew after she started to offer ZTC. She is one of the growing number of professors offering ZTC, which currently covers more than 400 courses.

“(Californians) have the right to education, (but) the high cost of textbooks can (be) oppressive,” she said. “Women and people of color have had access to education for a very short time. (They are often) limited (by high textbook costs).”

TEXTBOOKS • PG 10



Photo By Rebecca Esparza / Staff

EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

CATRINA'S BIG NIGHT OUT

BY REBECCA ESPARZA

O ctavio Paz, in his classic “Labyrinth of Solitude,” poked fun at death and encouraged fellow Mexicans to join the fun. “The Mexican chases after death, mocks it, courts it, hugs it, and sleeps with it.”

Denizens of the borderland have joined in during the 21st century. Films like “Coco” have made el Dia de Los Muertos a national celebration.

Madam Catrina has company. Dia de los Muertos displays in the South County are brilliant works of folk art, Aztec-Catholic spirituality and a celebration of ancestors.

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT MELT DOWN

Faculty, students push back against steep cuts in classes, winter and summer intersessions

BY ALEXA LIMA

Senior administrators promised to pivot away from a controversial plan that would have eliminated winter and summer intersession classes and deeply cut spring 2025 offerings, but faculty continue to express anger that class selections remain in flux and what they describe as a lack of transparency in the process.

President Dr. Mark Sanchez, Vice President of Academic Affairs Sam Agdasi and interim Vice President of Fiscal Services Omar Gutierrez endured withering questioning from faculty and a student about what faculty described as “a crisis” during a contentious town hall meeting organized by Agdasi.

Faculty and many of the deans blamed the situation on overspending Southwestern’s state allotment for funding classes during the fall 2024 semester, leaving the college short of cash to staff intersessions and spring classes. Sanchez said the problem is that “Southwestern has outgrown its state FTES allotment (funding for classes based on enrollment).” He also blamed the failure to reestablish the college Enrollment Management Committee, a group comprised of faculty and administrators that advises on the formation and staffing of classes. The committee was dissolved during the pandemic and not reconstituted.

BLAMING THE FACULTY

Professor of Communication Eric Maag was not having it. He criticized Sanchez for blaming the situation on events that happened prior to his hiring in 2022 and not paying attention to one of the college’s most important administrative functions.

“Dr. Sanchez, your acknowledgment that this was based on a mistake, that this happened previously,” said Maag. “This was enrollment mismanagement and we’re dealing with the consequences of that. We haven’t really gotten into how or why, and I know it’s much deeper than a defunct Enrollment Management Committee. That is not the group responsible for this.”

Faculty union president Candice Taffolla-Schreiber, a professor of communication, said she was upset that faculty and deans are being blamed by Agdasi for the chaos and the poor communication



“Southwestern has outgrown its state FTES allotment (funding for classes based on enrollment).”

DR. MARK SANCHEZ
SC president



SAM AGDASI
SC vice president of academic affairs



OMAR GUTIERREZ
SC interim vice president of business and financial affairs

CLASSES • PG 3

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SAM AGDASI
SC vice president of academic affairs

“My intent was to bring more voice of the faculty and faculty leaders as the representative of the faculty into this process. This is why I invited them...I wanted to see your faces, those who are here...I am not avoiding sending an email. I want it to be very transparent, that’s what I am offering.”



PHIL SAINZ, SC
professor of political science

“We have a serious situation with bots and false enrollment,” he said. “I haven’t really heard what’s the game plan moving forward because this last semester was a disaster and it definitely impacts enrollment. We have fake students taking away really students’ opportunities.”



ERIC MAAG,
SC professor of communication

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“From what I am hearing there is a lot of data, a lot of numbers, there are so many statistics up on that board. But students aren’t statistics, we’re humans. We are doing our best and coming here every day and hearing that our classes are being cut is so...angering.”

DIRA WONG, SC student



“When the summer session is cut too severely, as we found out in the past, some of the students will go elsewhere to pursue what they need and some of those students will complete their programs elsewhere, which costs us within the student-centered formula funding. That is what happened in the summer of 2012. Within 18-24 months we were spending considerable money advertising to bring in more students who presumably had gone to other (colleges) due to our anemic summer schedule. That’s not a very efficient use of funds to have this herky-jerky semesters, cut it and then spend money later bring students back.”

ELISABETH SHAPIRO, SC business professor

BOTCHED ENROLLMENT PLAN THREATENS CUTS TO CLASS SCHEDULE

CLASSES • CONT FROM PG 1

Faculty leaders say administration overspent on fall classes, endangering intersessions and spring schedule

surrounding the controversy. Maag agreed.

“I think the thing that I am most disturbed about is the continual assessment that communication is supposed to flow downhill and once it hits the bottom (the faculty) it is supposed to be announced far and wide. The problem with that, as Candice said, is that it is not her job or the faculty leader’s job to send global emails to make sure everyone knows the problems we’re in (with enrollment management) and what’s happening.”

For more than an hour faculty spoke in person or over Zoom about the damage the cutbacks would have on students and adjunct instructors who were suddenly having classes pulled away. They also castigated administration for not heeding early faculty warning about fraudulent bots gobbling up spaces in classes and squeezing out students. Bots are computer generated “robots” used to steal federal FAFSA by signing up fake students and using stolen social security numbers to apply for financial aid money. Faculty claim that as many as 5,000 “inauthentic students” were counted in the announced fall enrollment of about 22,000. Administrators have said the number was just over 400.

Political science professor Phil Sainz has spent months trying to draw attention to the bots issue. “We have a serious situation with bots and false enrollment,” he said. “I haven’t really heard what’s the game plan moving forward because this last semester was a disaster and it definitely impacts enrollment. We have fake students taking away real students’ opportunities.”

TRICKLE DOWN INCLUSIVITY

Agdasi defended his trickle down communication strategies as “inclusive.”

“My intent was to bring more voice of the faculty and faculty leaders as the representative of the faculty into this process,” he said. “This is why I

invited them...I wanted to see your faces, those who are here...I am not avoiding sending an email. I want it to be very transparent, that’s what I am offering.”

Southwestern, like other California community colleges, receives funding based on an enrollment formula. One Full-Time Equivalent Student is based on the statistical full-time student taking 15 units. Body count and the actual number of units students take during a semester are tabulated and divided by 15. For example, a student taking nine units and a student taking six equal one Full-Time Equivalent Student under the formula. Southwestern’s FTES for the year 2023-2024 was 15,658.

Agdasi said his plan was to release 93 percent of the intersession and spring class sections, a total of 2,167 sections and hold 156 (7 percent) for Spring 2025. He said cutting classes in summer would have less issues and it would be easier to add classes in the fall semester than to cut. Faculty argue that the college should not cut intersessions and should release all possible spring classes as they schedule is already cut by FTES issues.

WE ARE HUMANS

Journalism major Dira Wong said she was distressed by the conversations because they treated students like data and assembly line productions rather than young people working to earn certificates and degrees.

“I rely on winter intersessions and summer classes (to make progress toward my degree) because I have two jobs,” she said. “So I don’t have time to be in classes for eight-nine hours a day. I have to go to classes in the summer and the winter.”

Wong said she was not happy about the way administrators were talking about students as data points.

“From what I am hearing there is a lot of data,

a lot of numbers, there are so many statistics up on that board,” she said. “But students aren’t statistics, we’re humans. We are doing our best and coming here every day and hearing that our classes are being cut is so...angering.”

Wong’s comments drew lengthy applause and praise from subsequent speakers, including business professor Elisabeth Shapiro.

“Those are very powerful words from a student, and we really need to keep their perspective in mind,” she said. “Many of our students schedule their lives to pursue their educational goals during the summer just like this student stated. They work and that’s very important to them.”

Shapiro said the college has made this mistake before and paid a price both financially and with lost enrollment.

“When the summer session is cut too severely, as we found out in the past, some of the students will go elsewhere to pursue what they need and some of those students will complete their programs elsewhere, which costs us within the student-centered formula funding,” she said. “That is what happened in the summer of 2012. Within 18-24 months we were spending considerable money advertising to bring in more students who presumably had gone to other (colleges) due to our anemic summer schedule. That’s not a very efficient use of funds to have this herky-jerky semesters, cut it and then spend money later bring students back.”

Diane Palmer, chair of philosophy and humanities, said she came to the meeting to hear some accountability from the college president and vice presidents.

“Faculty and staff have spent countless hours (on enrollment management issues), including this meeting,” she said. We have devoted time and energy trying to fix a problem we are not responsible for. I am hearing no accountability from leadership.”

Sanchez responded by reminding listeners that the enrollment management committee was defunct and that Southwestern had “significantly outgrown” FTES funding from the state.

“Yes, you can blame the president,” he said. “But we’re all trying to make these decisions that are in the best interest of our district.”

Sam Agdasi Photo Courtesy of Sam Agdasi, Phil Sainz Image Courtesy of ABC 10 News, Eric Maag Photo Courtesy of Eric Maag, Elisabeth Shapiro Photo Courtesy of Elisabeth Shapiro

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

National College Newspaper Hall of Fame Inducted 2018	California College Media Association Outstanding College/ University Newspaper
ACP Pacemaker 100 An Outstanding Student Publication of the Century 2022	San Diego County Multicultural Heritage Award
Student Press Law Center National College Press Freedom Award 2011, 2018	California Newspaper Publishers Association California College Newspaper of the Year 2013, 2016, 2020, 2021, 2023 Student Newspaper General Excellence 2002-24
National Newspaper Association National College Newspaper of the Year 2004-2024	Society of Professional Journalists National Mark of Excellence 2001-24 First Amendment Award 2002, 2005
Associated Collegiate Press Pacemaker Awards 2003-06, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012-2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 General Excellence 2001-24 Best of Show 2001-24	San Diego Press Club Excellence in Journalism 1999-2024 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, 2022-24 Newspaper General Excellence 2000-2024
College Media Association National College Newspaper of the Year 2020, 22, 24	American Scholastic Press Association Community College Newspaper of the Year

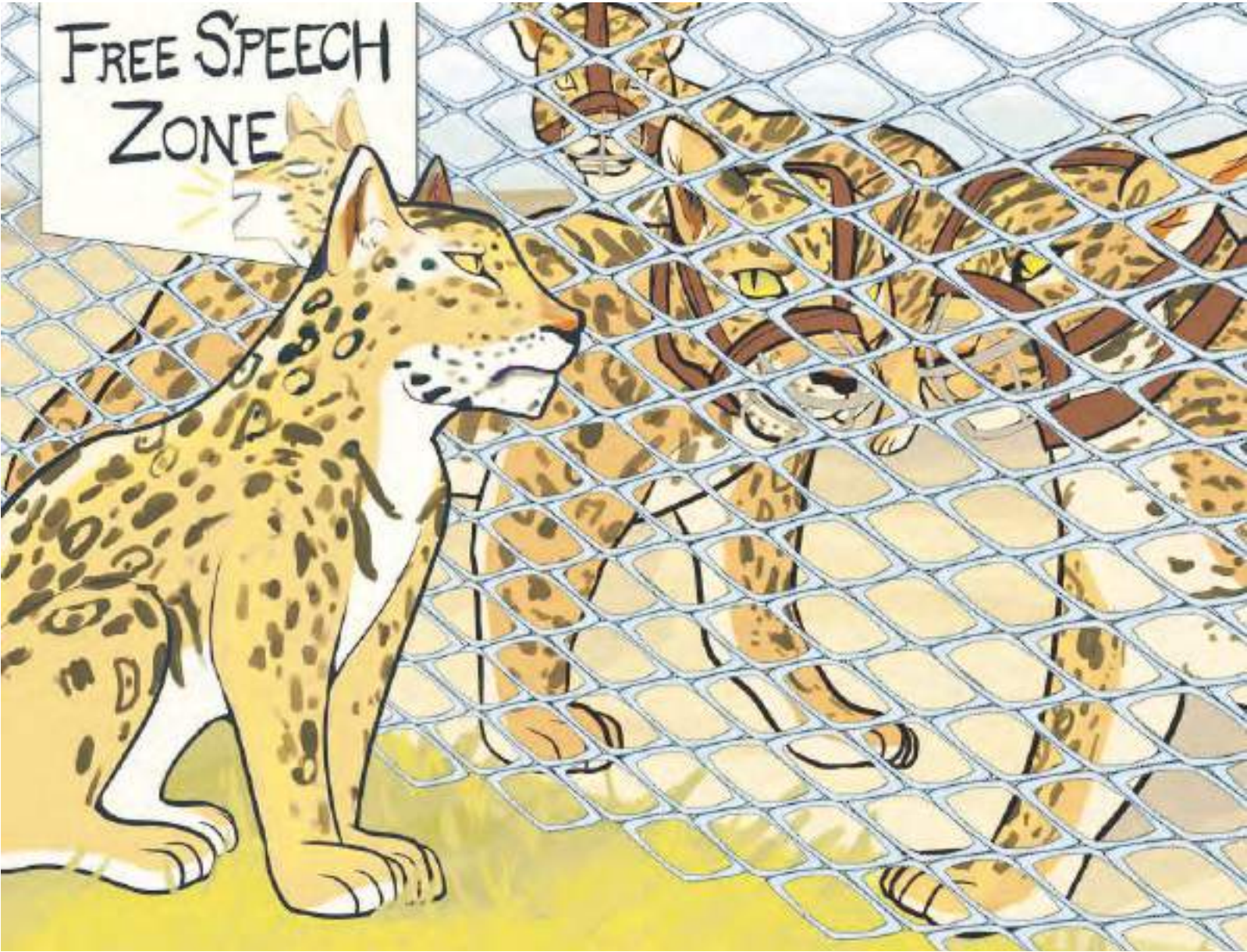


ILLUSTRATION BY CARLA LABTO / STAFF

CLAWING BACK HARD EARNED SPEECH RIGHTS

Students and staff at Southwestern College are buckling up for a bumpy four years. We expect the Trump cabal to come after our reproductive rights, our right to love whomever we wish and our right to a fair legal process.

We also expect the Project 2025 crew to go after college professors and journalists.

What we did not expect was for our own beloved college to go after our right to free speech and our right to petition our government. That came out of left field. College leaders have not officially done anything yet, other than scare the hell out of us. The working draft of revisions to Policy 3900 and its corresponding procedures have not been passed, but they are hanging over us like the Sword of Damocles and the inauguration of Trump. Make no mistake, the proposed changes are radical, even draconian. Policy 3900 is currently named “Freedom of Expression.” The looming rewrite is titled “Speech: Time, Place and Manner.” Its overly-lawyered prescriptions violate the spirit of the elegant and much-emulated 2011 policy drafted by former Academic Senate President Angelina Stuart and a team from English, reading, political science, journalism, law and counseling. Stuart – the 2024 Southwestern College Honorary Degree recipient – shepherded the document through the highly-collaborative Shared Consultation Council and to the governing board. The board passed it unanimously and with celebratory fanfare. An era of darkness and abuse had ended. Stuart said it was a beautiful act of collaboration and thoughtful cooperation. Policy 3900 is balanced, nuanced, logical and is inhabited by the spirit of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. It is a national template for other colleges. Why anyone thinks it needs to be blown up and rewritten is perplexing. To be fair, most of the new language is reasonable, if unnecessary and pompous. All of the new language is redundant. The 2011 version already contains guidelines to separate office personnel, classrooms and sensitive areas from protesters. It is idealistic, but also sensible and grounded in the law.

NO TO “FREE SPEECH ZONE”

There are some glaring problems, however, as the new proposed title suggests. Two are particularly egregious. One was an issue faculty, students and the community fought and bled for during the repressive regime of former president Raj Kumar Chopra and his henchman VP Nicholas Alioto. During Chopra-Alioto Southwestern College had a tiny “Free Speech Zone,” a speck of campus about the size of the 7/11 store across the street. It was the cafeteria’s outdoor dining area, a covered picnic patio. In October 2009 about 100 students gathered there to protest Chopra’s spending and his plan to cut 429 classes – about 40 percent of the schedule. For 50 minutes the students spoke and shared their ideas – to nobody. Not a single administrator showed up to give the students the courtesy of listening to their concerns.

Eventually the students realized this. They strolled peacefully down Jaguar Walk toward Chopra’s office in the front of campus only to be met by the entire Southwestern College Campus Police Department, armed and led by a snarling chief ready for battle. The students did not take the bait. They remained peaceful, if unhappy. Three professors were among them, urging calm. After 10-15 minutes of chanting and sign waving the students learned that Chopra was not in his office. (It was later discovered that he had intentionally left campus when he heard about the protest.) Later, as Chopra was preparing to leave the country, Alioto sprang into action and ordered a human resources director and an armed campus police officer to visit the homes of the three professors and suspend them. A fourth – the faculty union president – was also suspended, even though she did not attend the rally or the walk. Students recognized by the police and the student affairs dean were also punished. One was later stripped of a Student of Distinction Award for having the temerity to protest. The pretext for the suspensions and backlash was that the students left the Free Speech Area and faculty failed to stop them. That is one reason the 2011 version of 3900 does not allow the designation of a “free speech area.” The second reason is that it violates the spirit of the First Amendment which declared the entire nation a free speech zone. So including language in the rewrite that empowers administrators to declare where free speech may and may not happen should send shutters down the spines of freedom-loving people in this community.

PROTESTS ONLY WHEN CONVENIENT

Our second beef with the proposed alterations of 3900 is the “time” component that limits free speech to 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. If only democracy was so tidy and convenient. Nights and weekends would be off limits for free speech at Southwestern College (though high school football is okay). This rule is laughable on the face and oozes with arrogance and administrative entitlement. To say that Americans may only engage in a sacred national right after breakfast and before cocktail hour is shameful. Word is that the governing board and some key administrators are quietly pushing to keep all or most of the 2011 policy and procedures in place. Let’s hope so. That would be a wonderful Christmas present for the college and our community. We are watching closely and so are local and national First Amendment organizations that have dealt with Southwestern College speech issues before. Southwestern’s history of squelching free speech is well known to the community and the San Diego County news media, but it seems current campus leaders do not know about it or pretend not to know. (Come visit our newsroom archives and grab a few back issues. It’s all there in print.) America would not have witnessed the abolition of slavery, the right women to vote, the Civil Rights Act, reproductive rights and other social advancement without protest and the voices of citizens. Southwestern College students and employees have the same Constitutional Rights as the folks who live across the street. We are using them in our campus newspaper today. We reserve the right to use them on campus tomorrow.



CSEA LEADERS DECRY EMPTY POSITIONS

Union critical of ‘cost savings’ it says overloads employees and risks campus safety

BY ALEXA LIMA

Southwestern College has new buildings, new facilities, more administrators, more students ... but fewer classified employees.

That has to change said Silvia Nogales, president of SWC’s California School Employees Association unit, the union for classified workers. Understaffing causes overwork and exhaustion for the employees who are struggling to pick up the slack.

“There are a lot (of vacancies), that is why we are voicing our concerns to the governing board,” she said. “We want the board to ask questions to the president and shift their priorities. (They need) to (fill) these job (vacancies). These (empty positions) are the back bones (of the college). These are the people (required) to open (and operate) our campuses.”

SWC has record numbers of unfilled vacancies. Last summer former Vice President of Financial Affairs Daniel Villanueva reported 72 vacant classified positions. There are even more now.

Nogales said the failure to replace essential employees has left the campus dirty, unsanitary and unkempt. Students and faculty suffer from slow or absent basic services. There are only two gardeners responsible for five campuses, she said, along with a single plumber, one electrician and no pool technicians.

“We simply don’t have enough custodians, maintenance staff or groundskeepers,” she said. “It’s a critical mass issue. There just aren’t enough people to maintain the facilities.”

Insufficient staffing has fueled complaints from the community about cleanliness and maintenance, Nogales said.

“We have only four or five custodians on duty during the day for the entire campus and just 35 working the graveyard shift,” she said. “Twenty-five years ago it was manageable. We had fewer buildings, fewer bathrooms. That’s no longer the case.”

Some help may be on the way, she said. SWC plans to hire 12 custodians—six for daytime shifts, six for nights.

Nogales said she is very concerned about staffing in the Food Services Department, especially with the pending opening of a ponderous new cafeteria that will include two kitchens and serve conference facilities. The entire food services team is currently working out of the tiny Time Out Café managing catering events, filling to-go orders and supporting large district functions.

“There is no way that they will be able to keep up with the demand from the new buildings and all the increased level of activities with only five full-time employees,” she said.

Nogales said she supports the idea of having a Conference Center on the Chula Vista campus but said there are not enough employees to maintain such a large and labor-intensive facility.

“We are down to the bare bones,” she said. “We are missing bones at this point.”

Nogales said SCEA’s priority right now is the decimated Business and Financial Affairs Department, which has more than 40 vacancies. Slow service in Business Affairs directly impacts students and faculty, she said.



SILVIA NOGALES
SC CSEA President

“There is no way that they will be able to keep up with the demand from the new buildings and all the increased level of activities with only five full-time employees.”

“(Our) employees are doing double duty by filling in the work left behind from vacancies,” she said. “They are still responsible for their current job and then they have to pick up this extra work and they are only here eight hours.”

Nogales said classified employees are feeling discouraged and frustrated because the district has left critical vacancies unfilled for months, even years. The district has neglected to update job descriptions for years, which is holding up hiring.

Instead, she said, college leaders have outsourced work, spending more than \$200,000 on external agencies—money that could have hired at least four full-time staff. The college has been without a Director of Facilities since last year, leaving no one to properly oversee maintenance jobs or ensure they are filled with competent replacements.

Full-time classified staff are good for the college and community in so many often unseen ways, said Nogales. Permanent employees tend to be more committed to the college’s mission and

values, she said, creating a stronger sense of belonging. A dedicated, full-time team helps build consistency and trust across campus.

“Maintenance, grounds and custodial are areas the community, students and employees actually see and feel the effects of not having enough personal,” Nogales said. “If trash isn’t picked up or restrooms aren’t clean or restocked everyone notices. If trees are overgrown and cracking the cement, we notice.”

SWC has one plumber for the whole district, Nogales said. He takes care of 50 water heaters, 467 toilets, 874 sinks, 151 urinals, 85 drinking fountains and 195 showers – not including new construction. The college needs at least two plumbers to have a “full functioning” crew. Nogales said one plumber position has gone unfilled for 10 years.

There is only one staff electrician, Nogales said. He was injured last year and out for two months, leaving the college with no electrical specialist.

Grounds and irrigation technician Enrique Gonzalez spoke at the last governing board meeting and told trustees that his area is understaffed. Grounds employees are essential for student safety, he said, something most people probably do not consider.

“We need more people in the grounds department. We are five people only,” he said. “This campus keeps growing and growing. It (does) not have enough staff. We are thin.”

Gonzalez said maintaining trees is a safety issue, as well as cactus and other plants that require trimming.

College president Dr. Mark blamed Shared Governance and a slow hiring system for the backlog. He has rejected the notion that the college is top heavy with administrators.

“It’s not that the district is never committed to hiring those positions, we had those positions in place and because people are getting other jobs—getting better jobs—they move on. So when you do that it creates vacancies that you then have to go back and back fill,” he said. “We are in an environment of participatory governance, so we have to put committees together and screen applications. (This is) where in the process of filling those positions we consider vital for the district. It just takes time.”



PHOTO BY ANA LÓPEZ / STAFF

FIERY OFFERING—*Protestors burned their signs at the end of the rally, a final effort to draw attention to a national crisis.*

MARCH

• CONT FROM PG 12

*10th Women’s March
an emotional push
to curtail femicide*

A group calling itself the Black Bloc led the march. It aspired to create “iconoclasm, such as graffiti on monuments, according to a member.

“This is a way to challenge patriarchy and make women’s struggles visible to the community,” said a Black Bloc marcher who asked that her name not be used for fear of recrimination. “As a leader, for me, the march is an act of unity and resistance. I march to be more, to be united, to be with other women. Today is a day we can unite and express strength.”

Red Bloc was led by Monica Rosas. She said her team seeks to dismantle patriarchal body shaming used to minimize and belittle women.

“We seek to demystify and normalize aspects of women’s bodies, particularly menstruation,” she said. “We seek access to free menstrual supplies and a safe space for dignified menstruation. Women need to reconnect with our bodies and our inner wisdom to resist patriarchal impositions.”

Streets along the march route were dyed purple as a symbol of the fight against gender violence. Purple represents bruises and injuries, said Michelle Alvarez, a law professor at UABC and a member of the Centro 32 Collective.

“Women’s rights require us to fight,” Alvarez said as she held her young daughter. “Nothing will be handed to us without a struggle.”

Chikimafia, the Mothers and Children Collective, is focused on the safety of mothers and their children.

“Join us!” shouted its leader. “This is a



PHOTO BY CINDY GONZALEZ / STAFF

PRAYER FOR PEACE—*Protesters appealed to Christian and Indigenous deities for intercession to end Mexico’s epidemic of violence against women.*

place to oppose any type of violence and it is healing.”

Mexico’s Women’s Movement has grown considerably over the years. Founder Blanca Maldonado said it started with 10 years ago with just 10 women. This year an estimated 200,000 marched in Mexico City alone. Besides Tijuana, there were also huge turnouts in Guadalajara, Ensenada, Mexicali, Ensenada, Tecate, San José del Cabo, Tuxtla Gutierrez in Chiapas, Tapachula, Cuidad Juárez, Saltillo, Colima, Durango, Toluca, San Miguel de Allende, Irapuato, León, Chilpancingo, Morelia, Cuernavaca, Monterrey, Oaxaca, Puebla and a dozen other large Mexican cities.

“Seeing so many women today is extraordinary,” Maldonado said to the crowd. “We are all part of a movement for women’s peace. We are strong together. You are not alone.”

Tijuana’s most poignant voices were those no one could hear. A roll call for murder victims echoed through the streets and reverberated in the hearts of marchers.

“We know they are gone, but we have not forgotten them,” said Paola Frausto. “We continue to remember them. We want the victims to hear us all the way to the afterlife.”

Irlanda Hernandez said the march gave her hope.

“Seeing so many people participate (was inspiring),” she said. (I love that women are passing along this feeling of freedom to their children.”

Mexico’s Women’s Movement is growing and gaining courage, said participant Artiana Prado.

“Everyone is welcome to join,” she said. “Everyone is a feminist because of their own story.”