OPENING THE COLLEGE WAS A RISKY MOVE THAT ENDANGERED TRANSFRONTERIZOS

The vision of the Southwestern College Sun is to serve its campuses and their communities by providing information, insights, and engaging discussions on events, articles, and topics relevant to our readers. The staff strives to produce a newspaper that is timely, relevant, fair, interesting, and accessible to readers. Though The Sun is a student newspaper that is timely, accurate, fair, interesting, visual, and relevant to our readers. The staff strives to produce a newspaper that is timely, accurate, fair, interesting, and visual.

ADVISORS

Dr. Max Broncomb
Assistant Advisor
Kenneth Pagan

AWARDS/HONORS

National College Newspaper
Hall of Fame
Inducted 2018

ACP Pacemaker 100
Inducted 2018

National Newspaper Publishers Association
Pacesetter Award
Community Colleges
2012

Student Press Law Center
National College Press
Freedom Award
2017-18

National College Association
National College
Newspaper of the Year
2019-2022

Associated Collegiates
Press Recognition Awards

General Excellence
2011-12

Best of Show
2011-12

Columbia University
Schlesinger Press Association
Gold Medal for Journalism Excellence
2011-12

College Media Association
National College
Newspaper of the Year
2013

California College Media Association
Outstanding College/University
Newspaper
2012-13

San Diego County
Historical Heritage Award

California Newspaper Publishers Association
California College
Newspaper of the Year
2018

Student Newspaper
General Excellence
2013-14

Society of Professional
Journalists
National Mark of Excellence
2012-13

First Amendment Award
2018

San Diego Press Club
Excellence in Journalism
2013-14

Distinguished Award
2019-2020

Newspaper of the Year
2011-12

Journalism Association of
Community Colleges
Passerover Award
2016-17, 2020-21

National Mark of
Excellence
2015-2016

American Scholastic Press
Association
Community College
Newspaper of the Year
2013-14


UNWISE TO OPEN DURING STORM

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 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 communities 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 punked and endangered its students, particularly its vulnerable transfronterizos. We were forced to drive through flooded areas, ford streams, dodge fallen trees and diablo power lines wiggling near puddles, and trudge predawn miles in downpours. A line was, of course, a ghoulish marathon of unstaffed lines, surly agents and fickering 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 jogged 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.

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.

10th Annual Sun Scholarship

TO OPEN

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