



east los angeles college

**EAST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE**

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## Halloween



## 'Ofrendas' Exhibit Featured Student Works



Colorful altars created by East Los Angeles College students to honor and remember the dead on Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) were on exhibit through Dec. 7 in the small gallery of ELAC's famous Vincent Price Art Museum. The exhibit "Ofrendas" opened with a well-attended reception on Nov. 1. Traditional Mexican food and entertainment was presented.

Dia de los Muertos is celebrated Nov. 1 and Nov. 2 throughout Mexico and in Mexican communities in the U.S. and other countries. Mexicans have a special relationship with death, which they consider the beginning of life. Death is celebrated with beautiful, artful and touching traditional altars that honor the joyful relationship in which Mexicans happily and lovingly remember their loved ones who have died.

ELAC students created the celebrations under the guidance of Sybil Venegas, assistant professor of Chicano Studies. "I think all cultures have at their base, concepts about death, ceremonial practice, symbolic foods and these can be compared and contrasted," Venegas said as she discussed religion in Mesoamerica with

her students. "The non-Latino students get a real in-depth experience of Mexican culture as do Latino students who are Mexicans born in the U.S. whose family experiences were much more Americanized or homogenized with the dominant culture, so it is good for them too."

Ofrendas (altars) are set up in homes on a table covered with a tablecloth and include a photograph of the deceased loved one surrounded by their favorite foods, clothing, pictures of the patron saint, and personal and symbolic items. Copal incense and favorite dishes provide fragrances to lead the dead souls to the home. Favorite music also guides the deceased to the ofrenda.



Ofelia Esparza, the renowned East Los Angeles altar maker, presented an illustrated lecture to inspire students to create their own ofrendas. "It is said that we suffer three deaths; first when we actually die; then the day our body is buried; and the final death is the day we are forgotten," Esparza told the audience. "Dia de los Muertos is not just a Mexican Halloween. It is the unique way Mexicans remember and honor loved ones so hopefully they never suffer the final death."

## Dia de los Muertos festivities



## ELAC First to Generate its Own Electricity Through New \$9 Million Solar Energy Project

Massive renewable energy project is the Los Angeles Community College District's first as it moves towards goal to become energy independent and getting 'off the grid'

East Los Angeles College reached another milestone recently as college officials announced the commencement of construction activity for its renewable energy project, a Photo Voltaic (PV) "farm" that will produce one megawatt of electricity. The \$9 million project is programmed to harvest nearly enough energy to meet the college's daytime electricity needs.

The ambitious renewable energy project at ELAC is the first milestone for the Los Angeles Community College District as it moves toward taking all nine of its colleges off the grid. The LACCD is the first community college system in the nation with plans to become entirely energy independent. Construction for the PV farm began in November, with completion expected in early spring.

"This renewable energy project is another example that illustrates our district's strong commitment to move expeditiously toward building climate neutral campuses that will positively impact the environment," said Dr. Marshall E. Drummond, chancellor of the LACCD. "Not only will our energy independent campuses save money for other educational resources, but they will also act as a living model to teach students how to lead sustainable, environmentally responsible lives."

Currently, ELAC uses on average

slightly more than one megawatt daily to meet its energy needs. Future renewable energy plans for ELAC to make it entirely energy independent include using excess electrical energy to convert water into oxygen and hydrogen, using the hydrogen to power fuel cells for evening electricity needs. The other eight Los Angeles Community Colleges will follow suit soon with similar projects for their respective energy plans.

The PV farm at ELAC will be located on the south end of the northwest parking lot on campus. The project will be "Design-Built" by Chevron Energy Solutions under a 20-year Power Solar Service Agreement with the LACCD. This project is funded by the LACCD's Propositions A and AA Bond Program, which Los Angeles voters approved in 2001 and 2003.

The Los Angeles Community College District is the largest community college system in the country, educating more than 188,000 students each year. The LACCD has embarked on a \$2.2 billion construction and modernization program at its nine college campuses. As funded by the Proposition A and AA Bond construction program, the LACCD is also currently undertaking the largest public sector sustainable building effort in the United States. For more information, visit [www.LACCDBuildsGreen.org](http://www.LACCDBuildsGreen.org).

## ELAC Is Awarded Share of \$3.5 Million Federal Grant

East Los Angeles College is one of three colleges in the Los Angeles Community College District that was awarded part of a \$3.5 million technology grant from the U.S. Department of Education that is designed to improve technological and instructional environments.

The grant was awarded to ELAC, Los Angeles Trade Technical and West Los Angeles colleges. ELAC will serve as the project manager and lead institution for the five-year project, which will be managed by Dr. John Rude, dean of resource development at ELAC.

Awarded under Title V of the Higher Education Act for Hispanic Serving Institutions, the grant will establish accessible "portals" for all faculty members and students who use the Internet for instruction and research. Classroom environments will be altered to permit teachers to display visual and audio materials as they lecture. Students will learn how to interact with teachers and fellow students on collaborative projects.

"Ultimately, the colleges plan to adopt portfolio-based learning, based on a successful long-term project at LaGuardia Community College in New York City," Rude says.

Research completed for the grant application indicated that wise use of "smart classrooms" will improve student retention and shorten remediation time for students who lack basic skills when they enter college.



John Rude



## Athletic Dept. Honors Former Coach Padilla

East Los Angeles College honored former football coach Al Padilla during halftime of the Huskies' game with Los Angeles Valley College in ELAC Stadium. Padilla led ELAC to its only state championship in football in 1974 during his first stint as coach. He was the Huskies' coach from 1973 to 1977 and again from 1988 to 1992. He also coached baseball and taught physical education for 25 years.

Prior to joining the faculty at ELAC in 1970, Padilla coached at Garfield and Roosevelt high schools. He graduated from Roosevelt in 1948 and went on to play football at Los Angeles City College and Occidental College. He also played semi-pro baseball for the East Los Angeles-based Chorizeros.

An avid golfer, Padilla and his wife of 52 years, Dora, reside in Alhambra, where they raised three children: Daniel, Steven and Lisa.



Al Cone, director of athletics, left, presents former football Coach Al Padilla with a Husky windbreaker and a plaque of appreciation.

## New Instructor Is Hearing Advocate for Deaf

American Sign Language instructor Melanie Vansell is a hearing advocate for the deaf and is encouraging others to help her make deaf students welcome at East Los Angeles College.

ELAC hired Vansell to ensure that its American Sign Language program has continuity and a comprehensive offering of signing skills and instruction in deaf culture. The college offers three levels of ASL classes as part of its Foreign Language Department.



"Many people do not realize that there is a distinct deaf culture and that understanding and using sign language is a key to understanding the culture," Vansell explains. She brings decades of experience to her new job as well as a formal education that includes a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in history with a specialization in Modern European and American Foreign Relations.

Vansell started working with sensory-impaired people in high school after writing and performing in a one-woman play on the life of Helen Keller based on her autobiography "The Miracle Worker." She transcribed Braille, volunteered at the Foundation for the Junior Blind and worked with Recordings for the Blind.

After moving to Riverside, she volunteered at the California School for the Deaf Riverside and enrolled in American Sign Language classes at Riverside Community College where she learned how to sign and was fascinated to learn about deaf culture. She began interpreting while attending Riverside and eventually became a substitute teacher at CSDR. She also attended Deaf Kids Kamp as a counselor, interpreter and entertainer for eight years.

Vansell taught history at the community college level as well as ASL. She developed the ASL program at California State University, San Bernardino.

"About 70-80% of ASL students are able to hear and take ASL so they can

communicate with hearing-impaired friends and family," she says. "ASL classes are accepted as a foreign language requirement for university transfer candidates. ASL has its own grammatical rules, syntax and vocabulary rules just like any language."

American Sign Language is unique to the United States. Signing symbols differ in other English-speaking countries and French, German, Japanese and Spanish speakers use their own language-based symbols. Signing is as individual as hand writing and is influenced by mobility. Persons with arthritis or physical impairments may form signs differently from the standard, challenging others to understand their techniques.

"I hope to be able to train my students to begin to interpret for the deaf," she says. "Interpreters must be fluent in sign language and adhere to a professional code of ethics. There are standards that require interpreters not to edit or interject their comments or beliefs while signing."

Vansell has an unusual hobby – she rides a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. However, even her hobby is blended with her interest in ASL, because she often rides with hearing-impaired friends and is a member of a women's motorcycle club that includes several deaf members.

"It is important to remember that deaf people are interested in exactly the same things hearing people are, they can do anything but hear," she says. "I experience total freedom when I ride my motorcycle. Even though I have taken lessons and take every precaution, the thrill of riding a powerful machine with no metal protecting me is exhilarating and a little scary – but I never feel more alive!"

"A joy and challenge of my new position at ELAC will be to encourage more hearing students to learn to sign and appreciate deaf culture," says the advocate for the deaf. "I want others to join me in making deaf students welcome at East Los Angeles College."

## Dance Show



The East Los Angeles College Lets Dance Company presented "Works in Progress 2007" dance show with students enrolled in dance classes offered by the Women's Physical Education Department performing. Students performed a wide variety of dances, including ballet, folklorico, hip-hop, lyrical-modern, modern-jazz, salsa, tango and waltz.

## In Memoriam

The East Los Angeles College community recently lost two members who had a significant impact on the successful operation of the college. HERMAN BACCHUS served as Dean of Academic Affairs for a number of years in the 1990s through 2002. He had been a staff member of the Los Angeles Community College District from 1977. He served in a variety of positions at the district office, at Los Angeles Southwest College, Los Angeles Trade Technical College as well as at ELAC. He is remembered as a caring, dedicated and compassionate person. He

worked at making education available to all students and is fondly remembered as having a unique sense of humor. Ernest H. Moreno, President of ELAC at the time Bacchus was here said that "Herman was a good friend. He could brighten any situation and could handle all adversity."

GEORGE CYBULSKI worked at ELAC as both a classified employee (Technical Stage Assistant) and as an adjunct faculty member of the Speech and Theater Department for 27 years. He was involved in every aspect of theatrical productions and developed an enviable reputation in professional theater.

He was described as "creative and dedicated" by many of the students who worked with him during the past three decades. Professor emeritus (and past Director of Theater) Colin McKay described him as "one of the most talented individuals I have ever been associated with." In the classroom or back stage, he was someone who had a positive approach to make sure that "the show must go on." Speech and Theater Department Chairperson, Richard Anderson noted that "George was in integral part of our Theater program. He helped to bring it from infancy to being a model of professionalism among community college programs."

## High School Counselors



More than 100 counselors from area high schools attended the popular and successful High School Counselor Day at East Los Angeles College, which was put on by the college Outreach and Recruitment program.



**Robert G. Isomoto**  
Interim President  
East Los Angeles College

## President's Message

To all members of our ELAC community, I want to wish each and every person a Happy New Year! In addition to the usual holiday rush, our campus is experiencing a lot of activity. Many departments have been moved to temporary quarters so that we can continue with our building projects. All administrative offices have been removed from the E-1 building and are now located in various parts of the campus. We have begun renovation of the E-1 and G-1 buildings. These changes will allow all student services to be located in the E-1 building and all administrative offices to be moved to the G-1 location. Construction is now underway on our multi-level parking structure. When completed, this will allow students to conveniently park and walk just



a short distance to where all student services offices are located. By the end of our academic year, we are also planning to break ground on our Fine and Performing Arts Center.

These changes in our campus will result in making ELAC a state-of-the-art community college. In the meantime, however, we will experience some inconvenience. Because parking spaces on campus will be inadequate, we have arranged for East employees to be able to park in the structure in the Monterey Galleria shopping center. This facility will be patrolled and will allow for some faculty and staff parking close to the college. In addition, we have leased some spaces on Corporate Center Drive which is northwest of the campus. We will be establishing a shuttle service to this location. More information will be provided when plans are finalized. Be sure to check your ELAC e-mail account for details.

As we begin a new year, I am happy to report that East once again has posted positive gains in enrollment and revenue during the fall semester. We, of course, are very concerned that our Governor has indicated that there may be budget cuts in the future. However, at present we are able to sustain all programs.

During our winter inter-session, I hope to see faculty and staff at one of many scheduled campus activities.

Robert G. Isomoto,  
Interim-President

Interim President Robert G. Isomoto, left, walks with Los Angeles Community College District Chancellor Dr. Marshall Drummond during a recent visit by the Chancellor to East Los Angeles College.

## Iraq War Veteran Working Toward Degree

Even though his mother was against it, Juan Velez, an East Los Angeles College student, had always wanted to be a Marine. Besides, he felt the training he would receive in the infantry would help prepare him to become a police officer.

So a few months after graduating from Roosevelt High School in 2002, Velez enlisted. A basketball player in high school, he displayed his athletic skills in boot camp, finishing the three-mile course faster than any of the other recruits in his platoon.

Today, those legs he used to go up and down the basketball court in high school and on the playgrounds of Boyle Heights, and run impressive times in boot camp are badly scarred and deformed, and can sometimes be too painful to stand on. He can barely use the right hand he shot basketballs and operated artillery with. He has lived with this condition for three years since being badly wounded in Iraq when an enemy bomb exploded a few feet from him during an attack.

In 2004, Velez' unit had been deployed close to the Syrian border to keep the enemy from destroying a bridge over the Euphrates River. Bombings occurred frequently during the two months that he was there.

"We were used to it," he said. "They would attack but the bombs would land far away in the corn fields."

One night, however, as Velez stood on the roof of the building that housed his unit, a bomb exploded a few feet in front of him wounding and knocking the 20-year-old man from East Los Angeles unconscious.

"It was like I blanked out and then woke up from a bad dream," he recalled. "Everyone thought I was dead because the bomb had landed so close to me. I couldn't get up."

Medical personnel were called and doctors gave him morphine and placed tourniquets on his leg to stop the bleeding. Velez was transported by helicopter to the base hospital where doctors removed shrapnel from his hand and legs. But some fragments still remain.

Velez eventually received more medical



treatment in Baghdad and Germany before winding up in Bethesda, Md., where he underwent numerous surgeries and therapy.

"I couldn't walk and my legs were kind of numb," said Velez, who also received an injury to his right toe.

Velez was confined to a wheelchair until his condition improved enough for him to get around with a walker, and then a cane.

"I got better with time," he said.

Today, he walks to class but has to avoid standing for long periods and his legs can sometimes be sensitive to cold.

His hand has gone from being almost completely clenched to an open position.

"It was like a claw," Velez said, while attempting to make a fist. "But it's improved to where it is now and will get better if the nerves grow back."

Velez received several medals and awards for his bravery, including the Purple Heart, the Combat Action ribbon and the National Defense award. The military retired him because of permanent disability and he was discharged in 2006, 18 months after being wounded.

"Nov. 8, 2004," said Velez, when asked if he recalled the date of the attack. "I remember because it took place two days before the anniversary of the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps was formed on Nov. 10, 1775."

Velez enrolled at ELAC last summer and is taking general education courses toward an associate arts degree. He is still considering a career in law enforcement, but recently has been looking at something he believes he would really like and could do well in.

"I'm thinking of becoming a physical education teacher and coaching basketball," he said. "I like sports and I like to run."

## Longtime Employee Retires After 29 Years of Service

Custodian Jesus Santillan has retired after 29 years of service to East Los Angeles College. He worked his final night at the college Dec. 21.

Though he looked forward to his well-deserved retirement, it was tough for Santillan to say good-bye. "I haven't been able to sleep for the past 15 nights," he said. "I think working at a school or college is the ideal job to have. I met so many nice people here and made a lot of friends over the years."

Santillan, 64, resides with his wife, Rita, in South El Monte. They raised two children, daughter Maria, a court reporter, and son, Alberto, a chef, and have two grandchildren.

"I've always wondered how I was so lucky to be married to the woman that I'm married to," Santillan said. "We're very proud of our two children. They both have good jobs and are doing really well. My son originally was a teacher and I was really proud of that. He decided to switch jobs a few years ago and it was a good move by him because now he's a chef at a top restaurant. He really loves his job."

Born in Guadalajara, Mexico, Santillan was a welder working with his brother in a family-owned business before starting his employment at ELAC in 1978. "I took an immediate liking to the college when I started. It was a great 29 years here," he said.

