



# CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

## CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

### PRESS RELEASE

July 13, 2009

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## **Los Angeles Valley College and Sacramento City College honored by Condoleezza Rice and the California Community Colleges Board of Governors**

**Sacramento, Calif.** – Today, the Los Angeles Valley College *Early Start Program* and the Sacramento City College *Cultural Democracy Initiative* were honored at the ninth annual John W. Rice Diversity and Equity Award ceremony hosted by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and its Board of Governors. The Honorable Condoleezza Rice participated in the event that continues the legacy established by her father, Dr. John Rice.

The John W. Rice Award, named in honor of the former Board of Governors' member appointed by Governor Pete Wilson, represents the commitment of the California Community Colleges to diversity and equity. It also celebrates the profound impact Dr. Rice continues to have on California's Community Colleges and the great State of California. Dr. Rice's vision was for the California Community Colleges to exist not only to help train California's workforce, but to prepare underserved populations to become successful participants in California's emerging industries and new economy. Dr. Rice served on the California Community Colleges Board from 1992 to 2000.

Having been born to a Presbyterian pastor in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and living through years of segregation and the civil rights era, Dr. Rice was passionate about ensuring the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, staff, faculty and student body reflected the diversity of California. The John W. Rice Diversity and Equity Award is annually bestowed upon two individuals or programs that demonstrate outstanding contributions toward achieving diversity and equity within the community colleges.

### ***Early Start Program* – Los Angeles Valley College**

The Los Angeles Valley College *Early Start Program* prepares underrepresented high school students to successfully complete rigorous academic entrance requirements and to become eligible to attend prominent four year universities.

Primarily working with students attending John Frances Polytechnic High School, this program has produced unprecedented results. More than ninety percent of participating students come from economically disadvantaged homes and are English-language learners. In the past 10 years, students from this program have consistently passed the California High School Exit Examination on the first attempt and have gone on to transfer to prestigious four year colleges and universities throughout the United States including Harvard, Yale, Stanford, MIT, Dartmouth, Cornell, Duke, John Hopkins, Brandeis, and the University of California, Berkeley.

### ***Cultural Democracy Initiative* – Sacramento City College**

Through many workshops, activities and conferences, the *Cultural Democracy Initiative* at Sacramento City College creates opportunities for individuals to recognize their own cultural perspectives and presumptions.

During the 2008-09 academic year, the program organized 72 workshops designed to expand cultural perspectives with its 1,355 attendees. One workshop focused on how to integrate diversity into the hiring process. In the spring of 2008, Sacramento City College led the district in hiring faculty from diverse backgrounds.

Faculty leaders involved in the program partnered with the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges' Education Institute to help organize and launch a statewide community college diversity conference. More than 200 participants from 32 community colleges and 22 districts attended the event. Topics included diversity issues related to race, gender, age, culture, class, sexual orientation, and disability. Attendees gained insights into matters such as educating autistic students, recruiting and retaining minority faculty and addressing the needs of veteran students.

"Dr. Rice would be proud to see the diversity in California's community colleges," said Chancellor Jack Scott. "Our colleges mirror the diversity of California with African American students representing 8.3 percent of our student body, Latino students representing 36 percent and Asian students representing about 13 percent.

"Community colleges give all Californians an equal opportunity. We serve low income families and provide a wonderful yet inexpensive education. We help the unemployed with our career technical education programs that retrain displaced workers and get them back in the workforce. Our colleges serve students that are turned away from the University of California and California State University systems due to enrollment caps. We offer these students the opportunity to get their lower division coursework completed so they can transfer to a four year university," said Scott.

Clara Rice, John Rice's widow, attended the event and warmly recalled the memory of her late husband. "I called John my 'gentle giant' not only because of his size but because of his enormous passion for equity and diversity." She went on to say, "I'm sure he's looking down today and smiling as he sees people gathered here to celebrate these programs with his daughter and me present."

"I would like to congratulate the winners from Los Angeles Valley College and Sacramento City College. These programs represent what my father stood for," said Condoleezza Rice. "To say education is about the pursuit of happiness sounds a little bit frivolous to me. Education is about the pursuit of fulfillment.

"With an education, we can overcome circumstances. My father taught me that you can come from humble circumstances and do great things."

*The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation comprised of 72 districts and 110 colleges serving 2.8 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training and basic skills education and prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions. The Chancellor's Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. For more information about the community colleges, please visit [www.cccco.edu](http://www.cccco.edu).*

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