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Forum: "Creating the Future: Student LEADers in Action"

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LEAD Original Programming

Forum - "Creating the Future: Student LEADers in Action" (2012)

START – 00:00:00

[Music]

[Coyote howls]

>> Bienvenidos, and welcome to the next installment of LEAD Media Programming from Studio 54, Campus of California State University San Bernardino, the digital media platform for inspired educators, leaders and community activists and advocates taking our message directly to the people, to the gente. Thank you for sharing our common interest in the analysis, discussion, critique, dissemination and commitment to the educational issues that impact Latinos. I'm your host, Dr. Enrique Murillo, Jr., and this episode is a syndicated replay from Season 3 of LEAD Summit 2012. For decades, the inadequacies and shortcomings of Latino education had always been there, but a principle difference was scale. Innovation and ingenuity became our community's most valuable resources. LEAD, therefore, served and continues to serve as a primary site for innovative and productive projects in Latino education. Our impact and success are grounded on collaboration, participation, and outreach. The various LEAD networks reached agreement that there were very important issues that directly or indirectly affected institutions and the multiple communities we straddle that required us to do the action work that is most relevant for the local context and in such a way that they could be used to inform and shape policy. Put simply, the LEAD movement engages and believes that the singular accomplishable solution to our educational dilemma lies in community activism and democratic participation. Net roots is one way to describe our methods of awareness raising, education, promotion, advocacy, activism, analysis, discussion, critique and dissemination of educational issues that impact Latinos. This forum showcases LEAD partners who at the time were at the cutting edge of technological innovation and application as factors that help mobilize and increase educational capacity and advocacy. Continue and enjoy the full value and complexity of this episode. We extend our appreciation to all our LEAD sponsors and partners, planners, volunteers, speakers and panelists, production team affiliates, and town hall chapters, and commend them all for lifting their voice and uplifting the plight of Latinos in education. Thank you. Gracias. Clase...

[Music]

So welcome back, everybody. As we take our seats, I wanted to acknowledge more of our sponsors that I didn't mention earlier. Now, they're in the program, but I just want to mention them by name. Just real quickly, acknowledgments go to Cardenas Markets for all their support, Southern California Edison, Telemundo, "El Poder de Saber"

campaign. Also, we want to thank the USDA Hispanic Serving Institutions national program, as well as the California Teachers Association. We also want to acknowledge Alvarez Lincoln Mercury Jaguar, Alvarez Motors, Arizona State University, Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, our CSUSB Office of the Dean for the John Pfau Library, and of course, last but not least, the San Bernardino Community College District. Gracias a ustedes. Okay, so, now I'm going to turn this over to Ricardo Vargas. Ricardo is the Assistant Director of Recruitment and Evaluations and Undergraduate Admissions at the University of California, Riverside, UCR. This session is made up of some of our coordinators and participants from our joint UCR Puente Lead, Advanced Leadership Institute. So I'm very excited to turn this over to Ricardo.

[Cheers and applause]

>> Good afternoon. How's everyone doing?

>> Great!

>> Good. It's a pleasure to be here with you. I'm going to bring this mic down a little bit. I am not a very tall man. That's all right. But I do say on my license that I am five foot five and a half, so that's all right. Well, like I said, it's a pleasure to be here with you this afternoon. Before we introduce our panelists, I just want to allow me to share a little bit about UC Riverside Puente Leadership Conference that has been going on on our campus for the last five years. Back in the fall of 2007, my colleague Katherine Martinez and I kind of got together. We met, started brainstorming about a program, a joint program that we could bring to the Inland Empire that would work on our puentistas. Los puentistas is a very strong program. After everything was said and done, a little bit of bickering and so forth, we developed what is now the first annual UC Riverside Puente Leadership Conference. Now, there was some issues when we called it the first annual because folks didn't know if it was going to continue. But over the last five years -- As a matter of fact, we're currently programing for the fifth annual Puente Leadership Conference. Some of our UCRP alum are here to my left and to my right. These folks have had the opportunity to meet with our guest speakers, touch them, talk to them, go one-on-one with individuals such as Sal Castro, Sylvia Mendez, and more recently SeOora Reies LÚpez Tijerina, off to my left right here. As a matter of fact, there's such a connection that Sylvia Mendez is Facebook friends with a lot of us, myself included. Now, she doesn't reply to me when I send her messages. She doesn't reply. But it's okay. I understand she's busy. So before we move on to my students here, I'd like to introduce my esteemed colleague Katherine Martinez. She is with the statewide Puente Project, statewide Puente project here. She is a lot of the brains behind what goes on. I'm some of the muscle. She's the brains. And we do a good connection here. She's also the moderator, so she's going to keep everyone in check. So let's go ahead and introduce our students here. Off to my left, Jose Luis Mejia. He's from the City College of San Francisco. His major of interest is child development, with an emphasis in policy and organizing. Jose Luis, thank you very much for being here.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

To my right, Cindy -- Please forgive me. Quiralte. Quiralte.

>> Outstanding. Outstanding. No demerit for me. She is from Fresno City College. Her major of interest is Chicano and Latino studies. And through -- I hear some chatter going on. And the chatter is that she's going to become an attorney and so forth. Is that going to happen, Cindy?

>> Absolutely.

>> Outstanding. Outstanding. Because I need someone to come get me when I get myself in trouble. Good. Good. Round of applause for Cindy, please.

[Applause]

Off to my left, this fine young man way over to the left right there. Albert. There he is right there. He was wondering, "Who is he talking about?" Alberto Carranza is from Mt. San Jacinto Community College. His major of interest is electrical and computer engineering. So he's doing all that robotics kind of stuff. Say again?

>> Wind turbine.

>> Wind turbine. I don't know what that is. I was a poli sci major, but I believe you, son. I believe you. Really good. Let's give him a round of applause. Thank you, Albert, for being here.

[Applause]

And finally, we have Miss Karla Gûmez-Pelayo. She is from Napa Valley College, where the wine flows freely. Yes?

>> Yeah.

>> She says, "Yeah." Are you 21 yet?

>> No. Actually, it's expensive.

>> Oh, it's expensive. Okay.

>> I hear.

>> That's a different conversation that we'll have. You hear. Good deal. So her major of interest is political science and Chicano studies. And also there's some chatter going on that they might get a business, some kind of attorney firm going on, these two young

ladies right here, covering all of northern and central California. But if I may suggest, you need to open up some branches right here in SoCal as well. Can we make that happen?

>> We'll be doing some outreach.

>> They will be doing some outreach. Thank you very much. Good. So, without further ado, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce my esteemed colleague. I sometimes introduce her as my mother, even though she's not. But she's just that strong, that type of individual, and she will moderate this session. Ms. Katherine Martinez, thank you very much.

[Cheers and applause]

>> It's always so tough to go on after Rick, I have to tell you. Well, good afternoon, everyone. It's wonderful to be here today. First of all, I just wanted to also thank the lead organizers and especially Dr. Murillo, for supporting this partnership, the first annual Advanced Leadership Summit. As Rick was saying, you know, these students have gone through a summer program, and actually we have 20 students total -- they're sitting in the audience -- who have been here since Monday.

[Applause]

They're here from all over the state of California, and they've been in workshops. You know, our first thought was we were going to bring in speakers so that they could learn. It always goes both ways. We learn so much from them, as well, and I'm just in awe of them. They spent this past week engaging in conversations about immigration, economic development, the budgets on their campus, the crisis, and how it's affecting them. The Student Success Task Force recommendations, which are affecting, you know, community colleges about to be implemented. And so they've just been engaging in dialogue. So, it wasn't, you know, speakers coming in, talking to them. They were fully engaged in very meaningful dialogue over this week. And so just so proud of them and everything that they're they're offering. I mean, these are truly our future leaders here today. But we wanted to go ahead. And you don't want to hear from us anymore. We want to hear from the students because they have so much to say. And so what I'd like to do right now is to start to have each of them tell a little bit about themselves, the communities that they come from, how they got involved in Puente, and a little bit about their roles in leadership that they've taken on recently. So we'll go ahead and start with Jose Luis.

>> Thank you. So, yeah, my name is Jose Luis Mejia. And I also want to just say first thank you, too, to all the organizers making this happen. And it's really just a privilege and honor to be here representing for my community. So, I'm also -- I am a student, but I'm also the lead program facilitator with the Conscious Youth Media Crew in San Francisco and the Young Adult Engagement Coordinator for Transitional Aged Youth San Francisco. And in terms of my personal experience, I was raised in San Francisco,

in East Oakland, by two immigrant parents from El Salvador and Guatemala, and in communities that, like I say, have been in recession-like conditions way before the recession. And that is obviously like our communities of color, our Black and brown communities that have been in those type of situations before the "crisis." And that affected me. I grew up in a in a domestically violent household. I was, you know, kind of a violent young person from elementary to my youth and got in a lot of fights, was one of the labeled bad kids in the school who was used to getting kicked out and had a bad idea of what a counselor was because they were the person that got me in trouble or would kick me out of school. And honestly had no interest in school. I could really say honestly that I hated school. And I was really truant. I used to cut, got involved in slanging and robbing people and just hustling to, like, make a living and help out my mother, who's got some physical illnesses. And really one of the things that -- A few different things happened at the time that started changing my life. Of course, one of them is just the realities of what was happening around me, from my friends going to jail, people dying, ending up in the hospitals. But one of the ones that really hit home was when my younger sister ended up going to jail because -- what I felt was directly my fault because I taught her the negative street code and street values. And I started to change my life around in senior year -- junior, senior year in high school, when I got involved, -- you know, people who really cared about me. And I was able to pull it off and still graduate. But I was one of the ones that, like many of you probably know, graduated just barely, you know, just barely got by and ended up going to City College and taking remedial classes. And I still wasn't passionate about school, but the thing that started to make a difference for me was Puente. When I heard about that and I walked into the admissions office at City College of San Francisco and I was like, "I'm just interested in going to school," and it was mid-semester. And I just got lucky that the office I went into, the person who had availability, was the Puente counselor. And I was able to add late. He was, like, a brother who looked like me was, represented my experience, and it really started to change my life around. I started thinking differently about school and was paired up with mentor and counseling, learning in classes Latino literature, stuff that actually reflected some of my realities and the things that I had been going through. And it was something that completely transformed the way that I viewed education. Since then, I've been taking it seriously, trying to do well, and continue doing what I'm doing. I got involved with -- afterwards got to apply to go to the UCRP, which is the leadership conference they were just talking about, and it has made a really big difference because we were able to get connected and learn from, honestly, like, other veterans and people who are like us that have been in the struggle and trying to either fight for social justice or get more of our people into school and to succeed, and amazing folks like the staff here and Josefina Canchola, who impacted my life, as well, to pursue policy and try to make a change. And I believe -- was the other one to speak a little bit about what I've been doing or for the next one?

>> Maybe a little bit about your -- Oh, we'll fold it into the next question.

>> Okay.

>> Okay. Okay. So, let's go on to Carla. You can share a little bit about yourself in a few minutes.

>> So, again, my name is Karla Enedina Gmez-Pelayo. And I was born in Autln, Jalisco, Mexico, and raised in the Napa Valley since I was 3 years old. Let's see. I'm the oldest out of three -- I mean out of four. I have three younger brothers. And growing up, I did pretty well in school. But until I got to high school, being the first to be at that level in my family and to be in such an unfamiliar system, I quickly learned how to play the system, and I quickly started hanging around with the wrong people. And I started skipping school a lot. And I was looking at my high school transcript the other day, and I just -- It's hard for me to believe now that I let myself get to about a 1.0 GPA my sophomore year. And after my sophomore year, I got really -- I became involved in a leadership program at my high school that really just started tapping into all my potential to really be a leader, to be outspoken, and to really start shaping my identity as a Latina and as a female. And I was able to then really just develop a hunger to learn and to really see education as a value and begin to develop motivation that I lacked when I first entered high school, which resulted in my poor grades. And I was able to graduate honor roll, really good grades, and make a really big shift. And since then I've just held myself to really, really high expectations. Just I -- I want to hold that for my brothers as well and for myself. And -- And especially because my parents brought me here to get opportunities that I was wasting. And I just really want to make the best, like many of you may share, just really come to do well and to get the things that our parents couldn't. So, I enrolled in Napa Valley Community College after high school, after graduating high school in 2009. I didn't have the A through G requirements to be able to transfer straight to a four-year university. So I knew I had to go to community college and start to understand the system. And thankfully I met Alex Guerrero. He's the Napa Valley College Puente counselor. Because Puente has two main components. It's an English class and a counseling class, and it's a whole year. And I was able to enroll in that my freshman year of college, which really helped me transition from high school to college and begin to understand what it meant to be in college, what it meant to be a student in college, and the skills I had to gain and the rigor I had to instill in myself to just have a good work ethic and maintain really good grades for myself. So, from the Puente program, just meeting Alex and the counseling class really helped me navigate the system and understand what I had to do so I could transfer successfully. I'll be transferring this upcoming fall, as Rick said, Chicano studies and political science. I'm not sure where. And as far as after I finished the Puente program, 2009 to 2010 school year, I was selected to also participate in the Riverside Puente Conference. And I got a lot of things out of that week in Riverside. And three of the main things was just really meeting and being surrounded with other leaders throughout California that were also really passionate about education and that we actually shared common goals. Because a lot of the people I know back at home, sometimes it's hard to engage in dialogue where we're on the same page about our goals and what we care about, and just meeting other students like the ones here today that we want to go to college and we want to hold ourselves to expectations was a really good space for me to be in. And in addition, building that network statewide, there's representatives from different community colleges who have the Puente program. So, meeting students from different

regions and understanding their communities really helped me go back to my community with that knowledge of other things that were working in other communities and other problems that other communities had. And the last thing that really pushed me to do after attending the summer conference was to initiate the Puente Club at my community campus. That was one of the things we talked about at the conference of at least having, at the minimum, the Puente Club. And I went back and I said, "All right, I need to do this so that other students can have a platform to engage in leadership, to have opportunities to public-speak and to organize club events." So, I worked on that for about a year alongside other people. And it's now -- I'm really proud to say we just had a conference last week and Puente Club was there and they had all their materials and they had membership. So, that's -- those are some of the main things I got from the conference.

>> Okay. Thank you. Alberto?

[Inaudible]

[Applause]

>> Well, hello, everyone. Once again, my name is Alberto Carranza and I was born in Riverside and I grew up in the small city of San Jacinto. Growing up in the city of San Jacinto was difficult for me because my parents also were immigrants. They came from Zacapu, Michoacán, in Mexico, and they were my only immediate family. Like, we had no one here. The closest relatives that I had were in Las Vegas. So, growing up, there was a lot of violence and drugs going on around my community, so I was very sheltered by my family. Growing up, I always -- I found importance in education, but I didn't know what I could do with it. My parents were very supportive. They understood what I was about, but they just couldn't help me in the process. So I had no form of guidance. And then I saw, like, towards graduation that, like, during that time, a lot of students were talking about like, "Oh yeah, it's a moment of accomplishment and glory." And for me it was different. It was like a reality check. It was something that changed me because it was like, "I'm now going to go into the real world." And the only alternatives that I saw was either finding a job, joining the military, or trying to pursue further education. And then luckily, because of a counselor that worked for the TRIO programs, it got me involved and they told me about this program. It was called Puente. And I was like, "Oh, what's Puente about?" So, I got into Puente, and I liked it because the instructors and counselors were just really involved with the students. And furthermore, I never sought out to seek leadership roles throughout my community being that I was so, like, in a sense, sheltered. And I didn't know what I was aware around me. I didn't know what social injustices were going on around my community. So, once I was through the Puente program, I sought out to be involved and be proactive within my community because that's when I started seeing the injustices that were occurring in my community. And then luckily my instructor told me to sign up for the UCR Puente conference, and I got selected to attend the UCR conference in 2010. And through the conference, it enhanced my leadership skills, which I took back to my community and as well the workshops that I learned that helped me to be able to implement what I learned

from these workshops and who I met there to my community. And then after leaving the conference in 2010, I started the Puente Club at Mt. San Jacinto College and I became president of the club there. And one of the things that I addressed with my with my club was alternative schools, because being of the high dropout rate in my community, I wanted to target alternative schools, being that there is no form of representation in my community. So I just wanted to be, in a sense, a voice for them. So I started with my club conference called CHALE, and CHALE stands for Communities Having a Learning Experience. And with that -- I know. I used it in a sense like...

>> That's tight. That's tight.

>> ... to --

[Cheers and applause]

I brought it as a form of expression of, like, "We're sick of not being heard. You know, we're, like, done. Like, we want to be heard." So, I brought from four different alternative schools from the community towards our campus, to our campus, and we just try to make sure that they would attend and pursue a higher education. And then also, in addition, being that I'm an engineering major, I really emphasize the STEM fields. And I'm currently working with a friend of mine who works for the Paris district, and it's the Gears 2 Robots. And what Gears 2 Robots is, is a nonprofit organization that helps teach middle-school and high-school students hands-on activities that actually apply to real-life applications. Sorry about that. And then after that, I've just been involved. I currently work also for TRIO programs and I'm a student worker and I assist students with anything they need. I just feel -- It's, like, an obligation that I got out of Puente that I have to give back to my community, that it's our duty to be there and represent for these students, especially the ones in my community. And it saddens me that a lot of students are not in the STEM fields. Like, watching at the beginning, I don't know if many of you guys saw the film, the STEM novellas. And it was in regard to parents understanding the hardships that a student has. And then I just try to help students that are in the STEM fields, being that I'm in the same situation that they are. And I'm just hoping to just try to change not just my community, but just this country and the world. And that's it. I'm hoping the next LEAD conference, we see higher statistics and, instead of seeing difficulties that are occurring in the Latino communities, we see success stories. That's what I'd like to see.

>> Mm-hmm.

[Applause]

>> Okay. And finally, Cindy.

>> Hello, everybody. And first off, I want to say thank you for giving us such a great opportunity to have our stories be heard and to speak well of the Puente project and how it's been instrumental in all of our successes. So, thank you. My name is Cindy

Quiralte. I'm from the great Central Valley here in California. Not the Imperial Valley. The Central Valley. I'm originally born in Merced, California. I'm a student now at Fresno City College. Both of my parents are from Durango, Mexico, and they both understand that education is very important. However, they weren't able to give me the tools and the guidance and direction in terms of helping me be successful. In high school, I remember a lot of my teachers always telling me, "Cindy, you could do so well, you know, if you just apply yourself more." I didn't really understand what that meant, to apply yourself. I was like, "Well, I like it," but school didn't really seem like it was for me. And echoing some of the same concerns at high school graduation, many people were so excited about going on to colleges and applying and hearing back from schools, and I didn't know what that felt like. I didn't experience that same joy in terms of knowing about deadlines and how to go through that. So, I enrolled in the local community college, originally at Merced College first, and had no direction whatsoever, just walked on campus, very lost. And I just started taking classes, and I found that there was a certain pattern. My transcripts, looking back, I was like, "Wow, there's some D's, there's some W's, there's some I's." Because I felt in that timeframe of my life, transitioning from high school to college, that what was most important was work, understanding that, you know, in my family and my cultura, we have a strong work ethic. However, sometimes that's not applied to school and education. So I was trying to balance working and going to school, and that's something that led to, you know, my failures in the classroom. And I realized those issues that I was having. Fortunately for me, I like to say that I didn't find Puente, Puente found me, because the first day of spring semester, I remember walking on campus and needing an English 1A class, needing an English class. And once again, I didn't have a registered set of, you know, classes for the semester. So, here I go ambushing. And like Jose Luis had mentioned, fortunately for me, I walked into the Puente class, and the professor there was like, "You know what? We have room for you. We have room. We'll make room." And I was like, "Thank you. You know, thank you so much." And little did I know that it was a Puente class. And I participated in the UCRP leadership conference, and the first day that I got there, Josefina Canchola, which is a mentor from Puente, said the phrase I'll never forget -- "There are no accidents in the universe." So, for me, me being in Puente was never an accident. I was supposed to be here. And all those mistakes I had in the beginning, you know, were a part of that experience and understanding and developing myself. And I also noticed in my classes that I did get D's and F's on, those classes that I weren't interested in, but there was something very clear in my transcripts -- that I was getting A's in my history classes, I was getting A's in my Mexican-American history classes, my Chicano politics classes. And that was really strange. She was like, "Wow, what's going on here?" I noticed that I really focus all my attention on these classes and I excel. So, I started developing and thinking, "What do I want to do and I what do I want to major in?" And it just was a no-brainer to me. "I'm going to major in Chicano studies." Specifically, Chicano Latino politics was the class that really empowered me and was able to open my eyes and connect the dots to so many issues that we're facing in the community, understanding and being critical of my environment and being critical of my current generation and the issues that are affecting us. So, for me, I took that as an opportunity to say, "You know what? I'm going to get involved. I'm going to do things." And prior to being involved in Puente, I was president of MEChA on campus and really

vocal and active and -- But you know what? With MEChA, it was a great experience. However, you know, I didn't have that leadership -- the styling, the conditioning in terms of how to take roles and organize. So, with Puente, I got an opportunity to learn how to use my -- in the academic setting. At Fresno City College, for example, it takes six years on average to get out of community college. It's 52% Latino on campus. The demographics -- The typical student at Fresno City College is 24, she's a Latina, she's on some type of financial aid, and, to be more specific, she lives south of Shaw, which is a main street in Fresno. But all those things fit me. I am that student and at that college. And so with all these things that I've experienced, been very empowered with Chicano/Latino politics, very involved in MEChA, very involved in Puente, I decided it was an opportunity to really put those things into use. And I ran for student body, student government for my campus, and I won. And to me, it's very important because I'm the first Latina president of that school, and the campus has a 100-year history. And to me, I believe in representative democracy and I represent the student body. And so those are things that I have learned and have put into practice on my campus. And I also would like to mention that education isn't -- Something I've learned, that education isn't only for you, it's not for the individual person -- it's for everyone. For me, my education is for my my dad, my grandpa, my little sister, and to lead by example for all the sacrifices that were done before me and, you know, make use of those opportunities that we now have. And I make it a point to organize with my little sister, my cousins, and even convinced some of my older cousins to go back to school. And I take it upon myself to use all the things I've learned and share back with my familia. And that's something that Puente has taught me, you know, to be very family-oriented. So, thank you.

[Applause]

>> Well, we want to make sure that we have time for questions at the end. But we wanted to to give the students an opportunity because, like I said earlier, there's been so much dialog about, you know, several different topics that are very near and dear to them as students. So, all of you know that there are policymakers and educators here in the audience and watching live. What recommendations would you like to to share with them, observations that you've had as students, recommendations about policy that you'd like to give? I don't know who would like to start. Okay.

>> Yeah, I'll get it going. So, first I wanted to just say that, you know, I think you've heard a lot of our stories, and I don't think we're here just to, like, share success stories. I think that a lot of the things that you just heard from our personal experiences, you could easily pull out a whole bunch of themes or, like, best practices or some key things that pulled us in, that got us engaged in school, which are things that, either as practitioners and teachers that you can apply or start pulling into your class or, as policymakers, can push for either funding or creating policies that support these type of programs. And to me, I have several things that I would say, but I'll just try to keep it briefer because we don't have too much time. But one of them, for me, first of all, is integrating student voices to strengthening your program. Like, I feel that -- Like, one of the things -- One of the things that I do at CSF is young adult engagement. And what

that really means is bringing the voice of the most disconnected young people to policymakers, at least there specifically. But that's something that, honestly, also I advocate for and do trainings for other organizations to integrate the voices of their participants or their students to improve your program, to strengthen your program. And that's something that a lot of people tell a young person, "Oh, don't worry, you may not be an expert, but you have something." No, in my opinion, young people, your students, your participants of your programs, are the experts because they're the ones who are dealing with those things day to day and the things that they've dealt with in their life, that we have dealt with in our lives, is a wealth of knowledge that can help you improve your programs. So, for example, a lot of times when a young person drops out -- you know what I mean? -- or that person is that "bad kid," we exclude them or we may do something that ends up actually contributing to other stressors in their life. But instead of doing that, we could actually learn, "Well, why didn't you like the program? Why did you drop out of school?" Because there's something to be learned there in terms of improving. As well as for the ones that succeed and do well. We need to -- In my opinion, it's really -- I know everybody talks about qualitative and the numbers -- I mean quantitative stuff and the numbers. And one of the questions, honestly, that I had for assistant secretary here of post-secondary education before is, like, "What are we doing -- What are we doing --" and, honestly, it's something I would pose out to everyone here -- "to help out the young people who are at the bottom, the people who are struggling the most? What are we doing for young people who are experiencing high levels of violence, who are experiencing trauma? What are we doing for folks in poverty?" You know, because we know that when young people are dealing with all these other barriers outside of the classroom, it's affecting the classroom. We know that. You know, like, sometimes you may have a student who comes in, he's falling asleep in your class, and there's two things you could probably do. You could be like, "Man, you keep falling asleep in my class. You're out." Or you could say, "Hey, let me talk to you real quick," or, "Let me pull you aside after class. Why are you falling asleep in class? What's happening? What's going on at home?" Which is a difference. I think that a lot of policies and a lot of educators have more of a deficit-based approach rather than a strength-based or asset-based approach. And in my opinion, and what a lot of what Puentes does is capitalize on the things that normally have been viewed as negative behaviors, the type of stuff that got me in trouble and kicked out of class all the time, and those would be the things that people would say are bad rather than saying, "Those are actually -- There are qualities there. There are some assets there." When I learned how to slang drugs and get money on my own in the street and get creative to help out my family, there are entrepreneurial skills there, business skills there. And you know what? That may be -- That's that sounds funny, but it's not. It's a fact. You know, there are -- It's a fact, straight up. And like -- My brother right here gave me one of the most beautiful examples that I'm going to use forever now, which is that he had a young person who used to gangbang, and, you know, that was what he was used to. He came out of jail or something, and he's like, "All I know how to do is throw up signs." And he said, "Well, have you --" He's like, "I don't know what to study," he was saying, "but I do want to go to school. But that's all I know how to do. That's all I've done." He said, "Well, have you ever thought about sign language?" Yeah. And that's that is a -- And he actually did it. And now that's his major, and he's getting into that.

>> Wow.

[Applause]

And that is a perfect example of an asset, strength-based approach. To policymaking -- you can apply that to policymaking. You could apply that to practicing as a teacher, as an educator. And I think that that's just beautiful. Another thing that, honestly, I would say -- I'm going to try to keep it brief, but to me that was one of the really large ones. But another one -- I'm sorry, I have to I have to throw these out -- is, like, cultural competence when it comes to teachers is really large. By that --

[Applause]

And by that, I don't only mean -- Of course it's great to have a teacher who looks like you and all that, but the reality is we can't boot out all the Anglo teachers or other teachers who may lack that competence. But we can provide professional development. We could give them reality tours in their communities so they could understand what's going on in these young people's lives. We can do things to help people understand what these young folks are dealing with, and that will change the way that they handle situations in the classroom. That also may change the way that policymakers go about allocating funding, as well. Another thing that I think is really huge that I have to say is high standards. I really do believe that our young people are capable -- and I know we are all capable of going to any Ivy League school, performing like any privileged kid who has all the resources in the world. And I went with one of my brothers right here, Rene, from San Francisco -- we went to one of the jails in the Bay, which is supposed to be the worst one for youth with violent crimes. And we asked them, like, "So, what are your classes like?" And they were straight-up, like very, very clearly, "This is the one I like. It's the one I hate." The one they hated was the one where they treated them like they were less than, the one where they treated them like they were dumb. They were giving us examples of, like, easy work that they gave them and just, like, stupid tasks that were very simple and, honestly, were insulting to their intelligence. And the class that they loved was the one where that teacher raised the bar hella high and where the teacher expected the world of them and where the teacher challenged them to meet that high bar, but not only challenged them -- supported them with resources, would stay afterward, mentor them or tutor them, whatever it is, so that they could meet that high bar. And I think that that is applicable to policymaking because I think that all schools here should be having the standards to graduate from high schools, should be meeting the A through G requirements or whatever requirements it is to get into a post-secondary, four-year school, but coupling that with real supports so that they can meet that because we can't just raise the bar like we're doing with the Student Success Task Force for community colleges without supports. So, that's what I would tell you. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

Thank you. So, we can take a few questions. I don't know if there's any from the Web or... Okay.

>> Good afternoon. Randall Cenicerros, Colton Joint Unified Board of Education. I'm just struck by, you know, the openness. You're willing to engage and talk about your personal lives. But as a school board member, a governing board member, we set policy. Can you talk a little bit about what we need right now to keep our kids in school? What do you think -- Where are we lacking right now? What can we do? Is it because we're not providing a quality education? Is it because we're cutting back on programs? Is it because maybe you've not related with your counselor? Can you talk a little bit about that? Where do we need to apply our resources right now as many districts are struggling to deal with the deficit?

>> Okay, I can answer that for you. Thank you for having that question because, you know, in my role as president on the campus, I sit on a lot of campus committees and deal with a lot of administration chancellors and board of trustees and have these types of discussions and try to bring them a student perspective and have them understand that it's a very different time to be a student compared to when they got their education. There was a lot more resources. As students now, we have to remember -- not as students, but as admin and professionals, to remember that students are in -- they're in survival mode. The majority of students are really sacrificing to be in school, juggling so many units, work, family issues, and we're in survival mode. I constantly hear many students are apathetic, they don't care, how do they not understand, they're lazy. That's not the case. It's Maslow's hierarchy of needs. We're not able to think and rationalize and be critical until we have the basics and understanding that. Something we've been doing on campus is, one, making it a point to be more vocal and communicate with the student body as soon as possible. The chancellor has been actively involved in that in my district. Also, we've done psych services training for professional development for all the staff and faculty, so they're aware of some of the issues that our community is facing. I think it's very important to get to the ground level and connect with the students and hear their issues without making the decisions in a very rash way. Unfortunately, the state budget cuts and the federal budget cuts are putting students in a very hard position and making us be very competitive on things. However, that's excluding so many students and creating, like, a surplus population of people that aren't going to be educated. So, I think in terms of connecting with our student body, understanding the realities of which we are dealing with and trying to come up collaboratively with all the constituent groups to try to create policies that would support the students now and not so much look at it as an issue of they're being lazy or apathetic, they're not involved. No, that's not the case. You know, we do care. And I think it's important for us to be creative and innovative because the definition of insanity is trying to do the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. That's not going to happen anymore. So I think -- I commend you on your asking the question and trying to get involved, but it really starts with a conversation from the people on top to the students --

because we have to remember we're there for the students. For us, we're the next generation. And so I would say to just really work with the student body.

[Cheers and applause]

Okay, there's a quick comment. We really are out of time, but go ahead.

[Inaudible]

>> We don't have very many Puente programs in the IE, particularly in the high school setting. If we can do this connection that we do with these students [inaudible] we're only allowed something like one, maybe two. The best thing about our classes is students came forward to be a mentor to a middle school...

>> That would be awesome.

>> ...to make sure that they get to college, that would be great. So, the conversations, I think, between the board, superintendents, you know, K through 12, to work with our community college students -- These are our students. And they want to be a mentor. They have been mentored [inaudible] but they need to mentor the next generation as well.

>> Yes.

>> And that costs money and time and making sure that we make those [inaudible]

>> Thank you. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> So, I got permission from the head honch.

>> He says so.

>> So, I think just -- I really appreciate that comment, and I think that that is tied to what the brother from -- the policymaker from the board of education, I think, who came up is, I do think -- I agree. Like, we need wraparound supports. That's one way that I would say -- Our young people need wraparound support, meaning mental-health services, counseling, tutoring, mentoring, as well as leadership development. Because, again, that goes back to using people's "negative things" and looking at them as strengths to build upon. And that relates to what the sister was just talking about. One of the things we're doing with our student organization at City College is exactly that. We actually just started a mentorship group where we're working with middle-school and high-school students, specifically doing group mentoring and exposing them, talking about the realities of our barriers and how we can overcome them. And we're going to be taking them on college tours, taking them to our school, and just exposing them. And I think

that that's one of the real key things you could do is use your resources that you already have, which is young people who can bring somebody else up. Because I think a lot of times we have the mentality of celebrating our success of young people, but they are -- they're -- what is viewed as success is making it and leaving the neighborhood and just -- And that is completely wrong. I think success is when you make it, whatever that is to you. To me, what it is, is getting your education or getting the the job you want, but then returning to your community and being what is like the Robin Hood, like, taking and jacking all those resources, that knowledge, you know, and that wealth of information that you learned, that you get at schools and your networks that you get exposed to, and bringing those to the young people who need it most because we can change our neighborhoods if -- which is what I'm going to do and I'm still doing -- by being someone in the community who still lives in the hood and now is working as a youth worker. Or down the block, we have the business owner. Down the block, I have someone who's on the board. Down the block, I have my teacher. That's the way to change our communities, is by making sure that we stay there and not just saying, "I'm going to make it, and now I'm going to go get my suburban house." So, I hope it's -- Giving back is the key.

>> "rale. I love it. Thank you. That's great. Okay, so, any last quick closing comment from our moderator? And then we're going to switch groups.

>> Just want to thank all the students. It's just been a privilege and an honor to be working with them. You have no idea. We've been up till like 12:30, 1:00 for the last couple of days as these students just wanted to keep engaging in conversation. So, I would encourage all of you, if you want to talk to them afterwards, all these other students as well -- If we could have had them all up here sharing their stories, we would have. But thank you to all of you.

>> All right.

[Applause]

Que viva Puente. Que viva Puente. °Que viva! °Que viva! Que viva Puente.

>> Thank you to our students. Okay.

>> So, that was a fantastic panel. I mean, you've got -- These are the kids that we're trying to get to in the first place and now they're doing it and they're moving forward.

>> Well, I have to say, it was definitely an impressive group of young people that were keeping it real. They were talking about their --

>> Very real.

>> They were talking about their experiences, talking about the challenges that they face, talking about things - -you know, what it means to be part of a -- part of an

immigrant family, about cultural differences that exist, and the importance of having mentors in their lives. So, I have to say they were quite impressive.

>> You know, what was impressive to me was the idea of, again, well, they have entrepreneurial skills. You know, again, don't discount some of the bad habits. You know, some of the good habits can actually come out of that. And then the thing about the signing, you know -- he was, "Well, what am I going to do if I could just throw signs? Well, I'm going to throw signs -- sign language!" That was a fantastic story, wasn't it?

>> Absolutely. But, yeah, these kids are definitely -- They serve as role models. They had role models and fortunately now are serving as role models for others.

END – 00:55:34