

Regina Rhymes Wins Statewide Union Recognition: Community College Association Ethnic Minority Award

The Community College Association (CCA) awarded United Faculty member Regina Rhymes the 2019-2020 CCA Ethnic Minority Award in Honor of Maryann Pacheco. Regina, the sole recipient, was selected from union members across the state for her tireless dedication to equity and diversity.

When Regina assumed leadership of the Cypress College Legacy Program in 2015, she inherited a project. Although founded almost twenty years ago, the black studies program had struggled due to lack of interest and financial support by various administrators over the years. Regina had a lot of work to do to revive this important program that recruits and mentors African-American students who work together as a cohort in their English, Ethnic Studies, and Counseling courses. The goal is to improve retention and success rates in the short term and graduation with a degree—first an AA and then a BA or BS degree—in the long term.

To say that Regina succeeded in her goal is an understatement. During her five-year tenure as coordinator of the Legacy Program, Regina, a full-time professor in the Cypress College Sociology Department since 2000, has not only stabilized the problems of financing and administrative support, but she has successfully recruited more and more students. In fact, during the 2019-2020 school year, the program tripled in size from one class of thirty students to nearly 100—an impressive accomplishment. Most of these students complete their degrees and transfer to a university.

Regina's success is due to her tireless dedication to all aspects of the Legacy Program. Of course, both student and mentor recruitment and training are key; however, she also serves as a liaison to campus and district committees to make sure her program is on the table for financing and promotion. Regina has also done an admirable job ensuring that the program's special events are covered in both traditional and social media.

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A vertical graphic for the Cypress College Legacy Program. The top half is blue with the text "Cypress College Legacy Program" in yellow. Below this is a yellow triangle pointing upwards, containing the text "Community. Achievement. Purpose." in blue. At the bottom, in smaller white text on a dark background, it reads: "The Cypress College Legacy Program is the first community college program in Orange County to concentrate on Black Studies."

Cypress College

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Although financing and advertising are necessary to any program's success, the real heart of the Legacy Program is Regina's steadfast belief in and dedication to her nearly 100 students. She has developed a one-on-one relationship with her students, and the professors who teach in the program have done the same. Regina trains the mentors as well and fosters the same dedication and connection to the students she has within herself.

Regina has made sure students learn study skills and feel confident as college scholars, but she also makes sure they participate in a variety of extracurricular activities, including a full schedule of events for Black History month, tours of many college campuses, attendance at culture events, and training from Toastmasters.

The Legacy scholars truly benefit from Regina's active participation in Toastmasters, which includes her position as District Governor for Los Angeles County for three years. Part of her duties in this position included motivating her team members to achieve their goals--expertise that she has brought to her Legacy students who eagerly learn the finer points of public speaking. This invaluable training not only develops a valuable skill but also develops self-confidence.

Perhaps Regina's most impressive accomplishment is that she has tripled this program's size without a tripling of the budget. Since the operating costs of such a large program do not leave enough money for awards and scholarships, Regina has personally funded generous Legacy Scholarships for many years—a fact she does not advertise on campus.

Humble, devoted, charismatic, and dedicated--Regina is certainly worthy of the CCA Ethnic Minority Award. The United Faculty leadership asks you to join us in congratulating our outstanding colleague.