

Chicano activist, professor is honored with award

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Tejano Tribune

When contemplating the reception of his recent Distinguished Community College Faculty Award, Chicana/o studies professor Mauricio Rodriguez envisions an academically stronger local Chicano community.

"I know that in my position students can see me as a role model, and I am very aware and sensitive to the things that I do at the college and outside of the college," Rodriguez said.

The award from Texas Association of Chica-



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Chicano Studies Professor Mauricio Rodriguez

nos in Higher Education, presented at the 38th annual TACHE conference

program, Rodriguez, who also teaches in the English

in Austin, Jan 27-30, recognizes superior levels of professionalism and accomplishment in the areas of teaching, research, or service.

As founder and coordinator of the Chicano studies program, Rodriguez, who also teaches in the English

discipline, is aware of the importance and impact that his work and accomplishments have for the students.

Steve Smith, interim vice president of instruction, acknowledged the honor Rodriguez attained.

"It is always wonderful when faculty such as Mauricio Rodriguez are recognized for their accomplishments," Smith said.

Some of the award criteria include the following: five years of service teaching at a Texas community college, innovation in teaching and mentoring, consistent pattern

of teaching excellence, service to the community and support of Chicano/Latino programs and students.

He is aware that in his position he can "serve as an example for the students and demonstrate what they can do and how they can do it, such as volunteering for the community."

Rodriguez has been involved in both school and local activities that help and support the Chicano community. Such activities are volunteering for the United Way, coordinating and offering panel presentations at the

40th year anniversary of La Raza Unida Party and participating in the EPCC Puente program.

The Puente program offers educational programs and relationship-building opportunities to the border community by using Chicano literature to teach students about writing and their heritage.

"When students see a piece of writing in which they can see themselves, it gives them a sense of pride," he said.

Rodriguez said he believes this is an important learning technique be-

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cause it allows each student to realize his or her own identity and purpose, not necessarily as a Chicano, but as someone with a Mexican heritage.

Even if it is a strategy to inspire students to do the work, "it creates some kind of sense of investment, and that experience is actually imprinted," Rodriguez said.

He said this is important because the college has a very strong Chicano community.

Many students learn through the material they themselves are Chicanos.

"Personally, I am a self-referred Chicano," Rodriguez said.

"And that identity is important because you can't be born a Chicano. Nobody can tell you're Chicano. You must accept that identity and apply it to yourself."

Rodriguez's plans for the future include increasing the number of students who major and minor in Chicano studies, as well as promoting its importance in other fields of study.