Speaking for Those Who Have Been Silenced

In May, Norco College Anthropology Professor Alexis Gray presented Riverside Community College District's 53rd Annual Distinguished Faculty Lecture, "Oh Dear, It's a Doe, a Female Doe." Her lecture discussed the process of human variations and provided illustrations on techniques used to help identify the unidentifiable.

"I feel there is a tremendous importance of identifying the unidentifiable."

A forensic anthropologist, Gray often is called upon by law enforcement to examine deceased unidentifiable individuals. Today, she works closely with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's department on cases involving skeletal and decomposed human remains and traumatic accident victims. She also trains law enforcement personnel in the recovery of human remains.

"I feel there is a tremendous importance of identifying the unidentifiable," said Gray, who has incorporated working cold cases into her college classes.

Dr. Gray attended Santa Monica College and California State University, Los Angeles earning an undergraduate degree in Anthropology, and completed her Ph.D. in Anthropology at UC Riverside. She began teaching at Norco College in 2006.

"I was, and continue to be, surprised by the show of interest and support from my colleagues about my other life," Gray said. "The faculty lecture experience was quite a humbling one. When I read the names of the previous faculty lecturers, I knew I would really need to bring my A game to the table as that was an august group."
Each year, the Academic Senate members select the Distinguished Faculty Lecturer. It is the highest honor faculty can bestow on a colleague. The Faculty Lecture series began in 1961. Riverside City College Associate Professor of Art Rhonda Taube has been selected to present the 54th Faculty Lecture in 2014.

“I would tell future lecturers to relax and enjoy the pampering,” Gray said. “The staff made sure that every detail was perfect and that I was supported 100 percent. They totally made me feel like a rock star. Because they held my hand every step of the way, I was able to take every step. I will treasure this experience always.”

RCC Associate Professor of Art Rhonda Taube will present Riverside Community College District’s 54th Faculty Lecture in May 2014.

Taube is conducting fieldwork in the highland Guatemala community of Momostenango concerning K’iche’ Maya dance and ritual. Her areas of expertise include ancient, colonial, and contemporary Mesoamerican ceremonial pageantry and public performance.


A faculty member at RCC since 1999, she received her master’s degree in Art History, Pre-Columbian Latin America from Northern Illinois University and a doctorate from UC San Diego in Visual Arts.
Colleges Continue to Grow STEM Programs

STEM programs are on the rise at colleges and universities throughout the country and nowhere is that more evident than at Riverside Community College District’s three colleges.

Faculty and students realize that studies in science, technology, engineering and math are critical for success in the 21st century workplace. STEM classes help students learn to think critically, solve complex problems, and innovate in science and technology-fueled sectors.

Norco College offered incoming freshmen interested in math and science careers a head start on their education through the Bridge to STEM summer program. During the five-week program students worked directly with STEM faculty to extract DNA, conduct labs on air pollution, and create 3D models.

Moreno Valley College held a STEM Summer Institute in conjunction with UC Riverside. Students lived in dorms at UCR for a week and participated in hands-on STEM activities. As a bonus, MVC gave students a taste of learning communities and college life through enrollment in a Math 35 prep session and a Guidance 48A course.

Riverside City College’s STEM program served over 1,200 students in 2012-13. Students performed independent research in nanotechnology, computer science, engineering, biology, atmospheric chemistry, and other STEM areas. Fifteen students were selected from a national student pool to participate in the National Science Foundation (NSF) funded Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) held yearly at Harvard University, UC Riverside, UC Berkeley and other institutions. Ten students interned at the USDA, Forest Service, and other state and local regulatory agencies. The RCC STEM faculty has collaborated with research institutions throughout the world to develop research projects in alternative energy, K-12 education methods and pedagogy, and biological sciences.

Emphasis on STEM education serves a larger purpose. The United States ranks 17th globally in awarding bachelor degrees in sciences with only one-third of all degrees coming from STEM fields. Yet, studies show that science and engineering jobs are growing at an unprecedented rate. Students holding STEM degrees are expected to fill America’s need for high-tech, high-skilled workers.

Southern California Edison, which last year contributed $50,000 to STEM scholarships at RCCD, is a company in need of a highly educated workforce.

“The importance of STEM educated students cannot be overstated. We need a workforce that understands the principles of science, technology, engineering and math, and can put them into application in a work environment,” said Ray Hicks, SCE Region Manager. “We are committed to encouraging and assisting RCCD students in their quest for success.”

“To become a lineman at SCE you need to pass tests that include an understanding of electrical theory, and that is to just get into an entry level position,” he explained. “With the state’s requirement for creating renewable energy, engineers who can design the renewable system, the transmission grid, and the local distribution system are invaluable.”

Mayse Nominated for Grammy’s Music Educator Award

Riverside City College’s Kevin Mayse, associate professor of music and director of the RCC Wind Ensemble, was one of 217 music teachers nationwide in the running for the Music Educator Award presented by The Recording Academy and the Grammy’s Foundation. More than 30,000 initial nominations were submitted; the 217 quarterfinalists represented 195 cities across 45 states.

“I was extremely humbled to be considered for this award,” Mayse said. “There are thousands of great music educators out there who never get recognized, many of whom I teach with daily at RCC. I am pleased to have my name and the name of our institution associated with this great award.”

The Music Educator Award was established to recognize current educators (K-college, public and private schools) who have made a significant and lasting contribution to the field of music education and who demonstrate a commitment to the broader cause of maintaining music education in the schools.
Love of Skiing Leads to Lost Treasures, Award, New Career

The Far West Ski Association honored Moreno Valley College Kinesiology Professor Ingrid Wicken over the summer, bestowing her with its Ski Heritage Award for her new book, *Lost Ski Areas of Southern California*.

The Association cited Wicken’s book “as the most detailed approach to lost ski areas...the accounting for the lost ski areas uncovers real historical treasures – personalities, partnerships, champions and championships – and shows the fabric and evolution of snow sports.”

“Ski Villa was a concrete slope paved in plastic tiles with a vertical drop of 280 feet. In 1939, Sepp Benedikter operated a pine needle slope. It was at the corner of Lankershim and Ventura Boulevards, which is now the location of Universal Studios.”

Her love for skiing began in 1974, while her book fetish began at a young age. But it wasn’t until the 1990s that the two worlds collided.

“It all happened by accident,” said Wicken, who began teaching at Riverside City College in 1989 and coached women’s tennis for 10 years. “I never expected to be a published author.”

In 1995, while opening a small bookstore, she purchased some American Ski Annuals from the 1930s. She remembers thinking that nobody had ever written the history of skiing in Southern California. “So I decided to write the history and that is how it all started.”

Wicken’s research uncovered not only lost history, but also lost treasures. In one chapter she writes about Mt. Palomar, which had a ski area in 1967, Ski Villa in Carbon Canyon in Orange County, and the days of pine needle ski runs.

“Ski Villa was a concrete slope paved in plastic tiles with a vertical drop of 280 feet,” Wicken said. “In 1939, Sepp Benedikter operated a pine needle slope. It was at the corner of Lankershim and Ventura Boulevards, which is now the location of Universal Studios.”

Wicken is working on another project—a history of women ski jumpers—with authors from Germany, Canada, Norway, and Finland. She also wants to spend more time on the slopes.

For more information on Ingrid Wicken and her books, log on to: www.skilibrary.com/publications.html

Mahon Named Hayward Award Recipient

Richard Mahon, professor of Humanities at Riverside City College, was one of four recipients of the Hayward Award in 2013 given by the Academic Senate of California Community Colleges. The award recognizes faculty for professional excellence in their academic field and contributions to the community.

Mahon, who has taught at all three RCCD colleges, was hired in 1998. Six years later he was selected as Distinguished Faculty Lecturer. His professional contributions include service on the executive committee of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, member of the Board of Governors for Faculty, and commissioner on the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges.