



PRESS RELEASE

July 21, 2015

Contact: Paige Marlatt Dorr

Cell: 916.601.8005

Office: 916.327.5356

Email: pdorr@cccoco.edu

Dr. John W. Rice Award presented to two California Community Colleges instructors for exceptional work promoting diversity and equity on campus

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Two distinguished California Community Colleges instructors were honored today with the Dr. John W. Rice Diversity & Equity Award for their work in fostering student equity, diversity and access in the California Community Colleges.

The 2015 Dr. John W. Rice Diversity & Equity Award, named after a former member of the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, was given to Butte College's Dr. Shahroukh Mistry and to Orange Coast College's Robin O'Connor. Dr. Mistry's leadership helped led to hiring policies that attract more diverse candidates and also re-energized campus-wide diversity activities. O'Conner spearheads an adapted kinesiology program that pairs student volunteers with students with physical and mental disabilities.

"These dedicated faculty members exhibit the values of understanding, tolerance and fairness that Dr. Rice nurtured and spread," said California Community Colleges Board of Governors President Geoffrey L. Baum. "Their work serves as a shining example that sets the bar higher for all of us as we educate students from all backgrounds in the most diverse system of public higher education in the nation."

Dr. John W. Rice served on the board from 1992 until his death in 2000. While on the board, he displayed a strong commitment to multicultural learning experiences for all students. The award was established in 2001 to honor community college staff members, districts, colleges, or programs that have made the greatest contribution toward faculty, staff and student diversity and equity. The annual awards ceremony is made possible with generous support from the Foundation for California Community Colleges.

Born to a Presbyterian pastor in Baton Rouge, La., and living during segregation and the civil rights era, Dr. John W. Rice was passionate about ensuring California community college staff, faculty, and student body reflected the diversity of California and that support services were available to help students succeed. He was a leader, innovator, and spokesperson for nondiscrimination in the California Community Colleges system.

The annual awards ceremony is made possible with generous support from the Foundation for California Community Colleges.

“We are proud to support the annual Dr. John W. Rice Awards, which applauds exceptional work creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for all students, regardless of background,” said Keetha Mills, president and CEO of the Foundation for California Community Colleges. “Today’s ceremony celebrated two individuals dedicated to promoting diversity and equity throughout the California Community Colleges.”

About the Winners:

Dr. Shahroukh Mistry has helped to create a campus environment at Butte College that welcomes people of different backgrounds. He has helped the Butte College community to learn about other cultures and to expand their knowledge of the world. His efforts have paid off, with surveys indicating that Butte College is a highly tolerant campus. He oversees Diversity Days, a weeklong campus event during which speakers are invited to discuss diversity and equity, and workshops, film screenings and performances are held to promote these values.

Professor Robin O’Connor is also doing her part to create a diverse and welcoming campus at Orange Coast College. She works in a kinesiology program to help disabled students improve their physical strength through exercise. She recruits volunteers to help her students with their exercise regimens. This reduces barriers between her students and the volunteers and eliminates stereotypes about the physically disabled. O’Conner has led efforts to make her college more physically accessible to people with disabilities and works with students to make clothing and food available to the homeless.

The [California Community Colleges](#) is the largest system of higher education in the nation. It is composed of 72 districts and 113 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training, basic skills courses in English and math, and prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities. The Chancellor’s Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.

###