



# News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Los Rios' New Student Trustee: Hard Worker 'Doing It for the Right Reasons'**

When Ricardo Lemus sat down recently for his first meeting with fellow student leaders of the Los Rios Community College District, he wasted no time making his presence felt.

Seated at the head of the table, this year's Los Rios Board student trustee told the student government leaders from the district's four colleges that he was looking forward to "a very productive year." We can "really do a lot this year," he pledged, "if we have a strong line of communication and foster a team effort."

For Lemus, who is working on his associate's degree in kinesiology at Sacramento City College, the leadership role fits him well.

"I've always been a natural leader. People have always paid attention to what I say," he said in an interview during the summer. "I feel what I say doesn't fall on deaf ears."

Those who know Lemus agree. They say Los Rios' students made the right choice last spring when they elected him the district board's student trustee for

the 2013-14 academic year. Lemus' role is to represent the student voice on the Board of Trustees.

"He seems like a sharp guy and, from what I can tell, I think he's going to do well for students and provide us with that student perspective," said Los Rios Trustee Dustin Johnson, a Sacramento attorney who served as student trustee in 1996, when he attended American River College. Student trustees can be intimidated by board members, Johnson added, "so I would encourage him to reach out to us, to get to know us, but also because he's our colleague."

"I can't think of anybody that could do a better job," added Kim Beyrer, Sacramento City College's faculty coordinator who oversees student leadership and development. "He's an incredibly hard worker. He's smart. He's mature. He's humble. He's really doing it for the right reasons – to serve students and for his own self-growth."

Today, the 28-year-old Lemus is quick to acknowledge that his focus was not always so clear, his drive not nearly so emphatic.

He graduated from high school in Stockton in 2003, but did not start Sac City until 2011. What did he do for eight years?

"A whole lot of a bunch of nothing," he says, spending his days "sitting around and doing whatever I was allowed to do." Well, not exactly.

He worked a series of manual labor jobs, including laying bricks and setting tiles. He began thinking about a career as a personal trainer but, at the suggestion of his sister, Elvira, a student at Sac City, Ricardo met with Mauricio Gonzalez, a counselor there, who set him straight:

"He told me, 'There's no point in getting a certificate to be a personal trainer at a vocational school, because you'll be stuck.' He said I'd be better off coming to Sac City to begin working toward a B.S. in athletic training. Then I could make enough money to support myself and a family in the future, if that's what I wanted."

So in spring 2011, he enrolled at Sac City, with specific academic and career objectives in mind: finish his associate's degree by June 2015, then transfer to Sacramento State to earn a bachelor's degree in kinesiology, while working as a physical therapist's assistant, then apply for a Ph.D. program in kinesiology, because a bachelor's degree "won't satisfy me."

"I am taking full advantage of the opportunities that my father did not get as a kid," Lemus said. "He left his precious homeland, Mexico, to offer me this academic opportunity. Therefore, I will not let his struggles be in vain."

Shortly after he started at Sac City, he also got involved in student government and community service. In 2011-12, he served as president of the Puente Club, which assists underrepresented students, and helped raise more than \$2,000 and tripled the club's membership from 12 to more than 36 members. He joined the student government in spring 2012 as a senator and rose to President pro-tempore of the Student Associated Council at Sac City – the post he held when he decided to run for student trustee of the Los Rios Board.

“I always give 100% into all that I do,” Lemus wrote in his candidate application for student trustee. “My leadership roles demonstrate this. So allow me to be your voice.”

Beyrer, the Sac City faculty coordinator, says Lemus “really does embody what the community colleges are all about. To come to community college has been a second chance for him. He’s come in and made the most of that. He did not come from a place of privilege. This is an avenue for him to change the course of his life. He’s jumped in and taken advantage of every single opportunity that he can.

“I even said to him at one point, I would be so thrilled if my son grew up to be like him. He didn’t always make the right decisions in his life but he has somehow pulled it together and is really moving in a wonderful direction. I’m just really proud of him.”

So are Lemus’ parents, Abelino and Alicia, who drove to Sacramento from Dixon one night last June and sat in the audience beaming as they watched their son sworn in and then participate in his first Los Rios board meeting as student trustee.

Lemus was beaming right back at them:

“I felt great! I felt amazing! I don’t think I ever stopped smiling. I’ve come a long ways from where I’ve been at. Seeing my father and mother out there, I know how special they felt, and I know my father is really proud of me. I am growing into the man he always wanted me to be.”

### **About Los Rios**

The Los Rios Community College District is one of the nation’s most respected learning institutions and the second-largest community college district in California, serving the greater Sacramento region. Los Rios includes: American River, Cosumnes River, Folsom Lake and Sacramento City colleges; five major education and outreach centers; and specialized workforce and economic development programs for regional businesses, governments and organizations. Los Rios colleges offer AA/AS degrees, certificates and transfer-education

opportunities in more than 70 career fields. The district's 2,400-square mile service area includes all of Sacramento and El Dorado counties and parts of Yolo, Placer and Solano counties. More than 77,000 students are enrolled in the four colleges. For more information, go to [www.losrios.edu](http://www.losrios.edu).

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