

# EL OBSERVADOR

## Path to College for Migrant Families

Benefits include free classes, other support

Portland Community College will start a High School Equivalency Program on its Rock Creek Campus in northwest Portland for migrant and seasonal farm workers and members of their immediate family.

Supported by a five year, \$2.4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Migrant Education, the program will help people obtain a GED, gain employment, enter post secondary education or training or join the military.

One hundred students per year will be served by this grant. PCC is hiring staff for the program and the goal will be to start taking in students for winter term. The focus will be on Washington County, but students could come from Yamhill County, Clackamas and Hood River.

"There is a need for this program in our area and I have been contacted by many community agencies in Washington County that are absolutely thrilled that they will be able to refer students to this program." Said Karen Sanders, a PCC division dean.



Portland Community college Rock Creek Dean of Student Development Narce Rodriguez (left) and New Directions Coordinator Alicia Gonzalez know how beneficial a high school equivalency program can be for migrant families.

It's another big win for PCC in federal grant funding. In the last six months PCC has earned more than \$13.5 million in money to help foster access and bolster education programs like this one.

According to the PCC Grants Office the high school equivalency program is needed because Oregon

has the fifth-largest migrant and seasonal farm worker population in the country and 25 percent live in the Northwestern part of the state. Latino student enrollment has increased by 20 percent compared to last year at PCC.

"The nice thing about HEP is that there is no upper age limit," Sanders

added. "So if there are individuals or adults out there who never finished high school and would like to do so, they can enroll in this program and continue their education."

Benefits to students include free GED classes and testing fees, books, supplies, bus passes and cafeteria meals, plus reduced child

care. Individualized tutoring, GED classes in Spanish, advising and required electives are also part of the program.

Potential students will go through a rigorous application process, which includes verification of migrant status, orientation, testing and personal interviews. Program participants will take 12 credit hours of GED classes as well as an elective – often English as a Second Language or College Survival.

Graduates of the HEP program receive free PCC tuition, up to 12 credits, that must be used within a year.

Narce Rodriguez, Rock Creek Campus Dean of Student Development, had two brothers who went through the program where it exists in other parts of the state. She said it really helped them because of an environment of inclusion.

"We have a waiting list for people from this community who want their GED and it's a matter opportunity for them to have access to education via PCC," Rodriguez said. "Plus, this helps meet the goal of our board of directors to foster partnerships with community to meet access to all and foster diversity within the campus and college as a whole."

For program information, call 503-614-7085.

## Activists Consider 'Tequila Party'

To push for immigration reform, other causes



Fernando Romero

With the political powers that the Republican and Democratic parties hold, many Latino voters believe neither party has done enough to represent and support Hispanic communities.

According to reports, some Latino activists are considering forming a Tequila Party, based on the inspiration of the Tea Party to represent the rising voting power of Hispanics in the United States and to push for immigration reform the Democrats have neglected to succeed in.

Fernando Romero, president of Nevada's Hispanics in Politics stated that the "Tequila Party" is just an idea says "I don't know if

it's going to happen, but there's talk," he told the Las Vegas Sun.

If immigration reform gets pushed back again next year, the creation of an independent Latino party may come sooner rather than later. "It would definitely induce

us," Romero said. "We would have to do something at that point to get ready for 2012."

Hispanics have proved to be a powerful political force in Nevada and nationally. They were instrumental in electing President Barack Obama and are credited

with saving Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's re-election this month. In Nevada, Latinos accounted for 15 percent of voters in 2008 and a record 16 percent in this month's midterm elections.

Despite, or perhaps because of, their robust turnout, many

Latinos have become disillusioned with party politics. Their efforts haven't led to the changes in policy they would like to see.

Hispanic Republicans complain that party officials court their vote but often advocate policies that marginalize the community.

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