

MCCC's student newspaper wins six NJCPA awards

College's student-run publication, *The College Voice*, honored with six top awards in annual competition from the New Jersey Collegiate Press Association.

The College Voice, Mercer County Community College's student newspaper, has earned six awards from the New Jersey Collegiate Press Association in its annual statewide competition judged by news professionals. The awards include First Place for General Excellence for a two-year college and Second Place for Layout and Design. Awards for individual contributions include First Place for Feature Writing to Editor-in-Chief Susana Sanchez; Second Place for Newswriting to Managing Editor David Hoyt; First Place for General Photography to Mike Kay; and Honorable Mention for General Photography to Kendra Yu.

Award recipients will be honored at the New Jersey Collegiate Press Association's Spring Conference on Saturday, April 18, 10:00 a.m. at the Trenton Marriott Hotel and Conference Center. Keynote speaker will be Frank LoMonte, executive director of the Student Press Law Center.

According to Voice advisor Holly-Katharine Mathews, an MCCC associate professor of English, winning the award for overall excellence is "huge for us. We beat out some really well-established papers." Mathews notes that the awards reflect an incredible commitment on the part of her 18-member staff. An all-day brainstorming session at the beginning of each semester sets the tone for work that never lets up, as students guide four issues of *The Voice* from conception to final product. Mathews is assisted by Photography Program Coordinator Michael Dalton, who advises the staff's photojournalists and others interested in taking photos for *The Voice*.

For editor-in-chief Sanchez, originally from Costa Rica, English is her second language. "It's challenging to be editor. I don't know the idioms. But it has really improved my writing," she says. A recent recipient of a \$5,000 Phi Theta Kappa Guistwhite scholarship, Sanchez is a Liberal Arts major who will graduate this May

and plans to transfer for her bachelor's degree. She predicts that her writing skills will be a major asset when she eventually returns to Costa Rica, where most people can speak English, but few can write it.

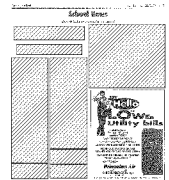
Managing Editor David Hoyt had never written for a paper before when he joined the staff last year. "It's a nice change from standard academic essays - out of the mold and much more creative." The newspaper provides a tangible goal beyond grades, Hoyt notes. "Here our emphasis is the product. Plus, lots of people read your work, not just your professor and classmates. You can have an impact on people's lives."

Hoyt acknowledges that the paper is a lot of work, but infinitely rewarding. "It teaches discipline and responsibility and builds self-confidence. We walk in for an interview and talk to anyone. The staff is really great. Everyone is friends with everyone. It's an enjoyable, relaxed, fun time."

That's an atmosphere that Mathews strives to create. "I want them to have a real life experience, to make friends, and to build their resumes. I want them to be treated like adults and excel at a high level, to collaborate, and to take on serious issues in an unbiased way. This is a great group of students. All are busy and all are perfectionists, but I tell them there is no such thing as perfection in this business. You know it's done when you hit your deadline."

Students also maintain and update their newspaper's website. "It contains the best articles from each issue, some breaking news, and several interactive features such as photo slideshows and video clips," says Mathews. We track which articles receive the most reads and I like to reward the writers whose articles generate most reads and comments. The top reporters vie for that prize."

Mathews' next goal for *The Voice* is to strive for an Apple Award from College



Media Advisers, a national organization dedicated to helping students improve their media operations. Mathews and nine of her staff members recently returned from the group's annual convention in New York City, which drew students from 1,600 schools from around the country.

"They got excited about First Amendment law and made friends with students from other schools. I was so proud of them," Mathews says.

To read The College Voice online, visit www.mcccvoice.org.



Photo courtesy of www.mccc.edu

Student reporters and editors of The College Voice, from left, seated, are Mabel Duran-Sanchez, Katrina Brophy, and Kento Watanabe. Standing from left are Susana Sanchez, Jason Braum, Matt Williams, Mike Kay, Caroline Fling, David Hoyt, Brian Edgeworth, Sandy Issac, and Eva Surany.