National Poetry Month

CAMPUS DIGEST

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College Report Read President Taylor's 2015 State of the College address. The annual event, sponsored by the MC Foundation, was held April 17. **Pages 2-4**

It's Wacky Student Services staff boost morale with fun activities and crazy costumes to make the work-place more fun. **Page 6**

In Verse In celebration of National Poetry Month, three Merced College poets publish their work in this month's *Campus Digest*. **Page 8**

Shopping for Plants

Photo by Susan Walsh

With a record sale of 622 transactions, more than 1,500 people attended the plant sale on the Merced campus on March 28. According to plant science professor Bryan Tassey "This was our largest sale by far with an assortment of veggie, herbs, succulents, fruit and shade trees along with a large selection of flowering perennials." Plans are already in the works for next year's sale and potentially one in fall. All proceeds help fund horticulture education at Merced College.

President Taylor Reports on State of College

Annual Address Highlights Community Support and College Planning

By Dr. Ron Taylor
Superintendent/President

Dr. Taylor

What a wonderful day it is! The sun, the beauty of this location, with happy people celebrating the college and the largesse of our community! A hearty welcome to everyone, and thank you for coming out to honor your college and our relationship with the community.

Speaking of the largesse of the community, I would like, before saying anything more, to thank the members of our Board of Trustees, who volunteer their time and energy throughout the year.

I also want to recognize former college President and currently President and CEO of the Great Valley Center, Ben Duran. Thank you for being with us today, and for everything you have done to make Merced College into the excellent institution that it is.

I also want to thank the Merced College Foundation. Thank you for sponsoring this day, when we celebrate how much good comes from selfless service.

Many thanks to our student leaders as well, and to the faculty and staff who have joined us. Your selfless service pays off for entire lifetimes. Thank you.

It is indeed a beautiful day, here in front of a beautiful building. The building behind me is itself a testament to the largesse of our community, and to our purposes as an institution. This building, the Bill and Dorothy Bizzini IAC, was completed on January 24, 2006, and it was funded through lease revenue bonds from Governor Davis' economic stimulus package, costing $10,218,000. It was the first instructional facility built since the 1980's, and it was built on top of the former soccer field. As a result, we built three new soccer fields at the corner of Yosemite and G Streets. The building has 22,986 assignable square feet. The architectural firm was Lionakis, and they received a Design Excellence Award for this design from the Sierra Valley Chapter of The American Institute of Architects. We are, of course, proud of this award, and I am glad that the structure lives up to its name. "IAC" stands for Interdisciplinary Academic Center, and it is true that we have housed various academic disciplines within these walls, and that the structure assists faculty in collaborating on curriculum and service to students. It houses the Humanities and Social Sciences areas, and it has a computer lab, a writing lab, and anthropology and archeology labs and storage. The classrooms were designed with state-of-the-art audio-visual capability—multimedia projectors, DVD players, document cameras, closed-caption devices and audio systems. On behalf of our students, a big thank-you to President Duran and his team as well as the Bizzinis and the community for making this building happen.

Today's event has twin purposes: to report to the community on the state of the college, and to recognize the community's support for the college. We will come to the recognition in a few minutes, saluting a pair of philanthropists who are truly without peer. First, though, a few words about the state of the college:

At this point last year, I spoke of the changing nature of higher education in our time. And indeed, the world has been changing dramatically and this has had large implications for what we do at Merced College. One could even say that the substance of what community colleges do has shifted. Our mission is now more focused on full-time, degree-seeking students rather than on part-time, occasional students looking for skills improvement; and certainly there has been something of a shift away from students seeking cultural enrichment rather than a degree. In significant ways, the direction for community colleges is coming more directly from the state rather than from local citizens. This is not all bad, as I'll explain in a minute. But it is certainly an aspect that we must acknowledge.

At this point last year, Merced College had just submitted its Midterm Report for accreditation and frankly a few of us were anxious that we might be put back on sanction. That did not happen, thanks to the hard work of many. At present, we are still giving careful attention to the issues that were raised in our previous accreditation report, since we do understand that the changes that were being recommended will take years to make firm and ongoing. Last month we filed our regular Annual Report with the Accrediting Commission. On May 1, we will have a training in preparation for our next comprehensive self-study and visit in 2017.

Also at this point last year, I sought your help in finalizing a strategic plan for 2014-16, which the Board approved in October. We have been working on implementing those goals and objectives and I am happy to report that we are on the verge of instituting a tracking system for our planning that will ensure we do everything we say we are going to do. We have always had good goals; the tricky part has been ensuring that we can readily report on progress. We are doing that now.

At this point last year, I mentioned the challenges we still faced: we still had a budget gap—a gap between ongoing expenses and projected revenues of over a million dollars—the result of the recession and rising health care costs. Thankfully, between our own efforts at whittling down our expenses, and the fact that the state has turned a corner, we now have no cash flow issues, and our budget gap is presently at half a million dollars, with the expectation that in the coming year, it will be at zero.

A year ago, it was clear to me that enrollment demand had tabled, and that this had significance for the college. We have been studying this situation, and developing new ways to bring enrollment to the college. Typically, when the economy is bad, community colleges experience an upturn in enrollment demand, and when the

See College, page 3.

College

Continued from page 2.

economy improves, community colleges experience a downturn in demand. That is likely the primary source of the change in our enrollment situation over the last year—together with stringent changes in regulation we've experienced over the last 2-3 years. As you may have seen in the newspaper, some have thought that the college is in trouble in this respect, but that is not the case. We manage our offerings very carefully, both to ensure efficiency and to maximize opportunity for those who need classes. What is different now is that in the new economy, we are motivated to seek out new sources of enrollment, and as a consequence we have been working on increasing online course offerings, we have been reaching out to local high schools to ensure that everyone who needs higher education is aware of their opportunities, and we have been talking with the local prisons about the possibility of offerings there.

This is a large and complex institution, with many moving parts. It is impossible to report truly on the "state of the college" about every aspect of the college's operations and direction, but I can highlight a few things. I will focus on what is new at the college—passing over, for example, the fact that we are still offering College for Kids, one of our most popular programs of outreach to the community. As I highlight a few new things, however, I must say how truly grateful I am for responsiveness of the faculty and staff to the things I have asked of them, and which the state has thrust upon us—and I am grateful to the Board of Trustees for their patience as the college experiences change. It is a time of change in higher education. As a staff member put it a few days ago, "we need to see change as a way of life." She was talking about the changes thrust upon us by the changing world of technology. High school graduates are now coming to us—thanks to the good work of our local high schools in providing tablet computers to so many students, and putting instructional materials online, and also thanks to the students' own changing life habits involving social media, and an extremely lively information culture—they are coming to us with expectations that represent a challenge. Yes, as this staff person so astutely said, "we need to see change as a way of life." With that as an overall backdrop, here are a few of the changes that the last year has brought:

Administrative changes—two new Vice Presidents, a new Director of Human Resources, Manager of Risk Management & Safety, Director of Facilities, Dean of Workforce Development, and soon, we'll have a couple other new deans as well.

We have also hired quite a number of new faculty and staff—just among the fulltime faculty, since 2012 we have recruited faculty in English, mathematics, library, Nursing—LVN & RN, radiologic technology, industrial technology, automotive technology, child development, economics, history & political science, criminology, counseling, physics, football, anthropology, communications, and biology, with several of these recruitments belonging to our Los Banos campus.

Most of the turnover has been due to the retirement—the aging of the baby boom has hit us as it has hit other organizations.

Photo by Michele Dwyer

The 2015 State of the College Address and Luncheon was held in front of the Bill and Dorothy Bizzini Interdisciplinary Academic Center.

Due to the improving state budget, however, going into this fall we will have a net increase of six positions. And we are glad for our new faculty. It is important to recognize the important role played by fulltime faculty. Our part-time faculty provide excellent instruction and we are extremely grateful for their contribution to our mission—we couldn't do it without them—but fulltime faculty tend to have an influence that lasts for decades. They shape programs, and they establish enduring partnerships with community businesses and organizations. A good example is the recent Plant Sale and the energy and value of our Horticulture Program; largely due to the relationship-building of Prof. Bryan Tassey. Another is the attention to social media brought by Prof. Toni Pirtle. The same can be said of our Athletic Programs over the years: the faculty who have served as our coaches build lasting relationships—truly, each has a legacy. And the same for our other programs—Business, Nutrition, STEM fields, the Arts and Humanities, Allied Health. Even physics gets into the act, reaching out to the community with the Siege Weapons Competition that happens again this year—this coming Wednesday, April 22, 12:30 – 4 p.m. at the Soccer Practice Fields.

Examples of community outreach and innovation brought by our faculty abound, but I should focus here on the truly new. Over the last couple of years, our faculty have responded to the state's call to develop new degree pathways in collaboration with CSU faculty—Associate Degrees for Transfer they are called, and they have turned out to be popular with students, as they smooth the way to effective enrollment at the university. Over the last couple of years, our faculty have created eighteen of these degree pathways.

The most recent new development in our curriculum happened on Wednesday, when Allied Health submitted a proposal for a pilot program offering a Bachelor's Degree in Diagnostic Sonography. We don't know if our proposal will be accepted. As you may have heard, the state has authorized pilots to enable upper division instruction at community colleges under certain circumstances. If this happens, our first bachelor's program class would start in Fall

See College, page 4.

College

Continued from page 3.

2016.

Another example of innovation brought by our faculty is the new Lecture & Performance Series created by Dean John Albano and faculty from various disciplines—If you attended the lectures on "Dangerous History" by Michael Lorenz or on "Life Under Our Feet" by Bob Davies, you know how exciting this new series is for the college. The final event in the series happens tomorrow at 7 p.m. in our theater—a new play called "In Search of Hallman." I'm told it's about the meaning of life.

And of course it isn't just our faculty who bring new things to the college. As just one example, in our drama department, we have a new technician, Chad Phillips, who recently created (working together with Professor Carin Heidelbach and the students) an amazing stage set for Taming of the Shrew. Something to be proud of.

What are the broad new directions in which the college is embarking? I'll give you the short list. The state has handed us quite a set of initiatives—in a sense we don't have to worry about creating new directions for ourselves!—but they are fundamentally good new directions. As I mentioned last year at this time, the implementation of the Student Success Act was keeping us very busy, and our Student Services area was among the early adopters of processes that would ensure new students have a solid plan for their educational experience, and a good orientation to the services available to them. We are continuing to implement aspects of the Student Success Act. At the same time, the state also rolled out an initiative to improve Online Education statewide; and at Merced College this year we adjusted our oversight of online instruction, appointed a new Distance Education Coordinator, and hired a technician to support the effort.

In the last few months, the state has rolled out a couple of additional initiatives. The first of these initiatives is focused on Student Equity—equity of opportunity, equity in student success. In response to this initiative, we have approved an ambitious set of goals to improve access to education for disadvantaged members of our population, and to improve the success of students who are already enrolled. The resources provided for this effort have enabled us to engage in new outreach activities. We have hired a new Coordinator of Outreach to Schools, and with her help, senior administrators as well as Board members have conducted visits to area high schools in recent weeks, re-establishing and re-energizing these all-important partnerships. Working together, we hope to find ways to encourage local youth to really consider college as an option to expand their futures. This dialogue with the high schools has opened my eyes to the possibility of a strengthened partnership aimed at Career Technical Education.

The most recent of the state initiatives is focused on Institutional Effectiveness. This is essentially a quality assurance effort that will provide technical assistance when needed to colleges that should make improvements. From a statewide perspective, this initiative is the state legislature wanting to ensure, working through the state Chancellor's Office, that there will never again be a fiasco like the one that occurred with City College of San Francisco. Now from a local perspective, I see this as an opportunity for us to get timely help in ensuring our accreditation status is fully reaffirmed in the next cycle. Moreover, we do have a few weaknesses as an institution that must be addressed. In concrete terms, two things will happen in relation to the Institutional Effectiveness initiative in the coming weeks: First (1), we will adopt four Institutional Effectiveness goals and report these to the state system. The four correspond to areas stipulated by the legislature: (a) Accreditation Status; (b) Fiscal Solvency; (c) Student Outcomes; (d) Compliance with State and Federal Regulations. They have identified a measure associated with each area, and we will report our status to the state system on these points by June 15. Secondly (2), Merced College has volunteered, and been selected, to pilot the technical assistance aspect of the initiative. We will be receiving a visiting team in May. The team will interview faculty and staff concerning several focal areas that we have identified as needing attention. Generally the areas we are focusing on have to do with better software and technical support for our institutional processes—software to track progress on goals, to document student learning outcomes as part of our planning cycle, to support enrollment management, and so on. I am pleased with the seriousness that our faculty and staff have given to this arena. The Academic Senate has been holding brown bag discussions on student learning outcomes, and on May 8 the faculty will hold a "GE Day" focused on assessment of learning outcomes across the curriculum.

Other areas that will be horizons for us in the next year are incorporated in our Strategic Plan. We have been progressing on the six goals in our plan, and we are documenting that progress. For example, in response to one of our strategic planning objectives, we are now preparing a renovation of our college website. In the coming year, we will complete some of the goals in our plan, and then (in 2016) we will be preparing new goals and objectives for the ensuing years. A number of our objectives coincide nicely with the state's initiatives—student success, student equity, and institutional effectiveness. In a couple of weeks, our Board of Trustees will hold their spring workshop in which they will help us chart new directions based on where we have come.

Finally, a brief word about campus facilities and this wonderful building and the philanthropy we are here to celebrate. If we are lucky and if our Governor is in a philanthropic mood, the state will place an educational facilities bond on the 2016 ballot. This will be a huge gain for Merced College if it happens, since we expect to see funding for our long-awaited Agriculture-Industrial Technology facility in a November 2016 state bond. This would set the stage for a new, renovated set of educational facilities at Merced College to respond to the growth in our region.

The importance of educational access through community colleges has become ever more evident in recent years, and Merced College in particular, located at a distance from institutions in Modesto, Fresno, and the Bay Area, needs to be able to respond to the needs. We can help the regional economy by developing a better-trained workforce. We will need your assistance to ensure that the support for this effort is strong. Given your historical support for the college, I have no doubt you will encourage and assist us.

Outreach Efforts Produce Good Will and Great Results

High school outreach has been picking up speed this spring as the Office of Relations with Schools (ORS) welcomes a new director and many new initiatives.

Along with administrators and other staff members, Anne DiCarlo, director of ORS, has been visiting high schools from Orestimba to Chowchilla to Pacheco to Le Grand. The goal of these visits is to spread the word about all the great programs the College has to offer and to hear what the high schools need from the College.

The response has been very enthusiastic, with schools signing students up for application workshops and planning campus visits. At this point, DiCarlo and staff members have made contact with nearly 500 high school students. These students are increasingly interested in Career and Technical Education programs, Allied Health programs, and of course, programs that enable transfer to a four-year college or university.

ORS is in the process of hiring student ambassadors and has opened a Twitter account. Future ideas for programming include a return of the Counselor Day, High School Registration Day, a First Year Experience program, and summer outreach for admitted students.

Anyone wishing to promote their programs or to get involved with outreach activities is encouraged to contact DiCarlo at Ext. 6608 or email anne.dicarlo@mccd.edu.

Welcome to New Area 6 Dean

It is my honor and privilege to introduce to you our new Instructional Dean of Area 6: Economic and Workforce Development, Community Services and Non-Credit, Dr. Shelly Conner.

Dr. Conner

We are very fortunate to have Dr. Conner join us. She brings a wealth of experience and expertise and will be a wonderful addition to our administrative team.

Dr. Conner has 19 years of experience in the state community college system, serving nine years in the Yosemite Community College District.

During the past 10 years, Dr. Conner has served a dual role at State Center Community College District as director of Grants and External Funding and as chair of the Central/Mother Lode Regional Consortium for Economic Development. While at SCCCD, she wrote and coordinated several grants that included Merced College.

Dr. Conner earned her masters' degree from Golden Gate University and her doctorate in education from CSU Fresno. She lives here in Merced with her husband and two daughters.

Please join me in giving Dr. Conner a warm welcome to our community.

Submitted by Vice President Mary Gilliland.

Kathy Grossi is Named MC's Classified Employee of the Year

Photo by Robin Shepard

Kathy Grossi, administrative assistant to the Vice President of Instruction, has been recognized as the college's outstanding classified employee.

A six-year Merced College employee, Administrative Assistant Kathy Grossi has been recognized by her peers as the Outstanding Classified Employee of the Year.

Born in Sonoma County and reared in Merced County, Grossi has worked for three different instructional vice presidents. She takes her profession seriously and is known for her pleasant and appealing personality.

Prior to working at the College, Grossi had spent 22 years working as an office manager for a local real estate developer. She eventually became a licensed real estate broker.

Grossi says that working at a public institution like Merced College is very different from working in private industry.

Reporting directly to the vice president of Instruction, Grossi says she's "blessed to be a part of the Merced College Community."

Grossi has been married to "my best friend" husband Mark Grossi for 25 years. The couple has four children and six grandchildren.

Her favorite pasttimes are spending time with her family, working in the garden, cooking healthy foods, and binge watching her favorite television shows.

Upgrades to Blackboard Will Bring New Features

By Tom Canepa
Educational Technology Analyst

Spring is a time of new growth, and our Blackboard learning management system is no exception. So far this Spring we've introduced two new upgrades, one that brings new online teaching and learning features, and one that brings new automation to the system. And the best is yet to come.

At the end of the semester we will be upgrading Blackboard to a much newer version, which will bring many new features for faculty and students.

Beyond that, we will be adding the Learning Core package to Blackboard, which will add three major new pieces to the system: Content Management, Community Engagement, and a campuswide license for Blackboard Mobile Learn.

All told, our Blackboard system will be offering a host of rich new features to students and faculty, which will be available for our Summer and Fall classes.

One of the first upgrades already made for this spring was the addition of a new Blackboard-integrated version of Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing and collaboration software.

This package of web conferencing and online collaboration and instructional tools are specifically designed for the educational environment, and provide advanced tools for both live online teaching and learning as well as online meeting collaboration. This software adds whole new options for teaching and learning online, as well as new options for use interactively in the classroom. So far professors who have used it have given it rave reviews.

Our second new upgrade was just completed with the installation of the Intelligent Learning Platform, or ILP, which automates the course creation and enrollment processes in Blackboard.

The ILP connects to both Blackboard and our Colleague database system, and will both create new course shells in Blackboard and add professors and students to those course shells, all via automated processes that can be scheduled to run round the clock, seven days per week, providing faster enrollment into Blackboard than was possible before. This will be especially beneficial to students during those first weeks of a semester or session, when many students are adding classes, and would like to get enrolled into Blackboard for a class as soon as possible after completing the add process.

Another new and interesting function that the ILP adds to Blackboard is the ability for faculty to import final grades directly from Blackboard into the Colleague database.

This option will have to be tested and approved by the administration before it could be used, so it won't be available immediately. But it is a new and potentially significant option that has now been added to the system and will be carefully looked at to see if it should become an available option in the future. So stay tuned.

And finally, some of the biggest upgrades will be coming during the break between the spring and summer semesters.

During that break we will upgrade Blackboard to one of the newest versions, the April 2014 release, which contains all of the newest features available in Blackboard.

We will also move up from our current Course Delivery package to Blackboard's new Learning Core package, which will add three major new pieces to our Blackboard system: Content Management, Community Engagement, and campuswide access to Blackboard Mobile Learn.

With this new Learning Core package, there will be a wealth of new tools available, including new tools for content sharing and collaboration between courses and between professors, and the ability to expand the Blackboard user interface, adding new tabs, pages, and features to greatly enhance the variety of resources that can be offered to students, faculty, and staff through their Blackboard user homepage.

Spring is a season for new growth, and this spring we will be seeing some major new growth in our Blackboard learning management system.

Lesher Staff Boosts Morale with 'Wacky Wednesdays'

By Sherry Elms
Associate Registrar

Last September, Admissions & Records staff discussed ways to boost morale and make the workplace more fun. From that discussion, Wacky Wednesdays was born.

Each month, A&R staff designate a Wacky Wednesday with a specific theme. Staff participate in the theme and a winner is determined through a voting ballot.

The first Wacky Wednesday was Crazy Tie day and only involved the Admissions & Records staff. It was a successful event and other departments saw what fun this was and asked to be included. The Student Services Engagement Team asked that we expand Wacky Wednesdays to the entire Student Services staff.

In the spirit of "The More the Merrier," we kicked off our first Student Services Division Wacky Wednesday with Crazy Hat day. Many staff participated and the camaraderie and fun-filled competition was a joy to witness. We have even been able to include Los Banos Campus Student Services staff in our event, having them send pictures of their contestant participants, posting those pictures with the pictures of the participants here on the Merced campus, and allowing them to submit their votes.

We have had Crazy Mis-Match Day, a Halloween Pirate theme Day, Ugly Christmas Sweater Day , King and Queen of Hearts, and for March, Down on the Farm.

What began as a simple idea to break up monotony and raise Admissions & Records team spirit, has become an anticipated monthly event for all Student Services staff. Through events like this one , we are eliminating "silo thinking" and building a much more inclusive team spirit. The morale that comes from events like this extends beyond individual departments to create community and unity of purpose. We are joining together as one team working to reach our common goal of providing the best service possible to our students.

Capital Planning Notebook

By Sheila Flores
Manager, Capital Planning & Events

Certified Pool Operator on Staff

We are very happy to announce that Fred Villegas, aquatics custodian specialist, recently became a Certified Pool Operator (CPO).

The CPO certification program includes pool and spa chemistry, testing, treatment, filtration, maintenance, automatic feeding equipment, and government requirements. Not only does Fred now hold the CPO credentials but he is also certified in First Aid and Scuba Diving.

We are proud of our staff and are pleased to acknowledge their accomplishments.

Wayfinding Project

After some delays with punch list items, we are happy to be finished with the Wayfinding Project. The next step will be landscaping the area in front of the main monument sign.

We hope to have some renderings available to share with the campus community over the next few months. The project will be designed using drought tolerant landscaping measures.

Changes to Facilities Use Fees and Processes

Under the direction of Vice President Schultz, we are preparing a proposal to be presented to the Board of Trustees that will realign our facilities use fees to make them more competitive with local entities and neighboring colleges.

We hope that these new fees will help streamline the process for both the lessee and staff for our District.

We are also in the process of implementing a "paperless" process for logging schedules and events. We hope that this new process will not only save paper but will also provide a more efficient use of resources. For more information about capital planning projects and events, call Sheila Flores at Ext. 6225.

Bookstore Makes Improvements

Photo by Robin Shepard

Student and Bookstore employee Sterling Sapien stands in front of one of the the new cash registers.

By Robyn Piro
Bookstore Manager

The Merced College Bookstore recently acquired nine new cash registers for the Merced and Los Banos campuses. The new registers will allow more flexibility for customers who may be enrolled in one of the campus financial aid programs.

Each new cash register will soon be installed with VeriFone pin-pads allowing customers the choice to securely use credit cards and debit cards and the ability to request cash back during their transaction.

Recently, we implemented a new accounting module to our current system for accurate financial accounting and related processes of the Bookstore and all related financial functions. We are able to prepare various financial reports for the College's internal and external auditors.

A new module called "Verba Compare" will be installed and functional by Fall 2015 that will instantly display textbook prices from other sources such as Amazon, Chegg, half.com, etc. This tool will win trust from our students and parents through transparency.

Classified Employees will Celebrate CSEA Week

Across the state, Classified School Employee Week will be celebrated May 17-23.

With theme "Engaging Learners, Inspiring Leaders," Merced College CSEA members will gather on May 21 with a barbeque lunch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Aggie Park on the Merced campus.

CSEA classified employees and invited guests are welcome to join the festivities.

CSEA represents more than 215,000 dedicated classified employees in California's schools and community colleges who perform a variety of services, including school security, food services, office and clerical staff, maintenance and operations, transportation, library and more.

3 Poems in Celebration of National Poetry Month

National Poetry Month, which takes place each April, is a celebration of poetry first introduced in 1996. Organized by the Academy of American Poets, National Poetry Month aims to increase awareness and appreciation of poetry in the United States.

In this edition of the *Campus Digest*, three Merced College poets offer work in honor of the month-long celebration.

"Most people read poetry listening for echoes because the echoes are familiar to them. They wade through it the way a boy wades through water, feeling with his toes for the bottom: The echoes are the bottom."

Wallace Stevens
American poet, 1879-1955

Zarathustra's Return

By Max Hallman

The dawn appears triumphantly on the horizon;
The warmth of the sun disseminates
The chilled morning air,
Infusing vitality in all it touches;
Even rotted corpses, decaying bones
Dance in their graves.

The return of Zarathustra,
Lover of life and earth,
See how the mountains rumble
With Dionysian laughter.

The seed you planted in twilight
Has finally sprouted,
The terrifying abyss into which you glanced
Has finally been traversed.

I can see your serpent and eagle
Playfully awaiting your return,
The human-all-too-human 6000 feet below,
Even the smell does not reach these heights.

The return of Zarathustra,
Lover of life and earth,
See how the mountains rumble
With Dionysian laughter.

Hallman is a professor of Philosophy at Merced College.

A Basque Wedding Sonnet

By Meg Withers

Where all the boys who were after you? he
asks his grandmother, Itziar,*
whose smile is a quirky anomaly
in the certitude of valley life.

Where all those boys, he asks again shoving
his clean square soon-married chin,
bending into
the thick silver hairline.

Dead, she says,
speaking from the elevated height of age.
The table nods in acquiescence
to the wagging finger.

It is empirical – rock truth.
That stone fingertip touching the air over us all.

**Itziar – Basque for Rock*

Withers is a professor of English at Merced College.

Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil

By Robin Shepard

Were their love not as deep as sand on this beach,
elemental like untold grains of quartz, how could each
know the other so well without love's required intimacies?
Her shyness, exacting in detail, his charismatic spirit
crashing the surf, both hauling bodies against gravity—
Anyone who builds on rock as you do can take her time—
let the world come to you. Lowell's planet is high in southern
skies, enfant terrible, Caliban or Caligula in white shorts.
Bishop living privately, away from the world, splashes
laughingly behind dark sunglasses. Behind them, unaware
of sharing a beach with great poets, one might mistake
their familiarity with the ease of lovers. But they rarely
meet, keeping mostly to cherished letters, and poems
that forge a fragile beauty out of the broken world.

Shepard is the director of Institutional Advancement at Merced College.