

NEWS RELEASE

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Class participates in staged crime scene as part of new learning curriculum at Palo Alto College

Criminal Justice students at Palo Alto College will put their classroom learning into action by participating in a staged homicide scene at 10 a.m. and noon on Friday, Nov. 9, in the College's Student Center Annex.

The exercise is part of the College's emphasis on Problem-Based Learning (PBL), which emphasizes hands-on learning, discussion, and working in groups to solve problems rather than lecturing.

Through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation process, each institution must create a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that will improve the campus and submit a progress report in five years. Palo Alto College's accreditation was reaffirmed in June 2012 and the QEP was launched this fall. Sixteen faculty members from disciplines as varied as chemistry, history, business and criminal justice have created the first cohort to put PBL into action.

Criminal Justice instructors Earl Ballou and Lynn Parker created a scenario that students will experience on Friday. Students will work as teams to ask questions and solve the homicide mystery – connecting classroom knowledge to real world situations.

Joseph Coppola, Director of Instructional and Professional Development, explained the QEP concept. "As College faculty and staff tried to identify the QEP that would improve the campus, they determined a need for more active learning in the classroom," he said. As an adjunct speech instructor, Coppola said he has found that students were challenged to be innovative. "They have responded by rising above my expectations to demonstrate proficiency in real world skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, and oral and written communication."

To learn more about the Palo Alto College Quality Enhancement Plan and Problem-Based Learning, visit alamo.edu/pac/qep.

Palo Alto College, one of the Alamo Colleges, is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award associate degrees. With over 9,000 students, the College also offers short-term certificates and non-credit continuing education classes. The campus is located on the Southside of San Antonio at 1400 W. Villaret Blvd. at I-410 and Texas Hwy. 16 and online at alamo.edu/pac.