

Chicano Students Hit La Raza Cancellation

By Gerald P. Merrell

With the new fall semester barely under way, Fresno State College President Dr. Norman Baxter faces his first controversy, a disagreement with students of Mexican descent over the college's decision to cancel La Raza Studies at least until the spring term.

Within hours of the cancellation announcement yesterday,

Weather

OFFICIAL FORECAST

Fair through tomorrow with little change in temperatures. High temperatures both days 96-102 degrees. Lows 60-65. Light winds.

At 1 p.m. the temperature was 93 degrees and the relative humidity was 34 per cent.

FRESNO FACTS

Today's forecast—101, 63.
Today's normals—94, 58.
Today's low—61.
Yesterday's high—99.

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La Mesa Directiva de Fresno, a student-community organization, met behind closed doors for nearly 90 minutes to discuss what was described as an "extremely explosive" situation.

Newsmen were barred from the meeting at the East Fresno Community Center last night and interviews were not permitted following the session. A press release was read, however, by the organization's co-chairman, Virginia Sanchez.

An estimated 30 persons, mostly students, attended the meeting. The group, formed last June, represents students and townspeople of Mexican descent at Reedley College, Fresno City College and FSC.

"President Baxter has demonstrated lack of faith, sensitivity and commitment to representing all segments of the community," the release said.

"Dr. Baxter's action has not only worsened the Chicano community relations but pushed

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them to an extremely explosive level."

There was no indication what specific actions the organization may take, but a serious mood permeated the meeting.

The organization said the decision to cancel La Raza came as a "bitter surprise."

The organization was formed three months ago to recommend staff for the La Raza Program after last year's staff was not rehired for the 1970-1971 academic year by former Acting President Dr. Karl Falk.

No Faculty

Dr. Chester F. Cole, acting dean of the School of Social Sciences, of which La Raza Studies is a part, said yesterday the program would be cancelled because the college was unable to hire faculty.

Cole said faculty positions allocated to the program are still available and the college hopes the program can be reinstated in the spring. The cancellation did not affect FSC's other Ethnic Studies programs.

La Mesa Directiva said a 10-man committee met with Baxter on Aug. 4 with the understanding the college would consider recommendations from the organization for staffing La Raza. It was also understood, the release said, that if some of the recommendations were unacceptable to the college, La Mesa would continue to recruit and recommend applicants for the vacant positions.

The organization said it interviewed about 20 persons and on Aug. 1 recommended Cecelio Saucedo for a full-time position and two weeks later recommended nine other persons to fill the La Raza Studies staff.

The recommendations were sent to the college "well within the Aug. 26 deadline" established by FSC, the release said.

Baxter this morning said whether the college has a La Raza studies program in the

spring "depends on the cooperation of the Mexican American community." He did not elaborate.

As to La Mesa Directiva's role in recommending faculty for the studies, he said it was a "self-appointed" group.

The college president added: "The college is interested in input in the Mexican American community and interested in recommendations of qualified people from any source. But it cannot and will not appoint people for the faculty only on the grounds they have been recommended by any group. They must be academically qualified and satisfactory to the campus community."

Baxter said he plans to meet tonight with another organization of Americans of Mexican descent called Concilio.

"The Mesa Directiva considered the 10 members recommended for La Raza Studies staff to be excellently qualified. Their credentials ranged from a Ph.D. with teaching experience to ABs with teaching experience.

'Bitter Surprise'

"Dr. Baxter and Dr. Cole's decision to discontinue La Raza Studies was a bitter surprise to members of the Mesa Directiva. This decision is completely unfounded because there are at this time highly qualified Chicanos ready to teach at Fresno State College," the two-page release said.

"Dr. Baxter and Dr. Cole have attempted to tell the community that there is division in the Mexican-American community concerning La Raza Studies. The truth is that the community and the Chicano students are strongly united."

It said the "intolerable atmosphere" can only be remedied by the "immediate implementation of La Raza Studies including hiring of applicants recommended by the Mesa Directiva."