



Dr. Benjamin Hidalgo

1975-2014

A Professor Who Put Others First

BY HAYLEY LORGE // MARCH 2, 2014 //

Dr. Benjamin Hidalgo brought a distinct style of teaching to Curry College when he joined the psychology department in the fall of 2012. Hidalgo created a casual environment within his classrooms, allowing conversations to flourish and encouraging debates to ensue. The goal, according to Hidalgo, was always to help students better understand themselves and those around them.

"I think the process of a student discovering the idea that „I can be an actor in creating change in the world“ is a pretty exciting one for me," he said, in a promotional article that featured him on the college"s website.

Hidalgo passed away in late February in his home in Quincy; he was 38. His body was discovered on Saturday, Feb. 22. The state medical examiner"s office is conducting an autopsy to identify the cause of death.

Dr. Eric Weiser, chairman of the psychology department, said Hidalgo was the perfect candidate for the position and a wonderful addition to the college"s faculty. Weiser described him as charming and optimistic.

"He was the epitome of the ideal coworker, colleague and friend," said Weiser. "He left a favorable impression on everyone he met."



Dr. Benjamin Hidalgo

1975-2014

Born in Los Angeles to Dr. Yvonne Captain-Hidalgo and Dr. Benjamin Hidalgo on May 20, 1975, Hidalgo moved around often throughout his life. Growing up, he spent time in California, Maryland and Venezuela. Later, he would venture to Illinois and Wisconsin. His cousin Cherrie Van Hook described Hidalgo as an inspiration to his friends and family.

“His life was rich and filled with joy and passion, and he affected many people in positive ways,” said Van Hook, who referred to herself as his “sister-cousin.”

Hidalgo’s personality also shined through in the classroom. Jordan Reed, a junior at Curry with a double major in psychology and communication, remembers that Hidalgo always had a smile on his face.

“Even if you were having a bad day, you went to his class and he completely turned your day around,” said Reed, who took two classes with Hidalgo.

Hidalgo earned his bachelor’s degree in psychology from Pomona College in Claremont, Calif., and his master’s degree in psychology from California State University, Los Angeles. In 2010, he earned a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, with a focus in community psychology, from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Prior to joining Curry, he held a post-doctoral appointment at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, where his research centered on homeless people living with HIV/AIDS.



Dr. Benjamin Hidalgo

1975-2014

Hidalgo's former professor and dissertation advisor at the University of Illinois, Dr. Mark Aber, described him as having very broad interests within the field. Aber said Hidalgo was extremely bright, hard working, and creative. Ultimately, his scholarship revolved around the humanization of homeless populations.

Said Van Hook, "His focus, as he studied and practiced clinical psychology, was to help people and communities discover ways to view themselves and the world in a holistic and spiritual way—the way that he had come to appreciate it."

Hidalgo had many other interests. "He was really just interested in anything that moved. He was very intellectually curious," said Aber.

Two of those interests were the arts and music. During his time at the University of Illinois, he would often go to Chicago to see performances and enjoy the city. According to his mother, Hidalgo was also a passionate "computer geek." The family often relied on him for their computer needs. He was an avid fan of science fiction, including shows and movies such as "Dr. Who," "Star Wars" and "Star Trek."

Ultimately, though, Hidalgo will be remembered for his big, bright smile and his work in educating and helping others.



Dr. Benjamin Hidalgo

1975-2014

Hidalgo is survived by his mother, Dr. Yvonne Captain-Hidalgo, his cousin Cherrie Van Hook, as well as a host of aunts, uncles and friends. He also leaves his father, Dr. Benjamin Hidalgo, brother, Carlos Hidalgo, sister, Maria Hidalgo, and other friends and family in Venezuela.

A memorial service will be held for Hidalgo on Saturday, March 8, at 11 a.m. at the Greater Bethel MBC in Richmond, Calif. His burial will also take place in California.