

Tony Cantu, Fresno City College president, dies

By Hannah
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Tony Cantu, Fresno City College president, in a 2012 file photo

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Fresno City College President Tony Cantu, a longtime professor and administrator who became the school's leader in 2012, died unexpectedly over the weekend.

State Center Community College officials notified staff in an email sent early Monday morning. Cantu called in sick every day last week, State Center Community College spokeswoman Lucy Ruiz said. No other information about his death has been released.

The news came as a shock to those on campus, said school spokeswoman Kathy Bonilla, a longtime friend of Cantu.

Cantu was known on campus as "a no-nonsense kind of guy" who always had students' best interests at heart, she said.

"He told you exactly what he thought but he was always very student-oriented in everything that he did. And everything he did was thinking how the student was going to benefit and succeed," she said.

Bonilla said Cantu assumed the president post after serving in a string of administrative roles at both Fresno City and Reedley College. He was the dean of instruction at Reedley for two years and later served as dean of humanities and vice president of instruction at Fresno City. Early in his career he worked as a professor and department chair at Fresno City.

Bonilla said he had worked his way up the administrative ranks when the school's former president, Cynthia Azari, resigned in 2011. Cantu was tapped as interim president and later applied for the job on a permanent basis.

"He was the kind where (he said), 'You need me, and I'll go,'" she said. "He didn't have the ambition to be a president but the need was there and he answered the call," Bonilla said.

School officials said Cheryl Sullivan, vice president for administrative services, will serve as the acting head administrator.

Cantu wasn't married and does not have any children.

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