



DIALOGUE



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¡UNA TRANSFORMACIÓN DEMOGRÁFICA ASOMBROSA! (AN AMAZING DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATION!)

*by Michael Kaufmann, Non-Credit Adjunct Faculty in the ESL Department
and Member of the AFA Executive Council and Negotiations Team*

You don't have to be a non-credit ESL instructor working in South Santa Rosa to see what's going on. The signs are everywhere: at the bank, the supermarket, in neighborhoods, and, of course, at SRJC. (It's not your imagination, you really are hearing more Spanish on campus.) What I'm talking about, of course, is the dramatic increase in the Latino population in Sonoma County.

The changes taking place in the non-credit ESL program here at SRJC are not an isolated occurrence; this new reality has been recognized at the State level as well. The new recognition of the importance of non-credit first began in 1997 when a separate budget item was created in order to provide non-credit students with matriculation services, and it is reflected most recently in SB 361 (the Scott Bill) which, in addition to increased equalization for credit classes, also provides for equalization funding for certain areas of non-credit, such as ESL and College Skills. Senator Jack

Scott created this important legislation so that districts could acknowledge that certain kinds of non-credit classes are very similar to credit classes, both pedagogically and monetarily. It is AFA's position that any new funds realized from this non-credit equalization should be applied to the Non-Credit Salary Schedule.

Going on for some ten years now, this latest wave of Latino (overwhelmingly Mexican) immigration is a phenomenon largely, if not entirely, driven by economics. Beginning in the mid 90's, a series of financial shocks—the devaluation of the peso, austerity measures imposed by global financial institutions, and most of all NAFTA (referred to affectionately by some non-credit ESL adjunct instructors as *our* job security act)—clobbered the Mexican economy, leading to a disappearance of jobs and making a decent life in their own country impossible for an increasing number of Mexicans.

But that's the bigger picture. Let's focus on what all of the above means for us in a more immediate context, as members of the SRJC community concerned with the future survival of the College.

THE PROGRAM—STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS:

There are various areas of non-credit, but what I am referring to here is "the 700 club," the courses taught by instructors who fall under AFA's jurisdiction. And although the focus is on non-credit ESL (the program I'm most familiar with), much of what is said here could be applied equally to other areas of non-credit, such as College Skills, which is also affected by the issues being discussed.

During the last several years (and perhaps going back even further), discernible changes have occurred in the non-credit ESL student population. The stereotypical image (demeaning and never very accurate) of an

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WHAT'S IT MEAN FOR SRJC?

*By John Daly, Regular Faculty in the Counseling Department,
and Member of the AFA Executive Council and Negotiations Team*

Buildings and property have taken over the focus of the SRJC Administration and Board of Trustees. The frenzy to build and buy land creates ongoing hardship on faculty and the ability to do our jobs.

Why is there a need to go to Phase 3 of the Petaluma campus, buy a facility in Healdsburg, and purchase 20 acres in west Sebastopol, when K-12 enrollment is declining in Sonoma and Marin County and our enrollment is beginning to flat line? Who will fill these buildings when enrollment declines? We can certainly be innovative in enrollment planning, but, at best, there will be little growth in the future. Where's the Educational Plan to justify these real estate acquisitions? What programs will be designated to these new campus facilities? Who is going to maintain and operate the new buildings?

These are all important questions, but no one seems to have any clear answers.

There was a time when the Board and administration leadership focused on attracting quality faculty and insuring that SRJC would be the destination point and not just a place to gain experience in order to leave it and go on to work at another campus with better pay and benefits. When Al Maggini presided on the Board, he wanted SRJC faculty to be

among the top paid in the State, thus his and the Board's support of Rank 10. They wanted faculty to have a paid comprehensive benefits package. They financially supported faculty in curriculum development and implementation. State-of-the-art equipment and support with readers and lab assistants was the standard. They knew SRJC was about the relationship between faculty and students. Conference and travel money was a normal part of our professional development

More recently, the administration and Board have forgotten about our institutional purpose of hiring the best qualified faculty to present the highest quality instructors in the State. Bricks and mortar are the focus. We are now at Rank 29 in the State in salary. Our beginning level salary is at Rank 40 in the State and our final level salary is at Rank 41 in the State in salary.

Why not use the bond money to immediately improve or replace current buildings, like Barnett Hall, Baker Hall, Shuhaw Hall, the Bech Temporaries and the Tauzer Gymnasium? Why not have a quality facility to house our ESL program — our largest growing student population? Some ESL instructors have to work out of the trunks of their cars and in undersized elementary school classrooms for children ages 5–10

years old. I wonder why the SRJC administration is not committed to the ESL program — the major source of enrollment growth in Sonoma County. A commitment to the ESL program is consistent with the mission of the community college and would create growth in our overall program.

When will faculty and students again become the priority of SRJC and the Board? When will the building frenzy be guided by real program planning in the use of these facilities? Faculty deserve to continue to receive salary and benefits comparable to the best community colleges in California. I know this article is filled with questions, but, when there are no answers, this signals a lack of administrative leadership and certainly a lack of shared governance. Yes, it's true that the charge of the Board and the administration is to plan for the future and to insure the District's financial solvency. Once again, it seems that there is no plan and, without a plan, financial decisions can be faulty. Faculty should be at the heart of the planning process whether the discussion is about programs, curriculum, or facilities. Please respect our expertise and our valuable input. Please include us in the planning process. Please understand that the buildings are not as important as the people inside them.

“adult school” student taking English classes at night “to get out of the house” being entertained by a teacher delivering “fun and games/adult baby-sitting” has been superseded by a more highly educated (also younger) group of students. The average level of formal education that non-credit students bring with them, as documented by our intake surveys, has steadily risen in the last few years. If several years ago students arriving from their native countries with even as little as a ninth grade education was a rarity, now that level is probably at least the average. Many students have gone even further in their studies, some possessing advanced degrees. We’ve had lawyers, accountants, dentists and child psychologists in our classes; it’s just that they aren’t proficient in English.

In short, the typical non-credit ESL learner is more and more someone who arrives to the classroom already knowing how to be a student. These days, students come to class with supplies in hand and ready to learn. And, as always, they arrive with “ganas” (strong motivation) and enthusiasm for getting the education that was either denied them or that, because of the job market, they were unable to take advantage of in their native country.

The changing non-credit ESL student population has also influenced the nature of the program, itself. The introduction a few years ago of the non-credit

ESL pathway—a sequence of non-credit ESL classes leading directly to ESL credit courses—has increased the academic rigor of the program and led to a dramatic rise in the number of students matriculating from non-credit to credit ESL classes. In fact, as non-credit ESL coordinator Marti Estrin pointed out last spring in a presentation in front of the Board of Trustees, fully 32% of credit ESL students began their studies in the non-credit program; the latest figures indicate that this percentage has risen to 36%.

Non-credit matriculation funds have allowed us to develop procedural innovations related to student intake, assessment and retention—all almost entirely pioneered and implemented by non-credit adjunct instructors and equally overworked and underpaid STNC’s (where’s *their* union?). This “in-house” system of intake has strengthened the program and constitutes one of the main factors responsible for the growing number of students matriculating into credit ESL classes from non-credit. The day in which the majority of credit ESL students start their study of English in a non-credit ESL classroom is not far off.

LEARNING CONDITIONS— WORKING CONDITIONS:

Almost ten years ago, the State recognized that certain areas of non-credit were in need of matriculation services similar to those offered for credit

classes, and they designated financial resources (the non-credit matriculation item in the State budget) for that purpose. In spite of that, it has been an uphill battle trying to secure these basic services—counseling, assessment, and orientations—for students at our off-site locations (90% of the non-credit ESL program). Up until a few years ago, the degree of isolation of off-campus ESL students from the main campus was so great that many students in the program had no idea that they were even part of SRJC—they simply believed they were students in an ESL class not connected to any larger institution.

The unfortunate conclusion drawn from this is that the College, with all its resources in the General Fund (not to mention a budget item specifically designated for the purpose of non-credit matriculation) simply did/does not deem these students worthy of receiving services vital for their transition to credit classes. To the extent that things have improved over the last few years in the area of matriculation services for non-credit ESL students, it is due largely to the efforts of the program coordinator and committed adjunct instructors advocating for our students.

Inadequate matriculation services is only one of many inequalities suffered by non-credit students who study at

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off-campus sites; add to the list decrepit buildings housing overcrowded classrooms and lack of sufficient materials and resources allocated for various other support services. And with the construction frenzy gripping SRJC, where's the new building in South Santa Rosa to accommodate the Latino population that in the future will constitute the largest demographic at SRJC?

Maybe it's good in a way that some of these students, because of their lack of proficiency in English, or recent arrival in this country, aren't completely aware of what they're entitled to as students here. They could get the feeling they aren't wanted.

While non-credit instructors have been hard at work trying to elevate non-credit ESL students to full-fledged citizenship here at the JC, we, the instructors, continue to wallow in our own version of third-class citizenship among the various faculty groups—somewhere below credit adjuncts who, of course, are below full-time faculty in pay and working conditions.

Non-credit adjunct inequalities range from minor slights (only very recently were we deemed “professional” enough to be compensated for participating in PDA days) to major issues such as the lack of full-time instructors that forces adjuncts to take on tasks (sometimes uncompensated) that, in addition to a coordinator, really require the services of at least one full-timer with a generous amount

of re-assigned time.

But by far the most glaring disparity in the treatment of non-credit adjuncts reveals itself in the area of salary. Non-credit adjuncts are paid on average only 2/3 of the hourly rate compared to our counterparts who teach credit lecture hours. In some cases, this amounts to nearly \$30/hr. (i.e., \$92.25 vs. \$63.02 at C5). Trying to do the right thing, the overwhelmed adjuncts in the non-credit ESL department are faced by stark choices on a daily basis: shortchange our students' needs, or work without being fully compensated for our efforts.

It would be inaccurate to say that nothing has changed for the better vis-à-vis services provided to the non-credit ESL population. Over the last few years positive changes have occurred. More and more students in the program are getting the matriculation services they should have been getting all along. But it's still not enough and the process isn't happening fast enough to accommodate the need. The other core issue, the pay disparity between credit lecture and non-credit, has yet to be addressed.

DO WE GET IT?

I want to conclude where we started: with what for SRJC is the big picture:

The passage of SB 361 has led to enhancement of credit and non-credit FTES. With the passage of the Community College Initiative, our funding will become more

stable. With funding enhanced and stabilized, the main danger, something that could potentially affect every one of us at the College, is an enrollment crisis. Growth is critical, and if we attain it, it will in great measure come from the Latino demographic. And increasingly, much of that potential growth begins in non-credit—and starts by giving the students the preparation to matriculate to credit classes at the college.

Only those still in deep denial about the population shift, longing for the days of the “traditional student” (whoever that was) will be incapable of making the connection. Mission Statement aside, it's no exaggeration to say that “losing” the Latino demographic may very well put the future survival of SRJC in doubt.

So when are you going to bring us (the non-credit students and their instructors) into the fold? Because we're ready; in fact, we've been ready for awhile.

It's not necessary to conduct a survey of non-credit students (although we've done it) to know that many of them want to be here, as first class citizens/students taking credit courses. And it's equally unnecessary to survey the non-credit instructors to find out whether we're ready to be elevated out of third-class status and take our rightful place alongside the other adjuncts—as fully-fledged *second-class citizens* here at SRJC.