

ACCJC not showing openness to input in development of new accreditation standards

No response from ACCJC at January meeting after librarians raise problems with Commission's proposal to eliminate the current Substandard II.C.2

by Eric Brenner, Advocate Editor

As the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) is in the process of drafting new accreditation Standards to replace the 2002 Standards, it has been urged from all corners—from Academic Senates at colleges around the state as well as the statewide Academic Senate to the California Federation of Teachers to dozens of faculty members and administrators who have dealt with the Commission's accrediting practices—to be more collegial, open and transparent in its processes. In December, as it was facing a "Renewal of Recognition" review by the Department of Education and the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), ACCJC leaders pledged greater openness and consideration of input from the community college community.

ACCJC discourages public participation

At the January 10th ACCJC meeting in Sacramento, however, when a revised set of accreditation Standards was presented for First Reading, the Commission did not encourage the presence of the public and did not provide materials in advance so that the public could even follow what the Commission was doing. The regular ACCJC practice of limiting attendance at its "public" meetings to 20 people in rooms that will hold many more people is one indication of the appearance of a desire to exclude the public. Leaving only 15 minutes for public comment is another example of the drive by the ACCJC to discourage attendance and participation.

Karen Saginor, a CCSF Librarian and Academic Senate leader, reported on the meeting to Academic Senate leaders across California. She noted that: "The 'public' portion was comprised of reports, policy changes and a first 'reading' of greatly revised accreditation Standards. Most significant of the policy changes were a removal of the requirement that changes to ACCJC Bylaws be consid-

ered in public session, and extensive changes to the Policy on Complaints Against the ACCJC, narrowing the scope of complaints to which ACCJC must respond, requiring more information and substantial evidence from the complainant; specifying the form that the complaint must take (including an original signature) and disallowing the right to appeal the disposition of a complaint."

New standards weaken information competency

The Commission's newly presented Standards propose the merging of Standard II.C, concerning libraries, into Standard II.B. Student Services. The Council of Chief Librarians (CCL), a group that represents librarians in the California Community Colleges, presented an alternative proposal to the Commission to strengthen the coordination of student learning among librarians, learning support staff, and discipline faculty. In a resolution passed by the state Academic Senate, the librarians' group stated that:

- "The current Substandard II.C.2 entitled 'Library and Learning Support Services' contains elements that have provided for constructive assessment of libraries and systematically improved them;
- The ACCJC draft Standards weaken, to the detriment of student learning, the criteria used in the 2002 Standards in regard to information competency and access to library materials and services regardless of location or means of delivery; and
- The ACCJC draft Standards eliminate all reference to institutions 'providing personnel responsible for student learning programs' and eliminate the current Substandard II.C.2 entitled 'Library and Learning Support Services' and place the standards now in that section under Standard IIB (Student Services)."

They called for the retention of the "Library and Learning Support Services" as a separate Substandard in

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Lack of openness as ACCJC creates new standards

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the proposed new ACCJC Standards. At the beginning of the public meeting, Tim Karas, President of the CCL, spoke in public comment about the process used by his organization to provide consensus from the field on standards for libraries. The ACCJC has not used nor responded to any of their input.

Karen Saginor spoke during public comment about the contrast between the December statements made by ACCJC claiming wide vetting of the new standards and their actual practice, including the withholding of half the standards from the ASCCC and the lack of responsiveness to input. Saginor reported that:

"Vice President Krista Johns and others responded to say that the phase for feedback to the standards was just beginning at that meeting—even the Commission members had just received the new standards for first reading two days before—and there would be a wide process for feedback this Spring. These statements were contradicted a few hours later when the commission started its discussion of the standards and John Nixon, speaking for the standards committee, talked about how much input and feedback they had already had from 'experts in the field' including the

ASCCC. In the discussion, one of the commissioners remarked 'I just don't want us to leave the impression with the public that this is the first time the Commission is looking at these standards. It is not.' I cannot reconcile these various statements with each other or with the experiences many of us have had in not being able to access the text of the draft standards and the agency's lack of responsiveness to feedback during a time when the agency announces it is seeking input. It is also unclear how the January 10th afternoon meeting qualified as a public presentation of the standards as a first "reading," since these standards were not provided to members of the public who attended the meeting, nor were they read out loud. There was some discussion of sections of it by members of the commission (mostly impossible for the public to follow with no text) but no changes were made before it was unanimously approved. Vice President Krista Johns estimated that the text as approved may be provided to college CEOs and ALOs by the end of January."

The Second and final Reading of the new Standards will be approved at the June 2014 meeting of the Commission.

The Advocate

The Advocate provides a forum for faculty to express their views, opinions and analyses on topics and issues related to faculty rights and working conditions, as well as education theory and practice, and the impact of contemporary political and social issues on higher education.

Some entries are written and submitted individually, while others are collaborative efforts. All faculty are encouraged to contribute.

The Advocate's editorial staff, along with the entire AFT 1493 Executive Committee, works to ensure that statements of fact are accurate. We recognize, respect, and support the right of faculty to freely and openly share their views without the threat of censorship.

AFT 1493 discourages full-timers from taking on excessive overload

The following resolution was passed at the April 13, 2011 AFT 1493 Executive Committee meeting:

Whereas economic instability and budget cuts are affecting the employment status and livelihoods of part-time faculty in the SMCCCD,

Be it resolved, that the AFT 1493 Executive Committee recommend that full-time faculty members **seriously consider refraining from taking on excessive overload in situations where part-time faculty will be displaced from courses to which they would have otherwise been assigned.**

Project Change at CSM: First program in county to bridge gap from incarceration to higher education

By Katie Bliss, CSM English Professor



Katie Bliss

Sitting atop Tower Road off 92 in San Mateo is a newly renovated large and modern building, which operates as the county's juvenile detention facility, and has for over 50 years; just five miles down the street off of 92 atop Hillsdale Boulevard is the College of San Mateo, which has served the community to provide open access to higher education and has just recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. These two institutions have always been so close in proximity, but so seemingly separate in purpose and communication; however, over the last several years, attitudes about the best ways to help at-risk youth create change in their lives in a positive way has evolved from punishment to rehabilitation. For the first time in San Mateo County, there is an all inclusive bridge program that links these two facilities together to help young people make the transition from incarceration to higher education, and it is called Project Change.

For many years, students have been able to acquire high school credit or receive their GEDs while incarcerated; however, there hasn't been anything formally in place for students to begin their work on a college degree, or a specific support network for them when they start attending college. In this difficult economic climate where a postsecondary degree or credential is imperative for job opportunities, it is invaluable that all youth have access to quality higher education. Furthermore, when youth are involved with the criminal justice system, it can heighten the magnitude of disconnect from education, which results in devastating effects on the attainment of a career, economic success, emotional well-being, and a positive sense of self. There has been a strong need for programs that provide opportunities for young people when they are released back into the community. Career training and high school level education has been the primary focus, and now the next building block for opportunity and change is higher education.

The College of San Mateo's Project Change is an all-inclusive, collaborative bridge program that provides the resources of academic and emotional support to help students make the successful transition from juvenile hall to community college. The program was approved by the Basic Skills Initiative in November 2013 and is currently in the development period. The pilot is set to begin this summer in

June 2014. Project Change collaborates with Gateway Community School, the nonprofit Each One Reach One, the juvenile hall Youth Services Center, with services campus wide at the College of San Mateo, and with faculty and staff from across the disciplines to provide an inclusive and streamlined transitional program.

Designed to provide extensive student support

The design of the program includes:

- **Providing Academic and Peer Mentors:** students are matched with both peer and faculty mentors from across the disciplines for the full academic year. This is a relationship-based approach grounded in youth development to provide young people with a stable adult presence and a stable model of positive peers.
- **Developing Academic Identity:** students begin the program over the summer in a two-week class that focuses on English and math (Pathway to Success). The students from Project Change are intermingled with other students who are attending CSM from a variety of backgrounds. The students take the classes together as a cohort and receive more personalized academic attention, the opportunity for pre-registration, placement tests, and academic counseling for the upcoming semester. This increases their access to resources, social networks, assets, and opportunities.
- **Support for Academic and College Readiness:** workshops both inside juvenile hall and on the CSM campus are provided to students to help facilitate closing the gaps in academic knowledge and promote development of skills needed for college success, such as time management and study skills. These workshops help foster an interest and awareness of the possibility of college as an option for their future.
- **Student Support Services:** students are provided services for which they are eligible, which can include EOPS, CARE, services from the disability center, psychological counseling, the multi-cultural center, and career and academic counseling.
- **College Wide Collaboration and Culture:** multiple programs including Student Support Services, the Learning Center, Psychological Services, Counseling, and faculty and staff from across the disciplines are working together to communicate and provide a more streamlined approach to assisting the incoming students in Project Change with their success as college students.
- **Alliance and Collaboration with Youth Services Center** (formally Hillcrest Juvenile Hall) and Gateway Community School: Staff, probation, attorneys, judges, teachers, and administrators are working in collaboration to foster a successful and supportive transition from the juvenile hall to community college.

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Socialist Kshama Sawant's Win Signals New Openings for Political Change

Community College Teacher elected to Seattle City Council

By Mark T. Harris,
political commentator reporting from Seattle for The Advocate

The city of Seattle has long benefited from the fresh ocean breezes that flow in from Puget Sound. Now, a different kind of breeze is sweeping through the state of Washington's largest city. It's the air of political change represented in economist Kshama Sawant's new position as the first elected socialist to the Seattle City Council.

Sawant, a member of AFT Local 1789, is a part-time economics instructor at Seattle Central Community College. In a dramatic upset, the independent candidate garnered some 93,000 votes last November to defeat long-time Democratic councilman Richard Conlin.

What's remarkable about Sawant's victory is that her campaign did not downplay her openly socialist politics. Just the opposite. As a socialist, she championed raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour and implementing a new "Millionaire's Tax" on the very wealthy to expand funding for public services, including mass transit and education. In media interviews and elsewhere, she also made clear her support for unionizing low-paid service workers, rent control, support for women's and minority rights, and other progressive causes.



Kshama Sawant

A Grassroots Campaign

Significantly, the newly elected city council member, who began to make a name for herself locally during the Occupy Wall Street protests in 2011, had the backing of a majority of unions in the M.L. King County Labor Council. This included her own AFT local, as well as CWA Local 37083, AFSCME Local 1488, IBEW Local 46, and the American Postal Workers Union-Greater Seattle Local. (A two-thirds "super-majority" vote would have been required to earn the Labor Council's official endorsement.)

It's a sign of a changing political climate that an avowed socialist, a member of the Socialist Alternative organization, could win election to citywide office in a major American city. In fact, Sawant is the first socialist elected to city office in Seattle since Anna Louise Strong, who later earned fame as a writer, won election to the school board in 1916.

Not surprisingly, her election has generated quite the media buzz. Despite the local nature of the election, news re-

ports of her election victory went worldwide, including coverage in her native India. Even at the Jan. 6, 2014 swearing-in ceremony for the new city government, which included inauguration of the city's first gay mayor, Ed Murray, much of the news coverage centered on Sawant. The swearing-in included a record crowd for such an event, most of them Sawant supporters with more than 1,000 in attendance.

Sawant is cut from a different political cloth in other ways, too. With a salary of \$120,000 a year, Seattle City Council members are among the highest paid elected city officials in the country. Sawant has pledged not to take more than the average Seattle income, donating the rest of her salary to social justice campaigns.

But beyond any demonstrative measures, Sawant's election appears poised to give a concrete boost to progressive activism in Seattle. Buoyed by a grassroots, volunteer base of hundreds of supporters, Sawant is pledged to build a new grassroots Fight for 15 campaign to raise the minimum wage in Seattle. It's a proposal that's already won voter approval in nearby SeaTac, where Seattle's international airport is located.

The new living wage campaign got underway at a packed January 12 organizing rally, where 300 plus supporters of the Fight for 15 initiative met at the Seattle Labor Temple. There plans were unfurled to educate and train a small army of activists to begin organizing what is described as Neighborhood and Campus Action Groups to win support for the proposal throughout Seattle. The goal is to hold a week of political events, marches, and rallies from March 7 to 15th, with a large mass demonstration planned for May 1.

Of course, there's strong business opposition to this living wage proposal, and a fight ahead, but the fact that the new mayor has come out in favor of the raise (as well as three other council members) testifies to which way the winds of grassroots change are currently blowing in Seattle.

It's a refreshing turn of events to see a dedicated, pro-union activist elected to an important city position. In no small part Sawant's election is a reaction to the dismal reality of long declining real wages and benefits for many working Americans, with cutbacks in public services and education resources having devolved into a kind of default setting for bipartisan politics in the United States today.

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Quality Public Education: Local AFT 1493 Launches New Campaign

By Katharine Harer, Co-Vice President & AFT 1493 QPEC Organizer

Who isn't sick and tired of seeing community colleges get kicked around -- budgets for programs gutted while money for thicker and thicker layers of administration miraculously appears; students struggling to find their way while new policies restrict access and encourage fast-track, accelerated learning; faculty forced to take on more and more clerical and administrative tasks squeezing time for instruction, preparation and one-to-one assistance to students. Not to mention the spectre of the ACCJC threatening to sanction and pull accreditation from our colleges. The California Federation of Teachers, our statewide union, has started a new drive to rebuild public education, and our Local is jumping on board



The First Stage

This spring our goal is to spend more time with members, welcoming new hires and meeting individually and in small focus groups with faculty on each campus. We want to know what's going on: SLO issues? Impossible workload? Over-committee-d? We envision these individual meetings and focus groups as a more personal way to share information and as an opportunity to connect with our members.

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As Sawant herself noted in her January 6 inauguration speech, "This city has made glittering fortunes for the super wealthy and for the major corporations that dominate Seattle's landscape. At the same time, the lives of working people, the unemployed and the poor grow more difficult by the day. The cost of housing skyrockets, and education and healthcare become inaccessible."

Where is the Economic Recovery?

As a teacher, Sawant wants to increase corporate taxes to ensure schools and colleges get all the money and resources they need. With corporate profits at record levels, this should be an obvious solution. Instead, most politicians talk as if austerity and cutbacks and "no new taxes" (by which is usually meant taxes on the super wealthy) are our only viable choices. Why? The economic "recovery" has benefited the very rich, but the rest of us—not so much. Sawant is reminding us that the country is not poor; it's just that wealth is hoarded in fewer hands than ever before.

The Campaign

In May we will submit a grant proposal to the CFT for a full-on campaign to take off in the academic year 2014-15. Here are some of the ideas we've been considering:

- Working with local community groups on educational issues
- Setting up a lobbying committee to meet with local legislators
- Building a political action network -- a coalition of faculty, students, staff, K-12 schools and community groups -- to strengthen our political clout
- Creating an AFT 1493 student chapter to get students more involved in issues and actions that affect them
- Organizing forums and town hall

meetings in the community with our student and community partners

To build our ability to do these amazing things we've listed above, we need to enlist active members and potential leaders to our Local. The more we are engaged with our faculty, our student body, and our local community, the more power we have to rebuild public education on our terms. As Joe Hill put it: *Don't mourn! Organize!*

Will Sawant's election prove to be the first sign of new opportunities for independent activist politics in other cities? That remains to be seen. For now, it is certainly a promising development. As Kraig Schwartz, membership chairman of AFT Local 1789, remarks in a recent *Seattle Times* op-ed, "Sawant is a smart, articulate, fresh voice for the 99 percent. Her campaign, and the activism it has brought to the fore, has already enlarged our political space, offering new ideas with hopes of bringing a more balanced power equation to our city and country."

Indeed. The ground-level activism that swept Kshama Sawant into office reflects the desire by many to challenge the austerity mind-set that has come to narrowly define mainstream politics. Her campaign both as a candidate and now as an elected official instead puts its hopes in the twin forces of grassroots activism and independent political leadership to reshape the American political landscape. Most important, the political message of her election victory is that it is possible for ordinary working Americans to get organized and make this country a better, more prosperous place to live.

CCSF ACCREDITATION

What now for City College of San Francisco after the court injunction?

By Lalo Gonzalez and Micheal Madden,
CCSF students and activists in the Save CCSF Coalition

After many months of grassroots mobilization to save City College of San Francisco (CCSF), a Superior Court judge has granted a partial injunction that bars the ACCJC (Accreditation Commission for Community and Junior Colleges) from finalizing any plans to terminate the school's accreditation. This is the first major victory in the fight to save CCSF from budget slashes and shut-down. It is a reflection of the changing tide of debate around the school and the slow turning of the tables against the ACCJC thanks to the independent organization and mobilization of students, community members, teachers and their unions. Judge Karnow, who presided over recent hearings on the lawsuits against the ACCJC and their activity concerning the evaluation of City College, stated in his ruling that, "There is no question . . . of the harm that will be suffered if the Commission follows through and terminates accreditation as of July 2014. Those consequences would be catastrophic. Without accreditation the college would certainly close and about 80,000 students would either lose their educational opportunities or hope to transfer elsewhere; and for many of them, the transfer option is not realistic. The impact on the teachers, faculty, and the City would be incalculable."

The injunction halts all preparations for school closure in their tracks until a ruling on the activities of the ACCJC's evaluation process is determined in June 2014. The judge's motion affects only the ACCJC's evaluation of CCSF, while a demand made by San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera sanctioning all decisions made by the ACCJC across the state was not granted. The judge also rejected the ACCJC's attempt to dismiss the suits. The American Federation of Teachers lawsuit is now combining its lawsuit with Herrera's, putting its weight behind the successful injunction.

The significance of the injunction is three-fold: (1) it prevents the ACCJC from finalizing any decisions regarding CCSF, (2) it further delegitimizes the Special Trustee Bob Agrella and the elimination of democratic decision-making at CCSF, and (3) it provides the AFT 2121 teachers union and student organizers a semester to focus on strengthening rank and file mobilization.

The Effect on CCSF

The ACCJC is a private body that oversees 112 community colleges in the state of California, as well as schools in Hawaii and other Pacific islands. Since the commission's placing of CCSF on "show cause" a year and a half ago, the rulings of the ACCJC have been used as a justification by the newly imposed CCSF administration to implement destructive measures to

the school's nine campuses, attacking resources for students of color, the elderly and the disabled, and enforcing wage and healthcare cuts to the teachers and staff unions on campus.

The imposed accreditation crisis has been the cover for the systematic dismantling of the school under the pretext of "dysfunctionality and wasteful spending." This excuse was also used to implement attacks on the democratic organization and bargaining ability of the faculty's Council of Department Chairs, and eventually allowed for the liquidation of the school's city-elected Board of Trustees and its replacement by a one-man "special trustee": Bob Agrella.

However, this recent injunction has directly undermined the pretext of the ACCJC's unquestionable judgment, contributing to the public perception of this commission as an irresponsible body that has "no room" for including those most affected by their policies -- teachers, staff and students. The truth about the broader agenda to downsize CCSF, to lay off faculty and staff, to shut out tens of thousands of students from working class communities is becoming more visible.

What is the reaction from the state and those figures who are calling the shots at CCSF?

Surely those who have professed time and again their deep and caring commitment to the school's well-being would be over-joyed at the result of the injunction, but that is not the case. "The ruling doesn't affect me at all," said Special Trustee Robert Agrella, "I was brought in to meet the accreditation standards, and that is exactly what we're doing." Similarly, Brice Harris, chancellor of California's community college system, expressed in a letter addressed to Herrera his opposition to court involvement to save CCSF.

Both Harris and Agrella, the former directly appointing the latter to handle the dirty work of dismantling CCSF, are blaming CCSF, not the ACCJC, an organization that is facing three different lawsuits, received warning from the Department of Education to clean up its own act, and has been found to have shredded all of their important documents concerning the evaluation of City College.

Payment Policy

Despite the latest victory, the administration continues to follow the ACCJC's impositions, passing egregious policies aimed at limiting accessibility for the most marginalized students. Beginning Spring 2014, the administration will be enforcing a Payment Policy requiring students who do not qualify for financial aid to enroll in a corporate-sponsored payment plan with a debt collection agency known as Nelnet Business Solutions. Students will need to pay 20 percent of

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Assembly to Tackle CalSTRS Pension Liability

On January 29 state Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez (D-Los Angeles) and Assemblymember Rob Bonta (D-Oakland), Chair of the Assembly Public Employees, Retirement and Social Security Committee, announced they would push to implement a long-term solution to the funding shortfall in the California State Teachers' Retirement System this year.

"The Assembly will pursue a solution to the STRS shortfall this legislative session," said Speaker Pérez. "Further delay only means further cost and further exposure for the state's general fund. We believe there must be shared responsibility for a funding solution between school districts, the state and teachers. Our end goal is a State Teachers Retirement system that is 100% fully funded."

Assemblymember Bonta noted his committee would begin holding hearings in February. "I am eager to begin

this process and confident that an equitable and permanent solution can and will be found to the CalSTRS funding problem. Ensuring the long term financial security of California's hardworking and dedicated teachers is a goal we are hopeful we can achieve this year," Assemblymember Bonta said.

State Treasurer Bill Lockyer welcomed action by the Assembly to resolve the funding shortfall. "I welcome a serious effort to address financial problems that threaten STRS' long-term survival," said Lockyer. "It's a tough assignment. Prompt action is imperative, because the problem grows costlier as time passes. Hopefully, the Legislature and Governor can produce a solution this year that strengthens STRS' financial structure and protects our teachers' retirement security."

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their total tuition fees just to register, then pay the remaining balance in a rigid installment plan by the end of the semester. Undocumented students will be particularly affected by the new policy and have already begun organizing against it.

Students who default on their payments are susceptible to late fees and being barred from enrolling in the following semester. Placing the blame on working class students is illogical given the state's role in divesting in public education. In fact, within the last four years, state policies have resulted in a \$53 million funding drop for City College. The new payment policy is an attempt to shift the financial responsibility away from the state and onto the individual. And, the accreditation process is the smokescreen used to impose these Draconian policies.

Build an Independent Movement

Undoubtedly, the recent ruling against the ACCJC, despite some shortcomings, is a major victory. But there are serious limitations to relying on the courts. If the lawsuit succeeds, which it may if pressure from below is continued and deepened, it will not result in the removal of the Special Trustee and reinstatement of the democratically elected Board of Trustees. Nor would it roll back the austerity measures and crippling layoffs to professors and staff. Therefore, it is imperative that the union utilize its resources to prepare itself for mass mobilization, in conjunction with the students, to raise their demands for a reversal of the destructive policies of recent months and years.

Given the groundswell of support for CCSF, Democratic House Minority leader Nancy Pelosi was forced to speak in favor of the ruling, breaking her silence for the last year and a half while the school was suffering under direct attack. San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee, who was taking direct pres-

sure from the movement to defend the school last semester, has still taken no public stance against the ruling.

The student-teacher movement has led the charge and has forced politicians to react to the issues affecting the school. While holding office in the city and a supermajority in the state legislature, the Democrats have refused to lift a finger against some of the most serious attacks on public education. Only when the movement created a public relations problem for these politicians were they forced to make declarations of support. The pressure placed on City Hall by the Save CCSF movement has played a critical role in determining the outcome of Herrera's and AFT's cases, and was influential in the filing of the three lawsuits.

The student movement, motivated by a string of victories, and guided with a militant fightback perspective, could not only roll back the severe cuts and policies stemming from the accreditation crisis, but can set the precedent for a statewide mobilization in defense of public education. Such a perspective will only be successful by establishing a real mass student organization.

As mentioned before, the removal of the sanction against CCSF does not result in the rolling back of the austerity measures imposed by Bob Agrella and the administration. Therefore, it's imperative that we mobilize around concrete issues that have had an adverse affect on specific sectors of the student population. Students must organize and build up a base, department by department. The fight to abolish the new payment policy and ensure open accessibility is crucial. This is a struggle not only to keep CCSF open, but to ensure that it remains accessible and affordable for the diverse working-class communities of the Bay Area.

The struggle at City College is a microcosm of a much larger attack on public education. Therefore, these mobilization efforts are significant in the sense that they may provide a glimpse of future struggles across the state.

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Program developed from personal experience

The challenges a student can face when trying to make the transition from incarceration to higher education can be daunting. Navigating the college experience can be an overwhelming task and this program aims to help make this move more accessible. Having myself been a teenager who was incarcerated in San Mateo County's juvenile hall for the majority of my junior year and senior year of high school, and prior to that attending continuation school, I understand the obstacles that one can face when trying to enroll in college for the first time. It has been a goal for many years to set up a program that could address these difficulties and make the transition to college more accessible for incarcerated youth.

While incarcerated, I was able to work on my many missing high school credits, and I was able to finish my high school degree while in the juvenile hall. When I was released, I was at a crossroads and unsure of what direction my life was to take. I had what equated to an 8th grade formal education at the time, having not been in traditional school for the last four years. Certainly no one expected me to go to college, so I got a part-time job at 18 at a bookstore; one thing in my favor was my love of reading. One afternoon, someone came by the bookstore and dropped off a stack of College of San Mateo catalogs. I decided to browse through them, and I noticed that there was a certificate program in counseling people with drug and alcohol addiction. It piqued my interest and I decided to enroll for the spring.

I was truly frightened when I got off the bus and stepped foot on campus that first day. I had no academic skills, and no concept of myself as a student. However, the professors who I had in the Alcohol and Other Drug Certificate Program, in my psychology, math, philosophy, and English classes, all were such dedicated and enthusiastic teachers; their energy inspired in me a love of learning, and they took the time to help me during their office hours when I was struggling with the material, how to figure out time management, or how to more strategically study instead of highlighting everything in my textbooks. A few of them truly became mentors to me during the three years I was at CSM before transferring. Navigating the system of higher education was challenging, and figuring out all of my financial aid was a constant battle, but people in Student Support Services always provided me with guidance. I learned slowly how to become a successful student. This was a huge leap, from having left high school my sophomore year with a 0.2 GPA to getting my first A's in a decade in my psychology and English classes. I was also meeting other students who were focused on school and who could show me how to be a student, and we started studying together. Eventually, I had created a network of both faculty and peer academic support. I was beginning to see that this was an actual possibility for me; I could become a college student.

CORRECTION

Performance Evaluation Task Force to continue work through Spring semester

In the December 2013 *Advocate* article "Performance Evaluation Task Force: Next Steps", it was stated: "...AFT will be holding a faculty ratification vote on the new evaluation documents and procedures. The vote will take place during the Spring 2014 semester." The article also stated: "If the new documents and procedures are not completed before the end of this semester, then a subcommittee of AFT 1493 and the District Academic Senate will take up the work." Both of these statements were in error.

In fact, the Task Force has now decided that it will bring its work to completion during the Spring, 2014 semester. At that point, the AFT and the District Academic Senate will review the final drafts of all of the documents that the Task Force has created. After this review is completed, the AFT will prepare for the faculty vote by following the procedures similar to those used for contract negotiations: information and a rationale will be provided to faculty about the revisions to the evaluation documents and procedures, and faculty input will be requested before holding the ratification vote.

Thus, it will not be possible to hold the faculty ratification vote during the Spring semester. Rather, the ratification vote will be held at the beginning of the Fall, 2014 semester. AFT will organize meetings to discuss the work of the Task Force at the start of the Fall, 2014 semester, before the ratification vote is held.

I transferred in my third year and went on to get a bachelor's and a master's degree (the first in my family to do so), and returned to teach at the College of San Mateo where I've had the great privilege to work alongside many of the professors who inspired me to pursue my education.

The design of Project Change centers around many of those factors that contributed to my transition from incarceration to higher education: faculty and peer mentors, Student Support Services, encouraging student leadership, and fostering a sense of academic identity. There is a need for students to have support when they make this change, and Project Change provides this in a structured and supported package.

The enthusiasm that has been displayed by everyone from the college faculty, staff, students, administrators, and Basic Skills committee at the College of San Mateo, to Gateway Community School and Youth Services Center has been tremendous. There is an abundance of energy and care for helping these young people be successful, make a positive change, and have opportunities for the future.

For further information, updates, and ways that you can get involved in Project Change, please check out our website (collegeofsanmateo.edu/projectchange/) and "like" us on Facebook to keep informed.