

JESSE from SAN FRANCISCO: REAL ESTATE

I took my son, Jesse, out of his horrible high school, put him in Independent Study and a CCSF program called EXCEL or something. He took a few classes, then took Real Estate classes, and got his license at age 18. He went to SFSU and took a few classes but didn't get a degree. But with that Real Estate license from CCSF, he bought a condo at age 22, and was already paying more in taxes than I was earning as salary. Then he started a construction management company which is thriving, and he recently started pig farming, too. (as told by his mother, ESL colleague Janet Fowler, January 2012)

JORGE from MEXICO: FROM ZERO ENGLISH TO AN A.A. DEGREE

Jorge had no English until he started non-credit ESL Level 1 at CCSF. Now he's majoring in Psychology and plans to transfer to a four-year college after getting his A.A. degree. Jorge says, "Without non-credit ESL I never could have gotten this far."

MARGARET from TAIWAN: PEANUT MILK

All Margaret needed to become a successful entrepreneur was the English she got in her non-credit ESL classes. Then she bought a coffee shop that was failing, and turned it around completely. When she and her husband invented peanut milk, it was hailed as a miracle medicine for different ailments, and her coffee shop was featured on all the news shows including CNN.

JOSE from EL SALVADOR: PROMOTION TO MANAGER

Jose had worked for the same company for a long time as a valued employee who understood all the processes of the business. But he couldn't get a promotion because his English wasn't good enough. Then with his non-credit ESL classes, plus extra coaching from his teacher, he was able to present, orally and clearly, a number of recommendations for improving how the company did business. The powers-that-be were so impressed that they promoted him to a managerial job.

JIMMY from BURMA: CULTURAL EXPERT at MACY'S

Jimmy needed his non-credit ESL classes at CCSF as language preparation for professional courses as a window decorator. Those classes also gave him a lot of cultural knowledge that serves him well in his present job at Macy's in Walnut Creek. For example, Jimmy says, "I'm the only one in the store who knows how to decorate the windows for Hanukkah."

COUNTLESS OTHER STORIES of 1) non-credit ESL / ESL citizenship students becoming U.S. citizens and using their English to get jobs, get promoted or move on to better jobs, and 2) native speakers of English getting new job skills to move forward in their present careers or start new careers.

We oppose the SSTF's very limited definition of student success. Here are a few examples of student success stories that do not fit the SSTF concept. (submitted by Daniel T. Halford, ESL, CCSF)

MARIELA from COLUMBIA: NURSING

Mariela was a nurse in Columbia and came to California in her forties. She took non-credit ESL classes to improve her English so she could take the test to become a nurse here. She also took a few nursing classes but did not in any way get a degree. While taking these classes, she volunteered at St Luke's one day a week. That led to her job at UCSF. She has just passed the nursing test and is applying for nursing jobs now.

SHANNON from TAIWAN: STANFORD

I was a PhD nursing student in Taiwan and wanted to study abroad. However, the TOEFL test was a big challenge for me, especially in speaking and listening abilities. After I took three months of non-credit ESL classes at John Adams Campus of CCSF, my speaking and listening skills improved a lot. Therefore, I got a satisfactory TOEFL test score in May this year. Now I have been accepted to Stanford University for next year. Non-credit ESL classes provide wonderful learning resources and environments and the teachers' abundant knowledge. I believe that these classes are necessary for academic success. I recommend that non-credit ESL be guaranteed as an integral part of California community colleges. (December 2011, in her own words)

BIYUN from CHINA: ACADEMIC CULTURE

Biyun came to a non-credit ESL College Prep class 3 months after arriving in the USA. She represents a new group of students from China who already have high-level education before they arrive here, but are not ready to succeed in credit classes because they don't know our academic culture. Biyun needed her College Prep class not only to improve her English sufficiently for credit classes, but also to learn key aspects of American academic culture: critical thinking, group participation and building relationships with teachers (e.g. knowing that you can go to a teacher to ask for help). After taking this class, Biyun was ready to start credit classes and is now working on her A.A. degree.

CECILE from FRANCE: INTERVIEW SKILLS

Cecile worked with children in France before coming here. She needed her non-credit ESL classes first to get enough language support to understand the child development classes she was taking simultaneously, and second to get enough knowledge about American culture to be able to get a job. Specifically, in her ESL class she learned the skills she needed to succeed in an interview, and now she has a job in San Francisco teaching children.