



San Diego Continuing Education
Emeritus Program
North City Campus
8401 Aero Dr. San Diego, CA 92123

January 9, 2012

RE: Student Success Task Force Recommendations

Dear Dr. Scott and Members of the Board of Governors,

Having followed the process and the progress of the Student Success Task Force, and the input from administrators, educators and advisors to the committee, and having heard attempts to prioritize course offerings, we would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to another perspective on education plans and student learning outcomes.

Exciting new findings in neuropsychological studies have shown that cognitive performance (learning and applying knowledge) can be improved through the structured use of cognitive exercises or learning techniques. And that those techniques can be taught and applied to activities of daily living and to furthering educational pursuits. While these discoveries are significant to students of all ages, they are particularly significant to adults who face or fear a loss of cognitive function (ARCD, dementia, Alzheimer's, etc.). Education has been highly praised as a means of stockpiling cognitive reserve and re-strengthening weakened neurons. But for students seeking serious cognitive health benefits for the prevention of cognitive decline, we now know that we can structure classes for older adults in ways that teach them to exercise their brains more effectively through unique learning techniques and experiences.

Noncredit Older Adult Programs (OAPs) provide seniors with skills to help them navigate the aging process. OAP classes address specific and unique needs of older adults that are not targeted or taught in traditional college courses. In addition to offering workforce development, vocational training, and health and wellness classes specific to the aging, OAPs are now beginning to introduce educational strategies that enhance and promote cognitive health, in all course offerings regardless of the subject matter. Judging courses by their titles alone overlooks the fact that some desired student learning outcomes (e.g. cognitive health education) is not reliant upon the subject matter. Diverse subjects and titles are used to solicit participation and motivate learners. Cognitive health skills are taught through a variety of, most often indirect, learning activities, when the student is shown how to employ his/her mental functions for optimal performance and apply novel learning techniques to a variety of everyday tasks. Just as doctors' offices and hospitals are the best places for applied medical science, taking the latest advances in medical research and applying them to the medical care of people, schools are the best place for applied neuroscience, taking the latest advances in cognitive research and applying it to the job of educating and improving minds, of all ages.

California Community College Older Adult Programs are in the best position to teach cognitive health skills to aging citizens. California Community College Educators of Older Adults (CCCEOA) are at the forefront of brain-based education. OAPs are working together to identify and apply relevant research on brain plasticity and neurogenesis in the classroom. Classes that promote cognitive health and lifelong independence, support valid and very real educational needs of older learners and they produce significant and meaningful "student successes".

Please continue to advocate for the preservation and protection of valuable noncredit programs. Different students have different needs to live independent, self sufficient and productive lives. Please continue to recognize the educational needs of all California Community College students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pat Mosteller', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Pat Mosteller
San Diego Continuing Education Emeritus Program
California Community College Educators of Older Adults