Opinion: SBCC: New programs to meet evolving needs

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An ongoing goal of Santa Barbara City College is to develop programs to meet the evolving educational needs of our community.

One major need is addressing the growing income disparity in Santa Barbara as well as in the state and the rest of the country. In addition to those in the traditional 18-to-22 college-going age group, we need to focus on a large segment of the population who are in their late 20s through their 70s who need to be re-employed or acquire a skill set that enables them to get a job that pays a living wage.

Moreover, a significant percentage of these individuals are under-employed, working multiple jobs, and have family responsibilities. What could SBCC do to meet the needs of these individuals?

21st Century Skills Institute
We asked local employers what skills they need in workers. Their response reflected those reported in national surveys. They need people who can communicate effectively, use media tools to promote businesses, use critical thinking skills, work independently as well as in teams and groups, represent themselves well with customers, and think entrepreneurially and innovatively to keep projects fresh. They want people who understand that for business to make money, they must have employees with a good skill set in computer technology and other fields such as marketing.

We took all this information from employers to craft our curriculum this fall, designed to equip our students with these very skills.

We are preparing to offer micro-certificates through a new 21st Century Skills Institute for more in-depth specialist skills such as accounting, computer applications, business start-up, graphic design, marketing and management skills.
This program is not designed for people pursuing a degree. Instead, it is for any age student who wants to practically gain a new skill critical to their success in the workplace in as short a time as possible.

**Back on Track Program**

SBCC will have a second program, called Back on Track, launching in the same time frame. This program will address the same issues but with a little different focus. Back on Track is for students who had a goal of achieving an associate degree or higher, completed six or more units at SBCC or another college or university in the last three years, left in good academic standing, and are still living in Santa Barbara.

We estimate that there are more than 20,000 people living in the greater Santa Barbara area who fit this profile. In order to be competitive in the workplace, they know they need an associate and/or a bachelor's degree or higher. They started out to get their degree but something happened and they stopped. So this program is for individuals who want to finish their degree.

We want to make it easier to re-enter the college. We are looking to provide these former students with career and educational planning and encouraging them to enroll in one of the college's accelerated programs for full-time or for part-time students that are designed to enable them to complete their degree and/or transfer requirements in three years or less.

The accelerated degree and transfer programs for full-time and for part-time students will be developed in 2014-15 and implemented in conjunction with the start of the Back on Track Program at the start of 2015 summer session or fall semester.

**Memory Caregiver Program**

More than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. As the population ages, this number will triple in the next few decades. Much of the care provided is done informally by an estimated 1.5 million family members or unpaid caregivers.

Beginning this spring, the college will offer a new Memory Care program. This program is designed to address the need for competent caregivers who have the requisite skill set to meet the specialized physical, cognitive and behavioral needs of individuals with dementia and Alzheimer's disease.
The importance of this issue and improving the current culture of long-term care in Santa Barbara are supported by SBCC's ongoing partnership with the Santa Barbara Brain Trust Group spearheaded by Dr. Chuck Mendelson and a three-year grant from the Rupe Foundation.

**Non-Profit Management and Fundraising Programs**
Santa Barbara has more than 2,000 nonprofits that produce over $1 billion in revenue, generating more than 8 percent of Santa Barbara's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), making the nonprofit sector one of the largest employers in the county.

The college is working with an advisory committee of nonprofit employers to identify and develop courses and certificate programs that are needed by those working in nonprofit organizations and for individuals wanting to gain employment or volunteer for a nonprofit.

Through new innovative programs as these, SBCC will continue to work closely with our local community to address educational needs that impact our economy, quality of life, and health and wellness.

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