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Jeanine Curtis
California State University, Monterey Bay

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RUNNING HEAD: Breaking the Barriers

Breaking the Barriers: Adult School to College Project

Jeanine Curtis

California State University Monterey Bay

Abstract

The transition from adult school to community college can be a dream shattering experience. What can be done to help alleviate the obstacles and issues preventing adult school students from moving on to college and attaining the assets needed for personal and economic advancement? This project facilitated field trips to the local community college for over 150 advanced and intermediate English as Second Language (ESL) adult school learners. At the conclusion of the tour and orientation, data was collected from the students that yielded a wealth of information about the barriers these adult school students face in transitioning to college. By identifying and articulating these obstacles through this project, both institutions have begun to work more closely together to implement programmatic changes that should result in a larger number of successful adult school to college transitions.

Breaking the Barriers: Adult School to College Project

Setting the Stage

Language Consultant named Maria Hernandez¹ is a language advocate and also an exceptional example of inclusive multiculturalism. She is a bilingual Child Development Mentor at Valley Community College in Valley Town, California. As a mentor and teacher she encourages the growth of multiple languages and multicultural experiences in all her students, while respecting, encouraging and preserving their core heritage and traditions. I have known Maria Hernandez for several years and have been truly moved and amazed by her story.

Maria Hernandez was born in Sonora, Mexico. She came to the United States in 1992 at the age of twenty. She moved to the United States with her husband and two young children, leaving her parents and family in Mexico. The reason they moved was to find work and make a better life for themselves and their children. When Maria arrived in the United States, she knew only a few words in English. She told me, “I just knew some words, but I couldn’t make a sentence. I just knew words like window, pencil, notebook, and door. You know those little words that you learn when you study English in Mexico. To me, they were just words” (Personal Communication, 2006). She had no verbal or written structural knowledge of English.

When Maria first arrived in Valley Town, like many of our local immigrants, she found work in the fields. She described this work as being very hard and after working in agriculture for only a short time, she knew that she had to find a way to get a better job. In Mexico, before she was married, she had studied pedagogy to become a teacher. This dream of teaching and obtaining a college education had never left her.

After only one month in the United States, Maria Hernandez enrolled in the Central Valley Adult School’s English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. After one semester at the Adult School she concurrently enrolled in Early Childhood Education (ECE) classes at Valley Community College. She learned to speak English in these classes.

Maria Hernandez completed her education at Valley Community College, earning an Associate’s Degree in Early Childhood Development and says that she will never stop learning. She eventually transferred to a private university in Southern California where she is currently working on a Master’s Degree in Early Childhood Development. Her expected graduation date is

¹ All proper names are pseudonyms

spring 2008. Her future goals include teaching Early Childhood Education at Valley Community College.

At first glance this story appears to be a complete success, but what is not apparent is that Maria's education did not fall into place easily. Due to her lack of understanding of the college system and services, such as counseling, it has taken her years longer than the average student to reach her educational goals. She earned her Associate's Degree ten years after starting at Valley Community College. When she graduated, even though she had completed ninety units of college course work, only about thirty of these units were transferable to a four year university. Furthermore, not only was she lacking in transferable units; she had also depleted her financial aid.

Maria did not understand how this could happen. She had worked so hard for years to earn her Associate's Degree. She thought she had done all that was needed to move on to the next level, a four year university. This news was devastating. Maria was a first generation college student, so she really had no one in her family that she could turn to for advice. After completing her Associate's Degree, she finally went to see a college counselor who made out an academic learning plan. It took her an additional three years, but she was finally able to transfer and fulfill her dream of a higher education.

Maria's experiences are fairly typical of Adult School students who make the transition into community college. Often times these students do not understand or utilize the college support services that are available to them. They spend more years in school and attend classes that do not count towards their individual long term goals. Many of these students become frustrated, change their priorities, and give up their dreams.

What is indeed unique about Maria's story is her great perseverance and determination. When faced with the many frustrations, challenges and obstacles, she managed to continue and eventually fulfill her educational goals. Maria now donates time to the Central Valley Adult School. She talks to students about her experiences and counsels them on ways to make their transition to college a smoother and more attainable pathway. Much can be learned from Maria's remarkable story.

What is the Problem or Issue

As Adult school learners transition into higher education facilities, such as community colleges, they face a number of obstacles and challenges. This report will focus on the issues

specifically related to English as a Second Language (ESL) learners who have expressed interest in transitioning from adult school into community college. The obstacles this particular group faces include but are not limited to: lack of a support system and sense of community within the college environment, low level of educational attainment, language difficulties, and lack of legal resident documentation.

Lack of Support System and Sense of Community. The adult school offers students a family style environment where students can learn English and begin setting individual educational goals for themselves. A clear example of this can be found in Central Valley Adult School's welcome letter which begins by stating "Mi casa es su casa", translation "My house is your house". In this environment students are made to feel comfortable and at home while they learn.

Advisors at the Central Valley Adult School help students with many aspects of their lives including academic, vocational, and personal counseling. These advisors also assist students with citizenship and job readiness. Many activities, such as dances and dinners, sponsored by the Adult School build up trust between staff and students. Over time a real sense of community has formed. If students need help or have questions, they feel comfortable reaching out to adult school staff members who they know and trust.

Students who make the transition from adult school to community college have a difficult time adjusting because they do not find the same family style support system they have experienced while attending Adult School. Many Adult School students who are interested in transitioning into higher education are often times first generation college bound students. This means that they have no family members that they can turn to for advice when they have questions about college courses, services, and culture. They are unfamiliar with programs and services available to foster their educational success. As in Maria's story in the introduction of this paper, many of these students often spend unnecessary time in school because they do not seek help from counselors and other college staff. According to a report by Ray Padilla (2007) entitled *Camino De La Universidad* (The Road to College), the main obstacle for transitioning minority students is lack of understanding of the pathways to achieve education goals.

Low Level of Educational Attainment and Language Difficulties. California's Central Valley is a vast, rural agricultural region which covers more than one thousand square miles of productive and diverse farmland. The Central Valley Adult School is located in Valley Town, the

population and educational hub of the region. According to information reported by the Valley Town County Health Department in their *County Population* (2002) report, the community is predominantly Latino, poor, with chronic unemployment due to seasonal layoffs. Also mentioned in this report is the low level of educational attainment in this community, which is linked to poverty and low income. This report states that 18.9 percent of the total population of Valley Town attain only a ninth grade or less education; this percentage is notably higher than California State statistics of 11.2 percent with ninth grade or less education.

The language barriers and lack of basic skills can not just be looked at as a second language issue. Many of the Central Coast Adult School students are lacking basic skills in their native languages also. According the Central Coast Adult School Western Association of Schools and College (WASC) report filed in 2006, 50 percent of all students enrolled in the Central Valley Adult School English as a Second Language program have less than eight total years of education and 15 percent have less than six total years of education. These numbers indicate that sixty five percent of all ESL students enrolled at the Central Valley Adult School have less than an eighth grade education. What this means is that while they are learning English, they may have proficiency difficulties in their native languages. These students have to spend considerable time learning the basics in English and their native language before they are academically prepared for college course work.

Lack of Legal Documentation. With its close proximity to beautiful California's Central Coast, Valley Town is subject to a high cost of living and an extreme lack of affordable housing. Yet, the seasonal needs of the Agribusiness and the Hospitality Industry continue to attract large numbers of minority workers, mostly from Mexico, seeking a better way of life. A report issued by The United States Homeland Security (2005) states that a majority of these workers come into the United States without legal documentation. California leads the nation in unauthorized residents, with an estimated 2.8 million unauthorized immigrants and is followed by Texas with nearly 1.4 million (Hoefler, 2005).

One of the main reasons that the immigrant population does not seek access to the resources of their local community college is their lack of legal documentation. Acerbating this situation is that many of these immigrants posses falsified documents. Central Valley Adult School has no requirements for providing documentation for enrollment in its programs. Because

of this, a strong sense of trust and community are established by its constituents. This trust is not easily transferred to the community college environment.

The Research

While doing the research for this project, I noticed that there are several recurring obstacles affecting students of all ages throughout Monterey County. These obstacles can not be looked at as simply a local problem; the truth is that many of the obstacles and challenges faced by Monterey County students associated with obtaining a college education are common in every community throughout the nation. These obstacles include, but are not limited to: a growing high school dropout rate, a lack of basic skills, and lack of literacy. These obstacles are often times interconnected and lead to much larger life long challenges such as generational poverty.

Growing High School Dropout Rate. As mentioned earlier in this report 18.9 percent of the total population of Valley Town attains only a ninth grade or less education. This percentage is notably higher than the California State statistic of 11.2 percent with ninth grade or less education. What you also should know is that according to Valley College High School Equivalency Programs (2007) there is a 50 percent dropout rate in Valley Town's migrant student population and 83 percent of farm-workers have completed less than twelve years of education, meaning they do not have high school diplomas. The report goes on to say that the national poverty rate is 12.1 percent, but in Valley Town's farm-working population it is notably higher at 30 percent.

The dropout rate in Monterey County has a direct correlation to poverty and lower income rates. According to The Monterey County Children and Youth Report: "Students whom fail to complete high school are less likely to find and keep good jobs, and are not prepared to compete in employment markets that require technology and higher levels of skill"(Tellus,2001, p.37). This is important because a child's likelihood of educational, social, behavioral and physical health is highly correlated with the educational attainment of his or her parent (Tellus, 2001, p.13). Dropping out of high school has a direct affect on one's long-term income potential and also sets a precedent for future generations.

Lack of Basic Skills and Literacy. In an article that was featured in The Monterey County Weekly (2007) entitled "Critical Key to the Future", written by Diane Cordero De Noriega, it states: "By the 11th grade, only 55 percent [of county students] score at basic level or higher in English language arts, and only 60 percent in math. What this means is that over forty

percent of Monterey County's high school students entering their senior year of high school are not functioning at state and national academic standards" (p.21). Also noted in this article is that 54 percent of high school graduates who enroll at Valley Community College and Monterey Peninsula College require remediation in writing. This statistic is echoed by a Congressional Quarterly report written by Richard Worsnop entitled "Getting to College" (1996). In the report Worsnop states that more than a quarter of the nation's undergraduates needed remedial English and math.

Basically, an alarming rate of students who earn a high school diploma, graduate without obtaining the basic skills needed to be successful in college course work. This means that these students will spend their first few years in college learning the necessary skills they did not acquire in high school in order to continue in their education. These basic skills classes do not transfer to universities, so this also means that these students will spend more time and money at the undergraduate level.

In a report entitled "The Governance Divide: A report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success" (2005) several government agencies try to tackle the lack of basic skills. What this report finds is that states need to create standards that connect what students are learning in high school to postsecondary education. Due to federally mandated "No Child Left Behind", more and more teachers are "teaching to the test". Because of this, students are graduating from high school with a set of standards and skills that do not apply to college course work. First year college students who are high school graduates are often disconnected and overwhelmed when faced with college expectations. This disconnection or break in learning expectations also happens to Adult School students who transition into higher education facilities. They too are unprepared for the challenging course work and standards of college.

Combating Illiteracy and Dropout Rates. Combating illiteracy and high dropout rates is a priority throughout the nation and in Monterey County. Locally, there are projects such as Valley College's High School Equivalency Program (2006) designed to assist persons who are eligible under Sec. 206.3 to obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma (Johnson, 2006, p. 1). Earning a high school diploma and/or equivalent enables an individual to be more competitive in today's job market and also establishes the groundwork needed in preparation for continued education, such as a college degree.

Nationally there are many programs that are working towards ending illiteracy and combating high school dropout rates. One such program in Arizona, written by Jeanne Harrington, is entitled *Transitioning GED and ESOL (ESL) Students into Community College*. This program helps students transition from General Education Development (GED) into community college. This program includes active recruitment of students from local adult schools into Arizona's community college systems. Along with recruitment of adult school students, this program is designed to promote college preparedness and success. This is done by establishing early intervention by college counselors and personnel. The college personnel, in turn, establish study programs and workshops that better prepare adult school learners for college transition.

Methodology

This project is entitled "Breaking the Barriers: Adult School to College Project". The goal of this project was to collect specific data from the Central Valley Adult School advanced and intermediate ESL learners to identify obstacles and barriers that hinder successful transition from adult school to community college. By identifying and articulating these obstacles in this report, it is hoped by the author that both the Central Valley Adult School and Valley Community College will gain a relevant reference document that will help these institutions work together to implement programmatic changes resulting in a larger number of successful adult school to college transitions.

Dr. Tina Sullen, the Assistant Director/Coordinator of ESL Programs at the Central Valley Adult School initiated the contact by phoning Allen Newman, the Valley Community College Planetarium Director/ Advancement Associate and requesting that the college sponsor tours and orientation for adult school students currently enrolled in Central Valley Adult School's advanced and high intermediate ESL programs. The venue for this research project was Valley Community College located in Valley Town, California.

In response to Dr. Sullen's request, an invitation was extended by Valley Community College to Central Valley Adult School's advanced and intermediate level ESL students for a college tour and orientation. Originally it was thought that only one hundred and twenty students would attend this orientation, but the response was greater than expected. In total 159 adult school students accepted the invitation and received a customized campus tour and orientation. These students were also given information packets about Valley Community College's programs and

services. All participants were students currently enrolled in ESL classes at the Central Valley Adult School and had expressed interest in transitioning into community college classes.

Mr. Newman and I spent many hours working on the organization and execution of this project. This included sending out more than twenty five emails informing the different college departments of this project and asking for their participation. During the planning stages of this project, Mr. Newman and I also talked to several college administrators asking for their support. A total of four meetings were also held at the Central Valley Adult School. These meetings were coordinated by Mr. Newton. In attendance were myself, Mr. Newman, Tina Sullen, and Vicky Gomez her assistant. In these meetings it was decided what information the students needed to receive from the college, what the students wanted to see while on campus, the classes that would attend, and that the college would supply a continental breakfast during the tour. Much time, effort and organization went into facilitating the college visit.

On November 8, 9, 15 and 16 of 2007, four different groups of Central Valley Adult School students arrived by school bus at Valley Community College. They were greeted by a college representative and they began their customized tour of the campus with a trip to the Planetarium. At the Planetarium the students were introduced and greeted by a college counselor who specializes in ESL. They were also introduced and greeted by a college staff member, who is a former Central Valley Adult School ESL student. The groups then experienced a planetarium show, after which they toured the rest of the campus. The tour included a trip to the Child Development Center where Maria Hernandez spoke to them about making the transition from adult school to college. She spoke about her experiences and offered words of encouragement. The students were then shown areas of the Fine Arts Department, Visual Arts, Physical Education facilities, Admission and Records, Financial Aid, the Academic Learning Center, Book Store and the Dining Hall. In the Dining Hall, they received a continental breakfast before being taken on a tour of the new library facility. A copy of the tour the adult school students received is attached in the Action Documentation section of this report.

Upon completion of the visit, the students were invited to participate in this research project by filling out an anonymous questionnaire/survey. The students were given and read a letter explaining why this research was being conducted. It was explained to the students, both verbally and in the letter, that their participation was completely voluntary. The confidentiality of their responses was also addressed.

The consent letter and survey was given out and collected by the adult school instructor in classroom L113, located in the Valley Community College Library. Each of the students was given a copy of the letter which contained the consent narrative. They were told that if they wanted to participate in the research by filling out the anonymous questionnaire, they would need to sign the letter of consent. In addition, it was explained, that should they choose to participate, they did not have to answer any questions they were uncomfortable with. They were told that signing the consent forms and submission of survey was voluntary. The survey questions were:

1. What is your overall impression of community college?
 - Poor
 - Fair
 - Good
 - Very Good
 - Excellent

2. What do you feel are the main obstacles keeping you from attending community college?

3. Please check if you were given enough information about college programs, such as:
 - Registration procedures
 - Financial Aid
 - Tutorial services
 - Attendance requirements
 - Homework and Testing Requirements
 - Child Care
 - EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs and Services)
 - English proficiency level for college ESL classes

4. What programs or services would you like to learn more about in preparation for becoming a college student?

5. After visiting and seeing what your community college has to offer, are you considering attending? Why?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your visit to the community college and is there anything else that would make attending easier for you?

It was explained to the students that their relevant experience, expertise, and knowledge as adult learners would be helpful in determining the obstacles keeping Central Valley Adult School students from transitioning into Valley Community College. Also, their experience, expertise and knowledge as adult learners would assist both Valley Community College and The Central Valley Adult School in implementing procedures for a smooth transition of adult learners, such as themselves, whose long-term goals include a college degree and/or higher education. The students were given about twenty five minutes to fill out the surveys before they were collected.

Out of the 159 students who participated in the college tour and orientation, 150 signed the consent forms. From the pool of 150 Adult School students who signed the consent form, 72 chose to fill out and turn in surveys. The 72 completed anonymous surveys represent the ideas and opinions of approximately 45 percent of the total students that participated in the campus tour and orientation. Once the surveys were collected I reviewed and organized the answers according to common themes.

Results

Please note that the numbers of responses are between the parentheses in front of the response. The percentage of students that selected or wrote in the response was based on the total of 72 surveys turned in. Please note that students were allowed to select more than one answer for each of the questions. The results of the survey were as follows:

1. What is your overall impression of community college?

- (1) Poor: *1% of the students selected this response.*
- (0) Fair: *no students selected this response.*
- (13) Good: *8% of the students selected this response.*
- (28) Very: *39% of the students selected this response.*
- (30) Excellent: *42% of the students selected this response.*

These results were very encouraging because according to Tina Sullen the Assistant Director/Coordinator of ESL Programs at Central Valley Adult School, when this same group of students was polled by the Adult School they overwhelmingly had scored their impressions of Valley College as poor. When asked why they felt that way Sullen said that she was told that by the students that they were afraid of the college campus, it was too big and they felt that they did not belong. By looking at the results of this question you can see that 99% of the adult school students who turned in the surveys had a good (or better) overall impression of the college.

2. What do you feel are the main obstacles keeping you from attending community college?

- There were a total of six common responses to this open-ended question. They were:
- (35) Not enough money: *48% of the students wrote in this response.*
 - (39) Lack of language skills and/or prerequisites: *54% of the students wrote in this response.*
 - (13) Lack of resident Documentation: *18% of the students wrote in this response.*
 - (23) No time to attend/ other obligations: *32% of the students wrote in this response.*
 - (2) Already have a degree from another country that needs to be evaluated: *2% of the students wrote in this response.*
 - (3) No obstacles: *4% of the students wrote in this response.*

These answers were a little surprising because I expected more students to indicate that the main obstacle for them was lack of documentation. As the adult school students toured the campus, they asked many questions about the programs and services offered at Valley Community College. After touring the library the students had the opportunity to ask questions of staff and faculty from several different departments of the college, including Admission and Records, Financial Aid, and ESL. On each of the four days the main question asked by the adult school students was what type of documentation was needed to become a Valley College student.

The Adult School students that visited Valley College were not hesitant to ask questions about needed documents, but even on the anonymous survey, they were hesitant to identify lack of documentation as an obstacle. About half the students who attended admitted openly that they did not have any paper. By this they meant they were not legal residents of the United States. Only 13 of the 72 surveys turned in noted lack of documents as being an obstacle for attending community college.

3. Please check if you were given enough information about college programs, such as:

- (31) Registration procedures: *43% of the students selected this response.*
- (33) Financial Aid: *45% of the students selected this response.*
- (20) Tutorial services: *28% of the students selected this response.*
- (17) Attendance requirements: *24% of the students selected this response.*
- (15) Homework and Testing Requirements: *21% of the students selected this response.*
- (42) Child Care: *58% of the students selected this response.*
- (33) EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs and Services): *45% of the students selected this response.*
- (38) English proficiency level for college ESL classes: *52% of the students selected this response.*

These students received a package of information that faculty and staff members went over during a one hour question and answer portion of the tour. Not much time was spent on homework and testing requirements at college level and this is reflected in the results of the survey. In the future when adult school students come for tours, this topic will be addressed in more detail. Faculty members from the Academic Tutorial Center will be asked to present on these topics so that the students can gain a better understanding of what is required to successfully complete college course work.

- 4. What programs or services would you like to learn more about in preparation for becoming a college student?** There were a total of six common answers to this open-ended question. They were:

- (35) I need more information on ESL classes offered at the college: *49% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (26) I need more information on the Computer Labs and Tutorial Labs: *36% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (16) I need more information on Child Care Programs: *22% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (20) I Need More Information on Financial Aid and Work Study: *27% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (11) I need more information on Registration Procedures, Home Work, and Attendance Policies: *15% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (12) I need more information on Valley Community College's Nursing and Health Care Programs: *16% of the students wrote in this response.*

The most surprising thing about these this response is that the 16 percent of the students wanted to know more about the Nursing and Health Care programs and degrees offered at Valley Community College. These programs were not part of any of the tour or conversations that the students participated in. Their request for more information on these particular programs made me realize that these students needed more information on degrees and career pathways offered by the college. In planning for future adult school tours, counselors need to play a larger roll.

5. After visiting and seeing what your community college has to offer, are you considering attending? Why?

There were a total of six common responses to this open-ended question. They were:

- (39) Yes, I am Considering attending because the community college offers many educational and job opportunities: *54% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (3) Yes, I am considering attending because I can qualify for financial aid and that will help me with the cost of attending: *4% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (10) Yes, I am considering attending after I improve my English skills because I need more practice: *13% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (11) No, I am not considering attending because I have no time and money for college: *15% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (7) No, I am not considering attending because my English Skills are too low: *10% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (2) I am already attending and am a current Valley Community College student: *2% of the students wrote in this response.*

A total of 71 percent of all the students who turned in the surveys wrote that they were considering attending community college in the future. I feel that this was a very positive result. The students know that they face many challenges and obstacles, but they also received enough information throughout their day at the college that made them realize that a college education is attainable. The theme throughout the day was "This is your college and you belong here".

6. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your visit to the community college and is there any thing else that would make attending easier for you?

There were a total of five common responses to this open-ended question. They were:

- (15) I would like the cost of attending and books to be free of charge: *21% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (15) I need more information on programs and services (this included attendance policies, registration and testing): *21% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (1) I keep trying to take classes, but they are always cancelled: *1% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (2) Please translate all information into Spanish: *3% of the students wrote in this response.*
- (13) I received all the information I needed: *18% of the students wrote in this response.*

After reading the responses to this question I realized that most of the students used this space to thank Valley College for the great time that they had. Many of the students mentioned the trip to the Planetarium and how much they enjoyed their library tour. One thing that was mentioned by only two students is that they would like all of this information in Spanish. The adult school instructors also echoed this response. Information in Spanish will be taken to the adult school for students who need it. Also it has been mentioned that these tours and orientations can be given in Spanish for lower level ESL students whose English may not be quite up to speed yet.

Description and Justification of Action

In response to Dr. Sullen's request, Valley Community College extended an invitation to Central Valley Adult School's ESL students. These students were invited to spend an afternoon at the college, where they would experience a planetarium show and also be given a tour of the campus. Also these students would be given information on campus procedures and services needed to make the transition from adult school to college. There were several actions taken in the execution of this project, the first of which was developing and writing a formalized campus tour.

Up until now, Valley Community College has had no formalized tour. If the general public and/or school children wanted to see the campus it was basically up to the interested party to get a campus map and look around. School children from all over Monterey County regularly attend Valley Community College Planetarium shows. About a year and a half ago a local school district requested that all of its fifth and sixth grade classes be given tours of the campus along with their visit to the Planetarium. This was a great idea; the only problem was that no one at Valley Community College gave tours of the campus. As a Liberal studies major and future teacher, I was very interested in meeting the children and making sure that they had a great first time experience

on campus, so I started giving campus tours. This was done on a strictly volunteer basis and I have always considered the time I spent giving these tours the best part of my day. Currently about seven thousand school children visit the Planetarium each year.

When Dr. Sullen contacted the Planetarium Director at Valley Community College and requested that the Adult School students be given tours, orientation information along with a Planetarium show, I realized it was time to put the tour down on paper. I walked around campus and asked different departments for information about their programs and also searched out information about the different departments available on the campus website. What I ended up with was a seven page campus tour. The tour basically takes a lap around the campus and includes information on the different buildings, programs, and services offered at Valley Community College.

This tour has since been given to the Valley College Marketing Director who is working with the Valley College Web Designer to make this tour available on-line for public use. College staff is also working on making the tour interactive by spring 2008 so that the public can log on to the campus website and take a virtual tour of the campus. Once the tour is available online, anyone who wants to take a self-guided tour will be able to print it out and take themselves on a tour, even if there is not a guide available. Formalizing the tour of the campus will benefit the community, the college, and all students who want to see the campus in the future. As I finish up my studies at California State University Monterey Bay and get ready to embark on a new career in teaching, it feels good to know that I have done something lasting that will benefit the community.

Another action taken as a result of this project is Central Valley Adult School students were given full library rights. These students are now able to use the library computers and also check out materials to take home. This library access is very important because it gives these students a chance to use the library and also a reason to return to the college. If adult school students start coming to Valley Community Campus to use the library, it will help them get more comfortable with the campus and grow a sense of belonging.

Throughout the tours, the theme of the day was “This is your college and you belong here”. Opening the doors to the library and letting the adult school students know that the library was indeed theirs to use, was a pretty big deal. This set a new precedent at the college. Before this if you are not a Valley College student or local high school junior/senior, you could not check out material at the college library. Not only were library privileges extended to the adult school

students who came to campus as part of this project, they were extended to all Central Valley Adult School students. Currently there are twenty-three thousand students enrolled at Central Valley Adult School so the extension of library privileges to this population has the potential of making a huge difference.

Action Documentation

This is a copy of the tour that was given to the Adult School students who visited Valley Community College. This tour has since been given to many of the departments throughout campus to use for outreach. Also as described earlier in this report, an electronic printable version of this tour will be available to online for the general public by spring 2008.

Breaking the Barriers: Adult School to College Project Valley Community College November 2007 Tour Guide

1st Stop (Start of Tour):

Welcome at the Statue

- Welcome to Valley Community College.
- Valley Community College is one of the oldest educational institutions in California. Valley Town Junior College was founded in 1920. The school was renamed Valley Community College in 1948. The Valley Community College District was formed in 1949. Valley Community College also has campuses located in East Valley Town and a South County Campus.
- This is Oscar the Panther, Valley's mascot. The class of 1940 donated the 16-ton granite panther, sculpted by Raymond Puccinelli. Over the years Oscar has been painted pink, disappeared and was once found at the bottom of the swimming pool at Monterey Peninsula College, Valley's football rival. In the very near future Oscar will be making a journey to his new home located at 411 Central Avenue. This location has been designated Valley's new main entrance. We hope Oscar will stay there in his place of honor greeting Valley students and community members for years to come!

2nd Stop:

Classes and Administration Building (CAB)

- **Cashier's Office** – This is where you can pay tuition, special events, parking permits, pick up Financial Aid, payroll checks, and payments for day care services.
- **Admission** - The Admissions & Records Office is an integral component of Student Services. The Admissions & Records Office is responsible for the admission, registration, evaluation, graduation, and for the accuracy and maintenance of student records.
- **Counseling** – Academic counseling offices have counselors that are available during drop in hours and by appointment.
- **Financial Aid** - You can get your Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application, Board of Governor's Fee Wavier application and all other paperwork related to financial aid. Also staff is available to help you fill out these applications.

- **Office of the President Dr. Adams** - On Tuesday evening, June 19, long-time educator Dr. Adams was named interim superintendent and president of the college. She is the first woman to serve as a president and superintendent of Valley Community College. Dr. Adams brings to the college more than 30 years of experience serving community colleges in Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, and California.

3rd Stop:

Valley College Center (VCC)

- **Transfer Center** – The Valley College Transfer Center offers assistance to students in transferring to: the University of California (UC) system, the California State University (CSU) system, a private four-year university, or an out of state university. A variety of resources and services are available to assist students with transfer plans. Counselors are available to assist in exploring options, to plan for the future, and to discover how to prepare their transfer to a university. Valley College currently has Transfer Admission Agreements (TAA), which may guarantee admission to the UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz, UC Riverside, UC Irvine, CSU Monterey Bay, San Jose State University, San Francisco State University, Chapman University, Golden Gate, and Santa Clara University.
- **Bookstore** – You can purchase all class materials including: books, notepads, pens, pencils, test materials, gifts, and accessories.
- **Cafeteria** –Offers a wide variety of meals, snacks, salad bar, sandwich bar, hot entrees, and deserts.
- **Book Lenders**- You pay only \$5 dollars deposit for the semester and Book Lenders lets you use text books for the semester. Not all books are available and this program is offered to students who do **not** receive financial aid.
- **Associated Student Body** –This is where you can get your student CAT Cards and also serves as the Veterans Services Office.
- **Disabled Students Program and Services (DSP&S)** - Valley College offers supportive services and instruction for students with disabilities through the Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSP&S). Services and instruction are designed to enable students to successfully develop and complete an educational plan. Services include: academic and vocational counseling, educational planning, special equipment, note-takers, translating and interpreting in sign language, assessment for learning disability, classroom accommodations, and job placement. Instruction includes: college survival skills, learning disability resource lab, adaptive computer technology, adaptive physical education, and job search skills. Offer services and instruction for students with physical, visual, hearing, learning, developmental and other disabilities.
- **Workforce and Community Development (WACD)** - Pathways is Valley College's community education vehicle, providing short and special not-for-credit courses for personal enrichment and enjoyment, workforce training, and professional development. Pathways offers customized, on-site training on a contract basis, developed to suit each employer's individual needs. Also, an extensive array of online courses, including computer and web skill classes, business and management courses, test preparation courses and personal enrichment courses are offered.

4th Stop:

Library and Learning Resource Center- The 68,000 square foot state-of-the-art Library and Learning Resource Center is designed to meet the information and research needs of students in the 21st century. Some basic facts about Valley Community College Library:

- Cost to build: \$27 million
- Opened in June 19, 2006
- Collection Capacity - 80 thousand books
- Seating Capacity: 763 people
- Over 250 computers and wireless access for students and community use

5th Stop:

New Parking Structure- The parking structure accommodates 1,117 vehicles. It is a three-level and cost approximately \$17.2 million to build. Cost as little as 25 cents per hour to \$1 per day. Semester permits are available for students to purchase at the Cashier's Office.

6th Stop:

Merrill Hall (MER)

- **Career Center/ Job Bank** - The Career Center offers comprehensive programs and services to assist students with career assessment; counseling and exploration; educational and training choices; career goal setting; employment services such as Cooperative Work Experience Education, job listings, and career management and advancement. Valley Community College Career Center Programs and Services provide career development for all individuals in the community seeking to obtain an education. These services include Career Assessment, Internet and Computerized programs, Career Counseling, Job search assistance, CAL Works, and much more!
- **Rotarium: Located in MER 4-** This room was built by the Local Rotary Club. This room is used as a study hall by Valley Community College physics and science students. It is home to "The Pendulum" that hangs from the ceiling in the center of the room. There are only a handful of Pendulums this size throughout the United States. The main idea behind this display is to demonstrate that the pegs are rotating along with the daily rotation of the earth (just as you are) and they are being knocked down as they cross the Pendulum's path. The Pendulum is not affected by the earth's rotation. If Valley College was located on the North or South Pole, it would take exactly 24 hours for all the pegs to be knocked down, but because of Valley College's location it takes approximately 42 hours to complete this cycle.

7th Stop:

Child Development Center CDC – Valley College Child Development Center (CDC) is accredited by The National Association for the Education of Young Children. The Valley College CDC is committed to providing the highest quality programs possible to children, parents, and students. Valley College's Main Campus is licensed for 60 children and East Campus is licensed for 30. Both sites provide student teaching opportunities under the direction of a mentor teacher. Parent involvement is required!

Enrolment requirements include:

- Children must be at least 3 years old by December 2 of the program year they are enrolled in. Please note that priority is given to those children turning 4 years of age by that date.

- Children must be able to independently handle their toileting needs.
- Parents must submit copy of child's birth certificate
- Immunization card and shot records
- A completed enrollment packet

There is a \$25 registration fee charged to all families. Free preschool is available to those families meeting income requirements.

Operation Hours during Valley College Fall and Spring Sessions

Morning Session: 8:30am- 1130am

Afternoon Session: 1:00pm- 4:00pm

There are no extended hours available.

8th Stop:

Technology Building (TECH)

Occupational Education-The Division of Occupational Education offers a wide variety of transfer and vocational courses and programs. It also provides educational programs designed to meet transfer requirements to four-year colleges and universities for specific majors. Additionally, vocational education programs may provide a first step into transitioning students into career pathways. These programs are designed to enhance your existing skills while meeting the changing demands of today's labor market. Vocational programs can also fulfill your learning goals, contributing to lasting and rewarding employment. Just a few of the Associate and Certificate programs offered are:

- Auto Shop
- Drafting and Technology
- Ag Programs

Dance Studio – Located in the Technology building room TECH18 is the Valley College Dance Studio. There are several forms of Dance taught at Valley College these include:

- Ballet
- Jazz
- Modern

We offer not-for-credit courses which include:

- Salsa & Rumba
- Ballroom Dance
- Latin Dance and much more!

9th Stop:

Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) and Cooperative Agencies

Resources for Education (CARE) - offers services designed to help educationally disadvantaged low income, and minority students who have chosen to continue their education.

EOPS & CARE provide opportunities for:

- Priority registration
- Book Credits and assistance with cost of text books
- Individual and group counseling
- New student orientation and workshops

- Peer advisement, information on resources, and polices designed to help students stay on track in school and be successful students.

10th Stop:

Performing Arts (PAF)

- **Music and Music Rooms**- At Valley College you can learn to play the guitar, piano, sing in the chorus and much, much more. Located in the Performing arts Building are both group and private music rooms where you can practice. These rooms are used by theater and music majors and offer students the opportunity to practice for auditions.
- **Performing Arts Stage** – Room PAF125 is the “Choral Room” at Valley College. This room seats 150 people, theater style. Many groups from both on and off campus use this room for conferences and performances.
- **The Western Stage** – Considered one of the most successful theater programs on the central coast. TWS was founded by Ron Danko over 30 years ago opening for the first time on October 26, 1974 in the newly constructed Valley College Performing Arts Center. It is testament to the dedication of the staff and the enthusiasm of the community that The Western Stage has enjoyed 30 years of expansion and success. Begun as a small summer repertory company comprised of local actors, TWS has blossomed into a year round program featuring talent from across the country. Yet, despite its successes and growth, TWS has never lost touch with its community. Local artists remain the bedrock of the company. Its eight month season repertory, Spring festival of classes, and youth enrichment programs has made this theatre one of the most respected cultural centers on the Central Coast. Valley College offers programs and classes in Theater Arts including: Introduction to Theater, Acting, Musical Theater, Set and Costume Design. The Western Stage, also known as the “Main Stage” at Valley College seats 500 people theater style. Many groups from both on and off campus use this room for conferences and performances. The Western Stage also host major productions every year for the community. This gives students and professional actors a place to show-case their talent.

11th Stop:

Visual Arts Building (VAF)

- **The Gallery** – The Valley College art Gallery showcases both student and local artist collections. There is always something beautiful and exciting to see in the Gallery. These Displays are ever changing so it’s always fun to stop by and see what’s new. Admission is free and the Gallery is normally open Monday – Thursday. It is a good idea to call ahead. Their number is (831)755-6790.
- **Ceramics Lab** – Valley College teaches “Hands-On Art” in the Ceramics Lab. Working with several different types of clay and techniques from coil pots to slab, students have fun and make beautiful inspiring projects. Several different types of firing are used to complete projects. Every semester students of all ages and ability enjoy making clay creations.

12th Stop:

Pool / Auxiliary Gym/ Main Gym

- **Olympic Size Pool** – Valley College has the only Olympic size pool in Monterey County. There are many classes taught in the Valley Pool including:

- Beginning Swimming
- Swim Fitness
- Aquatic Exercises

Also the pool is rented out for both public and private use. In the summer months Lap swim is offered to the general public as a not-for-credit course.

- **Physical Education** – Valley College Physical Education, Athletics and Health Education offers classes including aerobics, aquatic exercise, cardio, golf, self defense, swimming, tennis, track and field, volleyball, weight lifting, and wall climbing. Valley College holds classes in both gyms, the weight room, and outlying facilities such as the tennis courts, sport fields and track. Valley Community College also has both men’s and women’s sport teams. These teams include:
 - Baseball and Softball
 - Cross Country
 - Football
 - Volleyball
 - Soccer
 - Basketball
 - Track and Field

13th Stop:

Learning Tutorial Center

- **Learning Skill Center** – Offers students the opportunity to strengthen their skills in reading, writing, and math through self paced individual programs. The Reading and Writing Lab offers a variety of self-paced lab courses to help students improve their reading, writing, and study skills. Courses are designed to help students improve their comprehension, critical thinking, grammar, writing, and language skills in a friendly, student-centered environment.
- **Tutoring** - The Tutorial Center offers free peer tutoring for a variety of academic courses. The Center recruits and trains student tutors and coordinates tutorial services to students, individually or in small groups
- **Math Lab** - The Math Lab provides an alternative to lecture-based math classes by offering self-paced classes in Math 201 (Pre-algebra), Math 121 (Elementary Algebra), Math 123 (Intermediate Algebra) and Math 151 (Technical Mathematics). In addition, Math 200L (Basic Math) provides a review of basic arithmetic for students. The advantages of taking a self-paced math class are:
 1. There is no time limit for tests.
 2. Students can study at their own pace.
 3. Students can earn the same credit as if they were taking the lecture class and also earn a letter grade.
 4. Help is available to the student any time the Math Lab is open.
 5. Students have access to a broad array of computer software and other resources in the Lab.
 6. The Math Lab provides a convenient and pleasant environment to study.
- **Student Support Services Programs (TRIO)**-is a Federally funded Student Support Service Program designed to assist eligible Valley College students to achieve their academic goals. Services offered include:

- Academic and personal counseling
- Scholarships
- Workshops to develop and improve academic and life skills
- Tutoring services
- CSU and UC campus tours
- Mentoring
- Technology access (computers and graphing calculators)
- **High School Equivalency Program (HEP)** - can help you earn your GED, get a job, or start your college career. HEP in partnership with the Salinas Adult School, will:
 - Provide you with academic skills preparation to pass the GED exam.
 - Offer you academic, vocational, and career counseling.
 - Direct you to appropriate academic and student service programs and resources available to you at The Central Valley Adult School and Valley Community College.

In addition to the academic Program, other services available to qualifying students include:

- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Bilingual Assistance
- Tutoring
- Technology and Computer Training
- Campus extra-curricular activities
- College and Job-Site visits and tours

14th Stop:

Planetarium – The J. Fredric Ching Planetarium (named for the college president in 1962, when the facility was built) offers public star shows most Friday evenings throughout the year. It is also used as a lab for Astronomy classes and is visited by over 7,000 K-12 students on school field trips each year. The Planetarium was completely renovated in 2004 and now has a state of the art full-dome digital projection system called The Konica Minolta Mediaglobe.

Critical Reflection

A debriefing meeting was held on November 21, 2007 to discuss Breaking the Barriers: Adult School to College Project. In attendance were the four adult school teachers/faculty members whose classes participated in the project; Tina Sullen the Director/Coordinator of the ESL programs at Central Valley Adult School and Vicky Gomez her assistant; Mr. Newman, Valley Community College Planetarium Director/Advancement Associate, and me. The meeting was held at the Central Valley Adult School. This was an open discussion meeting and everyone had a chance to talk about what worked and what did not work. Also, we discussed what the adult school representatives would like to see in the future. At this meeting plans were made to bring several other groups of adult school students to the college in spring 2008.

There were four suggestions made by adult school representatives who visited the campus with the students that would improve the students experience during future college orientations. These suggestions were:

1. Using more of the time that the students had on campus to tour.
2. Having College Representatives from different departments such as Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, Tutorial Center, EOPS, and others come to the adult school for workshops and informational sessions before the day of the tours so that the students would be familiar with the programs and be able to find where to go for the help they need.
3. Walking the students through more of the offices such as Admission and Records and Financial Aid. The Instructors wanted the students to have the experience of getting in line at the admission office and be introduced to the person behind the desk. The adult school instructor thought that by doing this it would give the students a chance to get comfortable and be less fearful, when they actually submit their application to register and receive services.
4. As addressed in the results section of this paper, there needed to be more information on attendance policies and home work. In an effort to promote student success, all of the adult school instructors wanted the students to gain a better understanding of college polices regarding attendance and home work. Adult school classes are taught open entry and open exit, meaning that there are no attendance restrictions. The instructors wanted students to understand that if students miss classes, they may be dropped or receive a failing grade on their permanent transcripts. Also, at the adult school there is only in class work, no homework is assigned. The adult school instructors wanted to make sure that students received information about assignment out side of regular classroom work that also would need to be completed in order to “pass” a college class.

All of the feedback on the program was really positive. In the debriefing meeting Tina Sullen, the Assistant Director of the ESL Department for the Central Valley Adult School, said that they look forward to making this a regular event. In a letter that Dr. Sullen wrote to the President of Valley College (see appendix), she states that this project is the first time that Central Valley Adult School and Valley College have had a true collaboration to serve the adult school student. Representatives from both institutions agree that this project and others like it which focus on helping adult school students transition into higher education, in order to fulfill their (the students) long term educational goals are much needed. The spirit of collaboration initiated by the Breaking the Barriers: Adult School to College Project represents groundbreaking work towards building a long term mutually beneficial partnership between the

adult school and college. The adult school now has the full attention of the key college personnel that can solidify an adult school to college pipeline.

The college, in partnership with the City of Salinas, the Monterey County Office of Education, and many other Valley agencies, has recently released The Vision 2020 report (2007), subtitled “Ensuring a College that Matters”. This report forecasts the future workforce and education needs for the Valley’s demographic and the need for aligned programs. Prominently mentioned is the need for articulation between the college’s and the adult school’s programs and services. The fortuitous timing of this comprehensive analysis further underscores the importance and validity of the “Breaking the Barriers” project.

On a more personal level, I have learned many things in the course of working on this project. When the idea for this project first started to come together, I ran it by several people who I thought would be as excited as I was. What I encountered was very different than what I expected. I was told by co-workers that this idea of transitioning adult school learners into college was just too big and that I should not do it. Others said that it might not reflect well on the institution. I was also told that others have tried for years to bring students over from the adult school and had never been able to make any progress in building a relationship that fostered the execution of such a project. Still, what this project taught me is not to give up. Maybe I was kidding myself, but I really believed that bring these groups of students from the adult school could make a difference in their lives by letting them experience what the college had to offer then.

As I did the research, that belief continued to grow. I became more knowledgeable on the issues affecting the valley such as low educational attainment and growing dropout rates. I found out through the research that there were over twenty-three thousand students enrolled at the adult school. I began to realize that the students at the adult school represented a population of students who have basically been overlooked by the community college institution. More than that I began taking to people at Valley Community College about what I had learned.

What I learned is that working towards change can start with one person’s idea. That idea can be huge. That idea can be seen by others as unrealistic and unattainable or even a dream. I

reached some low points during the course of executing this project. There were times when I thought maybe I had lost my mind and this project was simply just too big. Still in the back of my mind, when I closed my eyes I could imagine it. I imagined the potential difference that this project could make in peoples lives. I imagined the generational benefits that the education of one person could make and this kept me moving forward and along the way I moved others forward too. Working towards change can start with one person, but it takes many to accomplish the change itself. It took many, many people to make this project a success and it will take many more people to ensure that projects like “Breaking the Barriers” continue to happen.

The Major Learning Outcomes addresses while researching and executing this project where:

- Critical Communication in English, Language, and literature
- Cross- Cultural Competence
- Ethical Reflection and Social Responsibility

The “Breaking the Barriers: Adult School to College project was a lot of work. It took a tremendous amount of time, effort and planning for this project to become a reality. About a week after the project ended, a young man who had attended one of the tours came to my office. He brought with him a letter he had written. He told me he hoped that it would be helpful for my graduation project. This young man had just picked up his Valley Community College library card. I asked if I could see it. He proudly took it from his pocket. It had his picture on it, the college logo and had “Future Valley College Student” written across the top of it. We both smiled. I shook his hand and told him I expected to see him often. He left; I went back to my desk and read his letter. What I read moved me to tears. I have attached a copy of his letter as an appendix to this paper.

The Adult school student describes how the tour and activities of the day made him feel. They gave him hope for his own future and the future of younger generations. He ends his letter by writing:

The field trip ended, and we stepped out of Valley Community College, in our old yellow bus, with our heads full of dreams and our hearts filled with hopes. That was a walk to remember. One day we might [be] back and maybe, it will be to stay. (Appendix attached)

I sat for along time looking at his letter, realizing that this was the whole reason I decided to do this project. As a future teacher and a student myself, I share his dream and my heart is also filled with hope. Hope and with the belief that the change I continue to work towards, which includes “Breaking the Barriers” and educational success for all students, is indeed attainable.

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Appendix



ADULT SCHOOL

J. CORINNE PRICE, DIRECTOR/PRINCIPAL
CAROLE SINGLEY, PROGRAM COORDINATOR

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
VIRGINIA BAILLIE, PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Dr. _____ Superintendent

November 26, 2007

Dear Dr. _____

I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks for the wonderful work of Andy _____ Director of the _____ Planetarium and Jeanine Curtis, Administrative Assistant for the Workforce and Community Development Center. Andy and Jeanine worked so hard to arrange and coordinate the four campus tours for our students from the Adult School.

We were astounded by the scope of the tours which included so many departments on campus. Our students were literally wowed by their experience and are anxious to return to the school for future study. Particularly popular were the planetarium, the library, the art gallery, child care center, the theater and of course, the snacks at the student center. This was a ground-breaking tour that we have been trying to put together for a few years now. We are so appreciative of Andy and Jeanine for making it work.

We look forward to making this a regular event. Our English as a Second Language students are all on a career ladder which includes English proficiency, GED or high school diploma and post-secondary education. Being able to show them the many possibilities for future studies help make it an achievable goal.

I have worked in Salinas as a high school counselor and administrator at the high school and adult levels for 13 years. This is the first time that we have had a true collaboration to serve our students. We look forward to future tours and projects.

Thanks also to Dr. _____ and _____ for their efforts over the past few years to bring all of this together.

Attached is a copy of the report that one of our advanced students wrote about his tour. As you see, he is anxious to become a Panther!

Assistant Director, ESL Department

Adult School

Cc: Andy _____
Jeanine Curtis

"REACHING THE STARS"



ESL Students from the _____ Adult School approach to _____ Community College in Salinas. (By _____ ESL student _____)



As a student at the adult school, I have been to many field trips, But none like the one that happened on a cold morning of November 2007, the day when I felt that I could reach the stars.

The experience was amazing. From the mere moment when you mingle with all those promising college students, you feel enhanced. Seating on those theater like chairs looking upon the Planetarium ceiling and listening Greek and Roman stories about celestial affairs, make you forget about country borders, fences, migratory queries or any other terrenal dilemma. Beholding kindergarteners being inventively stimulated by the CDC (Child Development Center) teachers and volunteers, made me dream of a hopeful future for the upcoming generations. Knowing that no more than a month later, thousands of books, newspapers, encyclopedias, videos and the majestic internet shall be acquirable for my senses. Enchanted my hunger of learning.

Our encounter with the school staff in every department that we visited was not bad at all. All of them in each department kept repeating to us "This is your community college", "This is your planetarium", "This library belongs to you", "Your health center", "Your Olympic pool". It Made me feel wealthy, full of copiousness! Listening to success stories from people who started like me, struggling with building simple present English sentences in the adult school, who have made it to the top, made me think that if the did it !! Why not me?

The field trip ended, and we stepped out of _____ College, in our old yellow bus, with our heads full of dreams and our hearts filled with hopes. That was a walk to remember. One day we might back and maybe, it will be to stay...

