

Developmental classes prepare students for success

By Crystal Guajardo
Pulse Staff Reporter

Many Palo Alto College students believe they were not prepared for their first year of college, and the number of students enrolled in developmental classes confirms this belief.

According to Institutional Research, 2,157 students are enrolled in developmental Math, 729 in developmental English and 569 in developmental Reading this Fall. Developmental classes prepare students for college-level classes.

"I had laid-back teachers at my high school who didn't expect much," said Sophia Semersky, a sophomore Education major. "With little initiative, we always received a grade of an A. If my high school had higher expectations, I would have been more prepared, but since they didn't, now in college it's really tough."

Like Semersky, James Wright, a freshman Fine Arts major, said he also thinks he was unprepared for college.

"I felt my high school was really controlling and focused more on the rules rather than education," said Wright.

Some students believe that teachers

seemed to place more emphasis on judging them on the way they dressed or looked rather than how well they performed. Standardized test were also a factor.

"I would like to hear more about learning rather than teachers saying 'Remember this for the test,'" said Wright.

"Students would be more prepared for college if high school teachers cared," said Luis Hernandez, a freshman Pharmacy major.

"Because of the teachers who cared, I actually made it to college. If it wasn't for those teachers who offered one-on-one help, I wouldn't know how to learn and push myself," said Hernandez.

While most students say they are not prepared for college because of low expectations and too much emphasis on rules, not learning, others like freshman Sabrina Lopez, an undecided major, said the reason she felt unprepared for college is because she had half days and slacked off a lot.

"If I would have went to class in high school, I would have felt better prepared," said Lopez.

Palo Alto College offers underprepared students the opportunity to develop college-level skills in Reading, Mathematics, Writing, Speech and Personal Development. Based

upon the results of college entry exams and/or previous academic records, students are placed in the appropriate developmental courses. Developmental lab classes that enable students to succeed are also offered.

Lab classes are taken on a pass/fail basis and meet for one or two hours a week. Lab services include computer programs, videotapes, written materials and a college instructor who is available to provide tutoring.

The reading lab class, for instance, is required as part of the developmental reading course. Students work on a computerized program that covers concepts from the textbook and emphasizes vocabulary building.

"Education depends on how bad the students want an education and how many hours are put into studying," said Yvonne Richardson, instructional skills reading specialist.

First-year students should also make use of the required SDEV course. You will learn study skills, how to take notes, the importance of attendance and time management, said Richardson.

For information on free tutoring services in Math, Reading, Foreign Language, Science and Writing, visit www.alamo.edu/pac. Go to the Current Students' tab and click on the Tutoring link.

Mayor Castro sets education as priority

By Mark Gonzales
Special to "The Pulse"

Julián Castro, mayor of San Antonio, expressed his vision for the city's future in a lecture given at St. Philip's College on Tuesday, Nov. 30.

"Educational achievement is the number one priority for this city," said Castro.

He said that every young person in our city should be able to achieve their dreams right here in San Antonio.

The lecture, presented by St. Philip's College President's Lecture Series, was an opportunity for Castro to outline San Antonio's position on education.

He said that San Antonio ranks low when it comes to the percentage of people over the age of 25 who have a college degree.

Castro discussed the challenges of giving young people the environment they need to achieve educational success by drawing from his personal experience.

He said there were three moments in his life that made the difference for him.

First, teacher involvement encouraged Castro to believe in himself. At Hoelscher Elementary in the Edgewood School District, Castro recalled his first grade teacher encouraging him to get ahead in his school

work since he was doing well.

Second, parental involvement was a key to Castro attaining the educational experience important to his success. His mom, Rosie Castro, pulled him from Rhodes Middle School in the San Antonio Independent School District after a school official had commented during school orientation that half of the students would not be there by the eighth grade. She moved Castro and his brother, Joaquin, to Tafolla Middle School in SAISD.

Third, self-determination was a key to Castro's educational success after high school. He applied at all the universities he could. Though he came in ninth in his class and did not have the highest SAT scores, the fact that he applied to these schools gave him the chance that many others chose not to take.

"We were one of very few folks who actually applied to those schools—who reached farther than we thought we could," Castro said.

Castro's other priority is San Antonio's economic development. With education as the bedrock for his vision, Castro will also focus on keeping San Antonio's well-educated workforce at home.

"Brain power is the new currency of success," Castro said.



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