

Written Testimony to the Little Hoover Commission *June 23, 2011*

Leslie P. Smith, Associate Vice-Chancellor of
Governmental Relations, City College of San Francisco

Who is served by your noncredit programs?

City College of San Francisco serves over 25,000 students, mostly of color, every semester in noncredit. Asians are by far the largest ethnic group served in noncredit followed by Hispanics/Latinos with a substantial number of students failing to identify with any of the listed groups. This ethnic makeup is consistent with the fact that 68% of the students attending CCSF noncredit are taking ESL.

Noncredit students are older than credit students with a median age in the 40's and they are significantly more female. Noncredit students are immigrant, disabled, unemployed, underemployed, reentry, second chance, undereducated, but they one characteristic they all have in common is that they are looking for a chance to change their life for the better.

Fall 2010 CCSF Noncredit Students

Ethnic Group	Percent	Number
African American/Non Hispanic	5%	1248
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	44
Asian	40%	10972
Filipino	2%	560
Hispanic/Latino	25%	6941
Other Non White	0%	96
Pacific Islander	0%	67
Southeast Asian	2%	605
Unknown/No Response	16%	4441
White Non Hispanic	10%	2685
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>27659</i>

ESL Student	Percent	Number
Yes	68%	18787
No	32%	8872
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>27659</i>

16 - 19	3%	945
20 - 24	9%	2439
25 - 29	9%	2359
30 - 34	9%	2379
35 - 39	9%	2367
40 - 49	17%	4666
50 Plus	40%	10948
Unknown/No Response	6%	1556
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>27659</i>

Female	57%	15888
Male	35%	9702
No Response	7%	2069
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>27659</i>

How do noncredit students fare when they enroll in credit as compared to students who enroll directly into credit?

Of the 34,551 students who enrolled in credit courses in the fall of 2010, roughly 6500 came from noncredit having no previous enrollment in any credit course, while 762 were enrolled in both credit and noncredit during fall 2010 semester. Both students coming from noncredit and students continuing to enroll in noncredit did slightly better in units passed and GPA achieved than students enrolling directly into credit with no noncredit experience.

**Fall 2010
CCSF Credit Students**

Origin	Percent	Number
CR+NC	2%	762
Credit	79%	27291
Noncredit	19%	6498
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>34551</i>

Origin	Units Taken	Units Passed	% Units Passed	GPA
CR+NC	7.72	5.54	72%	2.75
Credit	7.92	5.44	69%	2.71
Noncredit	7.48	5.38	72%	2.78

The above graph seems to indicate that noncredit helps prepare students better for credit. Currently, nearly every student coming straight out of high school and enrolling in City College places below college level math or English. High school does not prepare students for the traditional credit pattern of one hour in the classroom and two hours outside the classroom of individualized study, more frequently called homework. Noncredit does not use that model and may provide for a much more effective transition from high school to college.

The basic difference between credit and noncredit is NOT the level of instruction since many credit programs go down to counting in math and phonics in English and many noncredit programs teach the equivalent of the high school diploma, i.e. one level below college math and English and noncredit ESL frequently overlaps with credit ESL, but rather the instructional delivery and methodology. To clarify, as stated above, credit uses something called the Carnegie unit which means that for every one hour of instruction there is an expectation of 2 hours of outside work expected, i.e. homework, although this may be done in small groups or other study patterns found in learning communities. Additionally, credit offers courses in the lab or lecture/lab format, but not usually in the areas of ESL, math or English; the lecture/lab or lab is usually an instructional delivery used in the sciences or vocational/CTE courses. The noncredit delivery system is somewhat comparable to a lecture/lab or a lab format in that the work is done in class, it is often individualized allowing students to proceed at their own pace, under the direction of the instructor, and almost always encompasses in classroom practice of new information delivered by the instructor.

A second difference between credit and noncredit may or may not be the goal of the student. Almost all students in a community college have the goal of improving their ability to gain a job, whether it is an entry-level, upgrade, new economic sector, or reentry. This is true of noncredit students, but they may be facing additional barriers, such as less academic preparation, limited English ability, lower economic status and the difficulties that brings, increasing age, disability, parenthood or any number of issues that may make the traditional college credit class less than an optimal learning environment, especially requiring additional study outside the classroom.

Noncredit students, in addition to pursuing better employment opportunities or increased employability, may need help with basic life skills because they are new to the country, come from a disadvantaged background, etc. The noncredit system by being open-entry/open-exit,

ungraded and flexible, offers a learning environment focused on positive reinforcement rather than punishment.

Like credit, ESL, math and English are taken by students not as a major, but rather as a course of study that opens the door to the students true reason for study, whether it is to pursue further academic study, a CTE curriculum, citizenship, or other goal.

Is it common for students to enroll in credit and noncredit simultaneously?

About 2% of the "credit" students continue to enroll in noncredit courses and about 1% of the "noncredit" students continue to enroll in credit courses, for a total of over 1000 students per semester that simultaneously enroll in credit and noncredit.

Additionally, about 7% of the students in noncredit came from credit never having taken a noncredit course before and 1% continue to enroll in credit while taking a noncredit class.

**Fall 2010
CCSF Noncredit Students**

Origin	Percent	Number
CR+NC	1%	272
Credit	7%	1831
Noncredit	92%	25544
Grand Total	100%	27647

The majority of students who come to noncredit from credit take business courses. It is possible to enroll in a short-term course in noncredit that will readily increase your employability. Courses that quickly teach students about the web, word process, spreadsheets, data bases, publishing, etc., are of immediate use to credit students who may not have time to enroll in a semester length and they may not need the credit. Additionally, noncredit business courses are provided at all 9 campuses and are readily available at all times of the day.

However, most students who take noncredit work and have families, thus they go part-time making it harder to take a larger workload, i.e. average one transfer to credit is about 5 units or two classes. This would mean one credit and one noncredit course.

Second, currently the community colleges are not permitted to put together hybrid programs, i.e. programs that would include credit and noncredit courses and that lead to a certificate.

Do your students use the same enrollment procedures and assessments in credit and noncredit?

We make the application process to noncredit as easy as possible for many reasons:

- 1) Many of our students don't read English well, so we collect just the most basic information.
- 2) Most of our noncredit students are not applying for financial aid and thus are not involved in that lengthy process.
- 3) Our whole goal is to encourage students to take classes, not provide barriers, so we are willing to lose a little background information to make the process easier.
- 4) Noncredit is open entry/open exit so we are enrolling students throughout the semester.
- 5) Noncredit is not funded at a rate that allows for sufficient staff support for a more complex process

City College has had the ability to hire "resource instructors" using federal dollars to develop tests specifically related to the curriculum and courses at CCSF. These tests are well respected. We have also had the research dollars to validate these tests.

Credit tests have some specific requirements, such as the ability to benefit, which allows certain students to qualify for financial aid. So, we have not adopted one test.

Additionally, when a student enrolls in credit, we do ask that they fill out the long form application so that we have more information and can get them engaged in the financial aid process.

How does your college work to ensure that noncredit courses and programs bridge with credit courses and programs to provide a seamless transition? Do noncredit and credit courses align? What lessons could other colleges and districts apply to better align noncredit and credit?

First, City College views all courses and programs as a gateway to the future for that adult student. For example, we do not take a look at the student's high school transcript to determine what is missing; we use placement tests to place the student appropriately into math, English or

ESL. The exception to this is our high school diploma program in which we work to complete what is missing so the student can complete as quickly as possible.

The idea of providing a gateway to the adult's future is very important for many reasons:

- 1) They may have left high school many years ago or been educated in a foreign country. We are not looking to rehash past failures. When students educated in a foreign country want to get credit for courses taken in their discipline, our credit program can do an analysis of their transcripts, but at this point they are usually moving into the credit program anyway.
- 2) When they come to us, we recognize their positive experiences as an adult, not rehash educational failures. Placement tests assess exactly that.
- 3) The curriculum is developed within the college so that it links to the courses in the college rather than a statewide standard such as K-12—all is geared towards the future.
- 4) Students usually do not come to noncredit to study ESL because they want to become ESL teachers, rather they take ESL and the other basic skills courses because they provide access to the courses in the students area of interest, i.e. computers, culinary arts, automotive, business, allied health, etc.

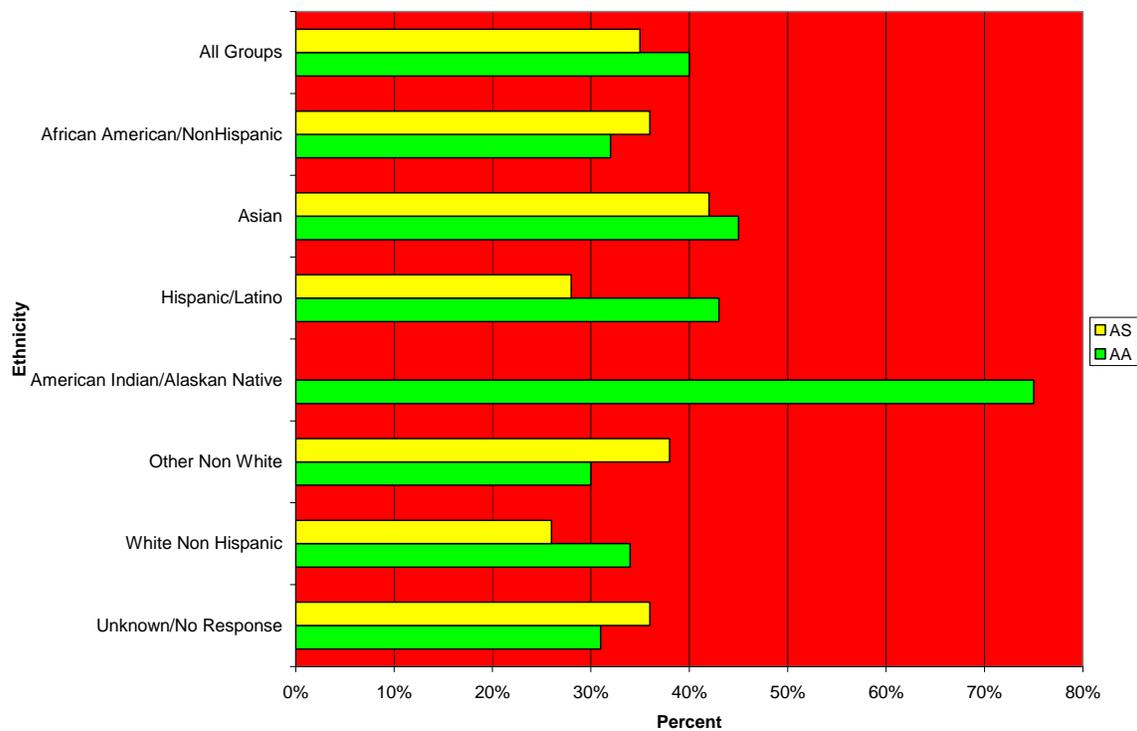
Second, City College has structured itself physically and organizationally to outreach, integrate, and promote students through the curriculum. More specifically, we have

- 1) Created a college that has 9 campuses and 100 off-site locations. This allows us to go out into the community to outreach to students near their home, workplace, or children's school site, and then gradually bring them on to one of the 8 campuses out in the community and then on to the largest campus where the entire credit program is offered. At our Downtown, new Chinatown/North Beach, Mission, and John Adams campuses we are trying to offer up through the general educational core classes in credit, so that it is only when the student specializes that they have to go to another campus. It is fundamental to provide pathways out into the community as well as pathways from the community to the "main" college campus.

- 2) Created a college with departments and schools that are not divided by credit and noncredit. For example, there is one ESL department and one business department. ESL is lead by the Associate Vice-Chancellor of ESL and International Education and the Chinatown Campus. While business is headed by the Dean of Business and the Downtown Campus. Both ESL and Business are run by a department chair which is a faculty position, so they teach 20% of their load and run the department the other 80%. This includes scheduling, curriculum, hiring, managing, and all day to day issues. They are assisted by faculty coordinators that teach part-time and run the programs at the different campuses—ESL is at 8 campuses and business at 9.
- 3) Hired faculty using minimum qualifications for credit usually, so that the faculty member can teach in both. This becomes more complex in business, because there are disciplines within business that demand a specific degree.
- 4) Departmental level curriculum committees that are used to develop curriculum. Basic skills is a community college categorical program that provides money to both credit and noncredit to help develop curriculum to increase student success. These department level curriculum committees feed into the larger college curriculum committee.
- 5) Integrated counseling into departments that serve all students so that all counselors are trained to help students appropriately. We do have counseling departments that specialize in new, continuing, and international students.
- 6) Enrollment services at all campuses thanks to Matriculation dollars. We are working on getting financial aid services out to all campuses.
- 7) One academic senate that has representatives from credit and noncredit, all campuses, and diversified by departments.
- 8) One faculty bargaining unit, paying full-time faculty the same amount based on years of experience and education. Faculty are paid prorata based on load, years of experience, and education.
- 9) One library with intercampus loans, but all electronic services across campuses.

We have worked a very long time to integrate credit and noncredit, breaking down barriers as we go. Although barriers remain and we must continually pursue avenues that will increase student access and student success in attaining their goal. The two charts below show the percentage of students at CCSF that needed noncredit to get to their AA/AS degree and 2) the percent of students taking credit at CCSF that took noncredit classes. These charts show the importance of the noncredit curriculum to providing educational access, especially to students of color. How far would these students have gone if there had been no noncredit to help them out?

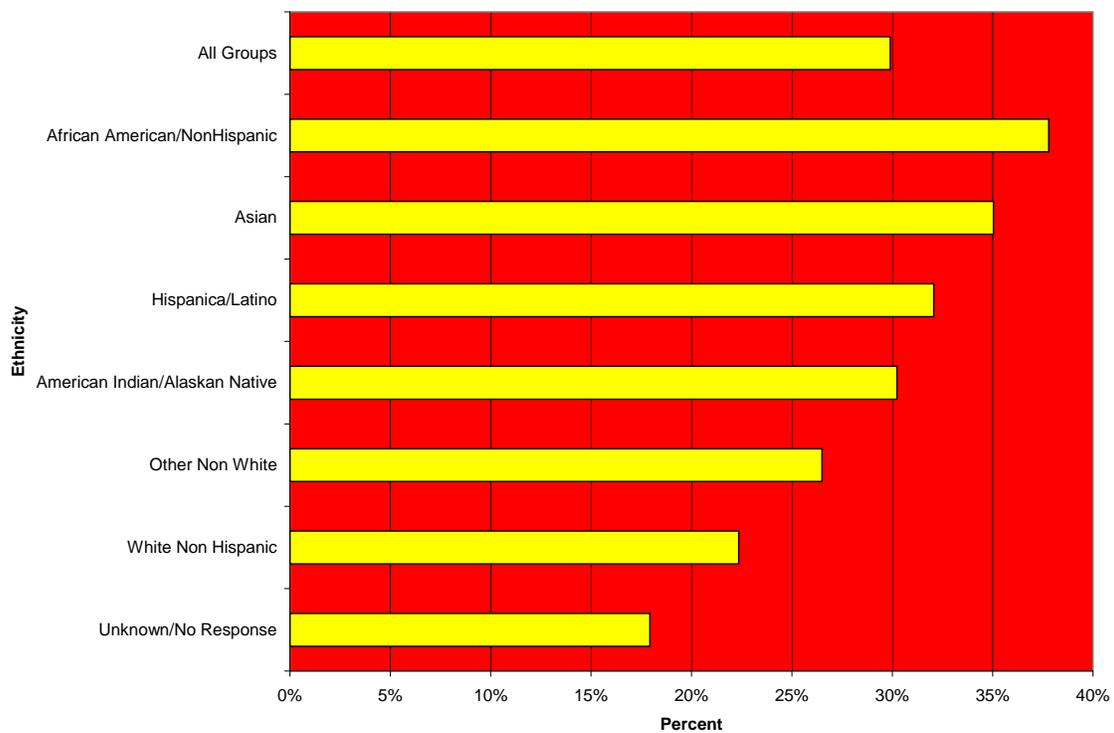
**AA/AS Degree Earners with Noncredit
2009**



Noncredit isn't so much about skill level as it is about a system designed to meet adult needs. It is open-entry/open-exit so that it is available when the adult needs it. It is competency based and individualized so that each student can get what they need out of it. It provides in class learning opportunities rather than following the Carnegie unit model of two hours outside of class for each hour in class. It is flexible and non-punitive, recognizing that when faced with hard choices such as taking care of your child, changing your work schedule, the student does not have to drop out, but rather the program is designed to accommodate these types of needs, using techniques of positive reinforcement.

It is important to recognize the research design and methodology used to document the success of our noncredit students. First, we took time out of the equation. We have designed a program for working adults with lives so we know they go part-time. Therefore, unlike many community college research studies we did not use time as the defining parameter. Rather, we took a look at the student's academic history to determine their starting point and their ending point to see how far they got. In real terms, this is how the students would assess their own success. They are proud of their achievements, they worked hard, and it should be correctly and appropriately recorded.

**Credit Students With Prior Noncredit
2009**



How do you work with local industry to ensure your programs are meeting immediate workforce needs? How quickly are your noncredit programs able to respond to changing industry needs?

All of our workforce preparation programs have advisory committees that are made up of local industry representatives, representatives from other educational institutions, and our faculty so that conversations of changes

in industry needs can be talked through regularly to assess what changes in curriculum need to be made and adjusted on an ongoing basis. These advisory groups also build relationships with industry that helps give our students a leg up when there are job opportunities.

(Unfortunately, unlike credit programs, we cannot set up internships and work study opportunities out in industry to give our students an opportunity to gain work experience.

We can develop new programs or alter existing programs fairly rapidly using faculty expertise, going through our local college curriculum committee. However, the backlog at the State level could be facilitated were the State to approve programs rather than individual courses, such as the credit programs currently have the ability to do.

In your opinion, compared to other colleges and districts in your region, what are some of the benefits of the San Francisco model for noncredit education? Are there elements of the model that could easily work for other colleges/districts? What might be some challenges for other districts?

The benefits of the San Francisco model are

- 1) Programs offered across the District in all neighborhoods of the City and County of San Francisco.
- 2) Large campuses providing full services in neighborhoods.
- 3) Clear linkages and pathways from the sites to the neighborhood campuses to the "mail" college campus.
- 4) Integrated organizational, structural, and physical model across a large geographic area.
- 5) One shared governance system in which noncredit representatives participate equally.
- 6) One hiring process so that there is less of hierarchical distinction between credit and noncredit.
- 7) One bargaining unit with one set of rules and pay scales.
- 8) A commitment to hire full-time faculty in noncredit.
- 9) A value and culture that states noncredit is to be treated equally and equitably.

To start a noncredit program in a district/college has to begin with a commitment to and a recognition of the need to, from the highest level of the college to all levels of the college, to serve and provide the educational needs of the most disadvantaged adults in California whether they are new to the country, in need of a second chance, trying to overcome a disability, continue their education as they became older

adults, or in need of better financial resources through entry, reentry, retraining, upgrading or other career technical education. If, the program is being set up from the beginning with no history, a series of values and principles could be adopted that would allow an “integrated” model to the design from the beginning. For example, most colleges hire by departments, hire the noncredit ESL through the ESL department.

If a college already has a noncredit program in place, but it is not set up on an integrated model, change becomes evolutionary. But, again, starting with values and principles helps. Movement towards any of the above would/could be recognized as a step in the correct direction.

Second, although it is really should be simultaneous, it requires a commitment of resources and time. To reduce the time needed to actually providing the course, other colleges with experience should be more than willing to share their curriculum until the college could fine tune it to their own needs. The state Chancellor’s Office should be called upon to facilitate.

Third, there needs to be a clear statement from the State that this is a State priority and need. This would help reinvigorate programs that already are in place and that can be recognized as State models. That said, there still maybe barriers, but having the State clearly identify this mission as a community college priority would help.

Fourth, we all know that the least prepared students are usually the hardest to educate, yet the funding structure provides two disincentives for districts to offer services 1) the reimbursement rate is the lowest and 2) the counting the hardest—positive attendance. If the State is serious about the community colleges stepping up to the plate to provide educational access and success to these populations, these two inequities need to be remedied.

Fifth, there is clearly a moral imperative to serve this population in the community colleges as envisioned by the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education and the creation of the California community colleges. If the community colleges do not step up to the plate and educate our poor adults, then the alternative cost must be assessed. We will be creating a permanent underclass, without opportunity to improve, and with an unacceptably high probably of costing the State and its taxpayers more as we would turn too many of our adults from assets into liabilities.

A very appreciate thank you goes to Steven Spurling, Associate Dean of Research, City College of San Francisco without whom none of the charts about would have been possible. Thanks also go to Judy Seto, Management Assistant, Governmental Relations, CCSF without whom there would have been no graphics.