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WOVEN INTO THE FABRIC OF OUR COMMUNITY

For 80 years, Sierra College has been part of our community’s story — and yours

by Michelle Carl



Many people can say Sierra College was a chapter in their life. For some, maybe it’s only a paragraph or two. Others could fill a whole volume with their experiences at the college. For 80 years now, Sierra College has been helping people write their own stories while enriching the larger narrative of our region.

Barbara Vineyard’s connection to the community college extends to her grandfather, who graduated circa 1886, back when it was called Sierra Normal College. She attended Sierra College from 1955-57 when it was on the grounds of the high school in Auburn (present-day Placer High School).

“When I went, it was a fairly small school. I think there were 250 students,” she says. “I knew almost everybody there, and you certainly knew every instructor.”

Vineyard spent a lot of time in the biology classroom and helped orchestrate a parade that generated awareness for a bond measure that would support construction of the new Rocklin campus, which opened in 1961. Vineyard graduated in 1957, got married and started a family.

“If it hadn’t been for the college I wouldn’t have gone to college,” she reflects.

Exposing students to the academic world is one of the reasons former professor Joe Medeiros appreciates having Sierra in the community.

“You start growing some really new and different wings here,” says the biology professor, who taught from 1990-2008. “It’s a grand opportunity to hear ideas and see futures that may not have been open to you before.”

Whether it’s the sounds of music coming from one of the college’s many events or the lively discussion of viewpoints other than your own, Medeiros says Sierra feels like a big university campus. But it’s the small campus atmosphere that contributes to student success, helping them transfer to a four-year college or get the skills for a well-paying career. The vibrant and welcoming staff, the safe environment, the beauty of the campus ... all these elements make Sierra the kind of place many never want to leave.

“It’s hard to get rid of students here. They feel at home here, comfortable here,” muses Medeiros, who took the helm as editor-in-chief of the Sierra College Press in 2012. “Look at me. I retired seven years ago, and I come here every day.

“This college really is a family, it’s very collaborative, and I think that’s palpable to the students who go here.”

Vineyard felt the pull back to Sierra College as well. In 1981, she took a position on the Board of Trustees, which she held for 28 years. During her tenure, she saw the campus’ enrollment grow to more than 22,000 and the

“You start growing some really new and different wings here.”

Joe Medeiros
Former instructor and Sierra College archivist

construction of the college’s Learning Resource Center and two satellite campuses in Truckee and Grass Valley.

While other colleges and universities take the top 10-15 percent of students, Vineyard says the beauty of community colleges is that they take the top 100 percent.

“Community colleges don’t turn students away,” she says. “Anybody can enroll, and that means fresh out of high school or if you’re 50 years old.”

An immigrant who needs to improve his English. An older adult who wants to learn computer skills. A future engineer wanting to get an affordable start on her four-year degree. For all of them, Vineyard says, “Sierra College opens the door.”

Sierra College: A Look Back

1936	1943	1954	1957	1961	1981	1996	2005	2011
Placer Junior College is re-established in Auburn. The new site fills the void left since the previous community college closed in 1920 due to declining enrollment during World War I.	U.S. entry into World War II drops the student population to 53.	Placer College is renamed Sierra College and its athletes gain a new nickname – “Wolverines.”	A bond measure to pay for new facilities is passed by Placer County voters.	The new Rocklin campus opens.	Sierra College becomes the summer training camp of the San Francisco 49ers, who go on to win five Super Bowls before leaving the college in 1997.	The 105-acre Nevada County campus opens.	Sierra College ranks first in California for the awarding of associate degrees and #13 nationally.	William Duncan is hired as president to advance the college’s vision and continue its educational legacy.

Matthew Jewett got the training he needed to become a firefighter at Sierra College. When he retired, he came back to the college as an instructor. PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES



ENGINES OF CHANGE

Firefighter trained by Sierra comes back as instructor

by Matt Jocks

Matthew Jewett's path in public safety has taken him to some interesting, exciting and dangerous places. But he never could have predicted it would lead him to Sierra College.

"Crazy how life works out, isn't it?" he says.

From a career as a reserve officer in the U.S. Navy to one as deputy sheriff for Contra Costa County, Jewett decided about 14 years ago to take a dramatic turn in his career.

"My brother [Greg Belin] was a firefighter," Jewett says. "And I saw that kind of camaraderie that they had, and it was something I wanted."

Choosing a path to his new career was a process, as Jewett evaluated his options.

"Sierra College was the best fit," he says. "Most of the curriculum was at night and on weekends, so I could work during the day. And Chief Romer, the instructor, was someone who was known throughout the state."

The results were better than Jewett could have expected. Within seven months after graduating from the Sierra College Regional Fire Academy, he was working for the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District.

There would be one more twist. After a 10-year career at Metro Fire, a back injury forced Jewett into retirement, and he wound up returning to the place where his fire career began — Sierra College.

Now, Jewett and fellow instructors like Grass Valley Fire Chief Mark Buttron are bringing real-world experience to Sierra's program. They say teaching at the community college level has its benefits.

"I really enjoyed my time as a firefighter. But, to me, [teaching] is just as rewarding."

Matthew Jewett

Sierra College Fire Academy graduate and instructor

"You get people changing careers," Buttron says. "You have 18- to 19-year-olds and also people in their 30s. You get a lot of vets. It's a complete cross-section, and I think that really makes for a better learning process for everyone."

Although graduates of the Sierra program have gone on to careers across the country, it is small, local agencies such as Grass Valley Fire that can benefit the most by hiring well-trained personnel.

"Some of the larger agencies have the ability to send people to their own academies," Buttron says. "We can't really do that."

For Jewett, the unexpected twist in his career that brought him back to the classroom led him to experience a new type of career satisfaction and fulfillment.

"I've seen several students from my classes get hired. They are fulfilling their dreams. Sometimes they come back and tell their stories," he says. "I really enjoyed my time as a firefighter. But, to me, this is just as rewarding."

Partnering on Public Safety

Aspiring law enforcement officers at Sierra College are looking for real-world experience. The local police departments are looking for manpower.

The two needs have come together through Sierra's law enforcement internships with the Grass Valley and Rocklin police departments. It is, in the estimation of Lt. Steve Johnson of the Grass Valley PD, a "win-win situation."

Johnson says the interns provide assistance with routine tasks — everything from desk work to delivering evidence, even performing traffic control. Occasionally things can get more interesting, as when two interns had the chance to patrol the city in an unmarked car searching for a suspect's vehicle.

The interns also learn by observing veteran officers and detectives in action, adding to their résumés as they seek careers in local or even federal law enforcement.

Many times, the internships are a way to recruit top-notch talent for the department. As an example, Johnson points to two recent Sierra graduates who were hired as an evidence technician and a reserve officer.

"In both cases, these are people who originally intended to seek careers with federal agencies," he says. "But, in doing their internship, they experienced what a small-town department is like and decided they liked it."

JOBS OF THE FUTURE

Career Technical Education at Sierra College helps students get ahead

by Anna Quinlan

After nearly 20 years working in the sheet metal industry, Neal Hayes was ready for a change. As the fastest-growing industry in California, the field of solar energy appealed both to Neal's desire for professional growth as well as his love for working in the field.

"I wanted to know the whole system," Hayes says. "I didn't just want to be a laborer anymore."

But he needed photovoltaic classes to get into the solar industry. When he discovered Sierra College has one of the highest pass rates in the country on the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) exam, he knew it was the right fit.

While enrolled at Sierra College, Hayes had the opportunity to serve as a team captain for the Solar Regatta, a contest hosted by SMUD in which students construct solar-powered boat motors and compete in a race. Hayes' team mounted two solar panels and an electric motor on a 16-foot canoe and ended up taking home the prize for overall champion.

"We did a lot of outside labs and volunteer work," says Hayes, factors that he feels have given him "a lot more room

for advancement" than a traditional classroom setting.

Hayes took all three of the photovoltaic courses that Sierra College offers and passed the NABCEP exam on his first attempt. He had a job offer in hand before he even completed the program.

Christine Tingler's search for a new career also led her to Sierra College. After she lost her job working for a radio station in 2014, she quickly realized she wasn't prepared to re-enter the job market in IT, which had changed greatly since she last worked in that field in 2004.

"I started sending my résumé out, but I wasn't getting a response," Tingler says. "I had been out of the industry for too long. The equipment has evolved so much and there are protocols that are no longer used. You need to be up-to-speed on all of those things."

Tingler decided, at age 51, she needed to go back to school. She says she chose Sierra College because it offered all the classes she needed to get a degree in technology support and transfer to a four-year university to continue her education.

"The courses are great and the professors have been really excellent," says Tingler, who recently finished her technology

degree and is currently working toward obtaining a Cisco certification. "Everything I have taken so far has gotten me prepared for re-entering the job market."

Additional reporting by Mike Blount.



Neal Hayes wanted to join the fast-growing solar energy industry and got the skills to do it through Sierra College Career Technical Education.

PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES



Christine Tingler was unsure how to re-enter the job market after she lost her job in 2014. Career Technical Education at Sierra College is helping prepare her for a successful career in the technology industry.

PHOTO BY KIM PALAFERRI

Fueling the Economy with Career Technical Education

Career Technical Education programs prepare students for entry into in-demand fields. Students finish their programs with a wide range of knowledge: theoretical, hands-on, applied and experiential. Many programs offer evening classes to accommodate students who are already working professionals, although students at all levels and with goals ranging from personal enrichment to career advancement are welcome. Sierra College offers 36 degrees in 24 programs within the CTE department (listed at right).

For more information on CTE, call 916-660-7871, or visit www.sierracollege.edu/academics/divisions/cte

- Administration of Justice
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Applied Art and Design
- Automotive Technology
- Business
- Computer Information Systems
- Computer Science
- Construction and Energy Technology
- Drafting and Engineering Support
- Early Childhood Education
- EMT/Health Sciences
- Engineering
- Fashion
- Fire Technology
- Geographic Information Systems
- Mechatronics
- Music
- Nursing
- Nutrition and Food Science
- Photography
- Recreation Management
- Technical Theater
- Welding Technology

INVESTING IN COMMUNITY HEALTH

Sutter Roseville works closely with Sierra to meet health care needs

by Anna Quinlan

In the fast-paced world of health care, quality can't be sacrificed. Not only are skilled individuals needed to do the job, they need up-to-date training and the experience to meet real-world challenges.

Sutter Roseville Medical Center has had a steady pipeline of these quality professionals thanks to its connection to Sierra College. Sutter recruits Sierra College students from a variety of programs, most notably nursing.

"Sutter Roseville Medical Center has had a relationship with Sierra College for decades," says Chief Nurse Executive Barbara Nelson, Ph.D., RN. "During that time we have been privileged to help in the education of countless RNs — many whom now provide care throughout Sutter Health."

The field of nursing tends to experience cyclical shortages, an issue that Sutter Roseville and Sierra College work closely together to mitigate, thus ensuring that the community is not underserved by the availability of quality nurses.

"We're heading into another shortage [of nurses] right now," says Sutter Roseville CEO Pat Brady. "It's a priority for us to produce an adequate number of students, make sure that training is available for them, and recruit the best ones to our hospital."

To achieve this, Sutter has donated toward nursing scholarships at Sierra College as well as a multi-year grant that aims to support the college and its programs.

We have a large commitment to serving the community, as does Sierra College. We're really working together.

Pat Brady
CEO, Sutter Roseville

"We view these donations as investments," Brady says. "From my perspective as a leader at Sutter, we have a large commitment to serving the community, as does Sierra College. We're really working together."

Beyond the financial contributions that Sutter makes to Sierra College's nursing program, the hospital serves as an important component of many students' hands-on experience.

"We have also had several of the Sierra College instructors continue to work for Sutter Roseville, making the clinical connections for the students current and relevant," Nelson says.

At the end of their first year, a typical nursing student will be assigned to a faculty coordinator at the hospital and begin clinical rotations in key specialties. Through these rotations students have the opportunity to observe the day-to-day duties of a Registered Nurse and work side-by-side with the hospital staff as an active participant in patient care.

"This gives us a chance to see the students and their level of poise in challenging situations," Brady says.

The nursing staff have periodic meetings with every student to evaluate their performance and provide honest feedback.

"It's our job to give them an accurate view of how they're doing to ensure their long-term success," Brady says.



Sutter Roseville Chief Nurse Executive Barbara Nelson supports Sierra College's nursing program, which delivers top-notch graduates that may find employment at the hospital.
PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

Sierra College Health Fair

The FREE Sierra College Health Fair will be from 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 23, 2016 at the college's Rocklin campus. This event will focus on ALL aspects of health: environmental, intellectual, social, physical, spiritual, occupational and emotional. The public is invited and encouraged to attend and enjoy music, vendors, speakers, classes, a 5K fun run/walk and more.

Visit www.sierracollege.edu/events for more information.



SIERRA COLLEGE NURSING STUDENTS

GOING BACK IN TIME

Sierra's Natural History Museum is a treasure trove of life

by Anna Quinlan

Where can you find a Woolly Mammoth tusk, a life-size *Pteranodon* and a 38-foot-long complete California Gray Whale skeleton hanging from the ceiling?

The answer is the Sierra College Natural History Museum.

Everyone in the community is invited to experience the museum located in Sewell Hall (just be quiet, as students are attending science classes in the building). The treasure trove of specimens includes 70 animal head-mounts, 140 skulls, and dioramas from the Mesozoic era to today.

It all started with Sierra College biology professor Raymond Underhill, who dreamed up and oversaw construction of a Natural History Museum in the mid-1960s. Underhill and his colleagues observed a growing public interest in ecology and believed that by offering a natural history museum alongside a planetarium, they could foster this interest and educate the community.

"At the time, it was the only dedicated museum within the community college system in California," says current Natural History Museum Committee Co-chair Richard Hilton.

Over its first decade, more than 150,000 people participated in lectures, demonstrations, exhibits, field trips and classes at the museum. When Proposition 13 cut off the museum's main source of funding in 1978, the program



SEWELL HALL DINOSAURS



Sierra College Professor of Earth Science and Natural History Museum Committee Co-chair Richard Hilton regularly leads students on field programs to collect fossils, which are on display at the museum. PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

“There’s just no other museum like this in the area.”

Richard Hilton

Co-chair, Sierra College Natural History Museum Committee

all but collapsed. When Hilton was hired in 1981, “the museum was outdated,” he says. “There were four huge displays, but they were antiquated.”

Several science teachers, having experienced firsthand the impact that the museum had on the community, stepped in and founded a museum committee in hopes of continuing its legacy.

“They really have worked tirelessly as volunteers,” Hilton says of his colleagues who help keep the museum running. “One of our greatest strengths is that not only do we have a collection of materials that is unrivaled in the area, but we also have a staff with the expertise to explain it all.”

Sierra College is currently in the process of raising \$1 million to fund the expansion of services offered by the Natural History Museum. The museum committee hopes to hire a salaried part-time director in the near future.

Hilton regularly leads students on field programs to collect vertebrate fossils and paleontologic specimens, many of which are also on display at the museum. With a designation as one of the top 30 museums associated with higher learning in the nation (the only community college on the list of otherwise four-year institutions), Sierra College's Natural History Museum itself is a rare find.

“There’s just no other museum like this in the area,” Hilton says. “When our students leave Sierra College they often wonder where the museum is at their four-year university, only to find out how unique our museum really is and what an asset it is to the community.”

Something’s Always Going on at Sierra

Everyone is invited to experience a feast for the eyes, ears and mind at one of Sierra College's many events.

An abundance of activities happen throughout the year, including music concerts, Earth Day, Broadway at Sierra and more. The popular Dinosaur Day Science Fest, for example, serves as both a fun-filled family event and a Natural History Museum fundraiser. Art lovers will enjoy a trip to the Ridley Gallery or checking out the college's 2016 theatre production of “Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.” There are weeklong celebrations of culture and social awareness that expose us to new points of view. And the school hosts the annual A Taste of Excellence event, which includes a tasting of fine foods and wines from the best restaurants and wineries in Northern California.

Find more information, including dates and ticket info, online at www.sierracollege.edu/events.



Dusty Byers was struggling to adjust to college life, but found support at Sierra College's Veterans Resource Center.

PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES



NEVER ALONE

Veteran adjusts to college life with help from resource center

by Mike Blount

A Mission to Help Veterans

The Veterans Resource Center at Sierra College provides former service members with information and access to resources to help make the transition to college easier.

"The military is a very structured environment where they are told what to do," says Blake Rood, a counselor at the center. "When they get out, they have to make their own choices."

Counselors at the center help veterans do that by connecting them to educational benefits, tutoring and many other resources. The center was recently chosen as the regional home for the federal Small Business Development Center program, which provides resources to veteran entrepreneurs in an eight-county area.

"Peer-to-peer contact is really important. We understand the environment they are coming from," Rood says. "We want to help them get a vision and develop a roadmap for their future."

For more information about the Veterans Resource Center, email veterans@sierracollege.edu or call 916-660-7470.

When 31-year-old Dusty Byers got out of the military in December 2013, he enrolled at Sierra College to put his education benefits to use. Byers had served a year in Afghanistan in the U.S. Army Special Forces, so he figured community college would be a piece of cake.

"I thought it was going to be really simple, so I ended up taking more units than I could handle," Byers says.

His experiences in war made it difficult to be a student. When he was in Afghanistan, he was trained to be observant and notice details, but in the classroom, that skill turned into a distraction.

"I was watching people's mannerisms and not focusing on the lessons at all," he says. "I ended up getting really bad grades in the first month."

Byers tried to focus in the classroom, but realized he wasn't retaining what he was learning. One day when he was feeling particularly defeated, Byers says he was about to walk off campus and never come back. He decided to stop by the Veterans Resource Center and let them know he was going to give up on school.

"I ended up talking to a guy and he told me they couldn't get me in for two weeks," Byers says. "I started to walk out and he stopped me. He said, 'Hold on brother. Come back in here and we'll get it figured out.' We ended up talking and I found out he was in a group that we attached to in Afghanistan."

Byers began talking with other veterans in the resource center, too. He could relate to their experiences, and in this new setting, he felt comfortable taking tutoring sessions.

"For the first time since I had been out of the service, I felt like I wasn't alone," he says.

In spring of 2015, Byers began working at the Veterans Resource Center because he wanted to be part of what had helped him achieve his goals. He earned a certificate in recreation management and will transfer to California State University, Sacramento next year to work toward his B.A. in recreation, parks and tourism administration. He hopes to become a park ranger one day.

"Without those guys in there, my life would be so different," Byers says. "Myself and other veterans at Sierra are very lucky to have the resource center there."

For the first time since I had been out of the service, I felt like I wasn't alone.

Dusty Byers
Sierra College graduate and
U.S. Army veteran



GOING PLACES

Transfer students are more successful when they start their journey at Sierra

by Matt Jocks



Lexi Wagoner says the faculty at Sierra College helped her succeed in the classroom and on the field. Her efforts have earned her a softball scholarship to Chico State.

PHOTO COURTESY SIERRA COLLEGE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT

Although Lexi Wagoner says she isn't a math whiz, she knows when the numbers are on her side. When she speaks of her experience at Sierra College, numbers often come into play. Whether it's low numbers like expenses and class sizes or high numbers like her rising grade point average and the softball scholarship that will take her to Chico State, Wagoner likes the way they have added up for her.

"This has been very beneficial for me," Wagoner says. "It's helped me grow in terms of academics and mature as a person."

Devin Moss wanted to go to an Ivy League school but wasn't accepted as a freshman. He built a foundation for college success at Sierra College and now attends Cornell University. PHOTO COURTESY FRATERNAL COMPOSITE SERVICE, INC.



Wagoner didn't take a direct path to Sierra. She initially went to Delaware State on an athletic scholarship. When that program "fell apart" she heard about Sierra College. There, she found a faculty that cared and special programs, like tutoring, that helped her develop academically.

"Our coaches pay very close attention to our academics," she says. "They have us write down, every two weeks, what's due, when our study halls are, when our practices are, so we can manage our time."

Wagoner has managed it well. Although she had never earned a GPA above 3.0 at the college level, she's now averaging 3.5 in her last three semesters. In addition to her success in the classroom, Wagoner earned junior college All-America honors as an outfielder for the Wolverines.

"I think [going to community college first] is definitely better," she says. "Because there are fewer students, the teachers are more accessible, rather than just sitting in a lecture in a big building. It's very affordable."

"I've got all my core classes taken care of and I'm ready to go on."

Devin Moss also discovered that community college could be a stepping stone to great things.

As a 4.25 grade point average student in high school, Moss was used to academic success. His plan was to get into an Ivy League school and play basketball. When he wasn't accepted to Columbia, he decided on a different route.

Sierra hadn't been his first choice, but it might have been his best one.

"Sierra was great for me," he says. "I had some really challenging classes there. You hear things about community college, that maybe the academics aren't that good ... but that wasn't the case at all. I had a lot of very good teachers."

For Moss, the primary benefit was making a successful transition to a four-year college. Moss was able to get an internship and gain valuable experience while still living at home.

"It's also a good opportunity to just learn a little more about yourself, to explore different classes and really think about what you want to do," he says.

He landed at Cornell University in Ithica, New York, where he's majoring in communications, with an eye toward a career in marketing. Thanks to two scholarships and financial aid, his tuition is covered.

"I'm doing well," he says. "I know, without that experience [at Sierra], I might have struggled a little more when I got here."

Helping Transfer Students Get There

Sierra College makes sure students get to the next step by making the transfer process easier. About two-thirds of its students who apply broadly to the University of California system are accepted, and 60 percent of transfer students to UC pay no tuition, with the help of financial assistance programs.

Some of the programs offered to assist transferring students include:

- Multiple workshops throughout the school year, providing information about requirements and procedures.
- Direct contact with university representatives, including campus tours and advising appointments.
- Annual College and University Day event that brings representatives from more than 50 colleges to Sierra.
- Assistance in completing university admission applications.
- Transfer Admission Guarantee programs, in which students can enter into agreements with UC or private schools. The agreements lay out specific course and GPA requirements that will guarantee admission.

Brandon Silveira needed extra support — financial aid, counseling and housing — to get launched in college. He got it at Sierra College and after earning his social science degree, he came back to serve other students like him.
PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES



A NEW BEGINNING

Former foster youth felt supported at Sierra — and now helps other students achieve their goals

by Matt Jocks

Not all learning takes place in the classroom and not all rewards at a college come in the form of a grade or diploma. Anyone who needs clarity on those points can ask Brandon Silveira.

Silveira came to Sierra College ready to learn, but not necessarily equipped to make it through the college experience. As a former foster youth, he was on his own. He needed financial assistance and other forms of extra support.

What he found at Sierra opened his eyes — and his heart.

“It was a whole new world,” he says. “Everyone was so welcoming. It was a place where I just felt safe. It seemed like every place I went was a place I felt good.”

Silveira benefited from an array of Sierra’s services. He needed financial assistance to manage fees and housing. He utilized Sierra’s health center benefits and crisis counseling centers. A faculty mentor provided encouragement for him to step out of his comfort zone and join the student government. He was able to secure a job in the cafeteria.

After getting a degree in social science from California State University, Sacramento, Brandon returned to Sierra to work in Student Services, where he now helps students who face some of the same challenges he had.

“My experience in foster care was not good. I just knew that this would be a new beginning for me. I was determined not to give up,” he says. “I have four siblings and I wanted to be a role model for them.”

He couldn’t do it on his own, however.

Years have passed, but the names and acts of the people who assisted him remain fresh in his mind.

Ryan Goodpastor helped him work out his housing situation when the Pell Grant came up short: “He made a difference in my life, and he may not even know it,” Silveira says.

Mary Ann Jones and Sharon Beachley in the Health Center: “I didn’t have a mom growing up, and they were like moms to me.”

Mentor Tim Haenny encouraged him to come out of his shell: “I was not a follower, but I wasn’t a leader. But he said, ‘I’ll guide you.’”

Silveira thought about those, and others, when he began working in the financial aid department.

“I always felt like, no matter what my work load was that day, I always had the opportunity to go to that window and assist someone,” he says. “And that would make the entire day worthwhile.”

“Everyone was so welcoming. It was a place where I just felt safe.”

Brandon Silveira

Former student who now works in Student Services

An Investment in Our Future

As the executive director of the Sierra College Foundation, Sonbol Aliabadi gets to help donors help students achieve their academic goals.

One of the biggest ways the Foundation does this is by offering over \$300,000 in scholarships each year. Aliabadi points out that although Sierra’s tuition is low compared to four-year schools, these gifts help pay for living expenses, such as books, gas and food that can really add up for cash-strapped students.

“We hope that by offering them a scholarship of some sort, at least we can relieve some of that pressure and they can stay in college,” she says.

When the college’s general fund is lacking, the Foundation fills the gaps by supporting projects that have the highest need. These have included bringing wi-fi access to campus and establishing an emergency fund to help students overcome hardships that may otherwise cause them to drop out of school.

The Foundation has also been able to fund a comprehensive support program for former foster youth. The Guardian Scholar Program supports this traditionally at-risk population by providing tutoring, counseling, housing assistance and a care pack stocked with everything from socks and shampoo to 8 GB thumbdrives and book vouchers.

Although most higher education giving goes to elite schools, Aliabadi says the trend is changing as more donors look to community colleges. She tells the story of one donor, a UC Berkeley grad, who left his estate to Sierra. Aliabadi asked his attorney, “Why Sierra?”

“[His client told him], ‘You know if I give my estate to Berkeley, it’s just a drop in the bucket. But I know if I give it to Sierra College ... it can do a lot of good there.’”

“There are some people who realize that the community college truly can do a lot with [their gift],” Aliabadi says.

How you can help:

- Attend the annual A Taste of Excellence event, held every spring, which raises funds for the Guardian Scholar Program to support former foster youth.
- Visit www.sierracollege.edu/foundation to give online to specific programs.
- Call the Foundation at 916-660-7020 to discuss planned giving.
- immortalize a loved one by creating a scholarship in his or her honor.

NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN

From current events to the history of rock, older adults can feed their brains through OLLI

by Matt Jocks

It started innocently enough. But before long, Ron Teilh was hooked.

Of course, if you're going to be hooked on something, knowledge isn't a bad way to go.

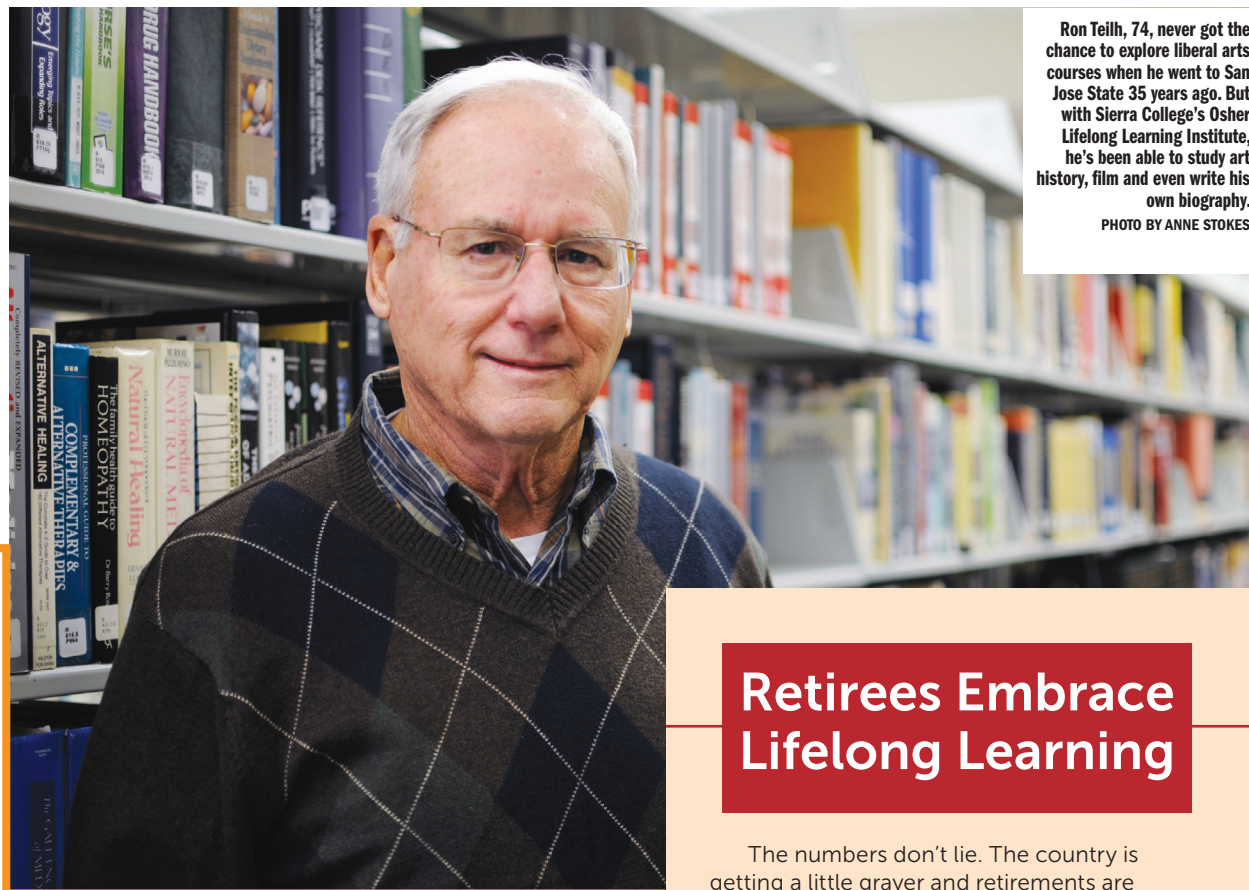
Teilh, 74, had recently retired from his job at Northrup Grummon and relocated with his wife from Fremont to Rocklin, when he saw a flier. It was about a course on American foreign policy being led by Sierra College's president at the time, Dr. Leo Chavez.

There had been training courses at his work, but Teilh hadn't been in an academic setting since getting his degree from San Jose State University more than 45 years earlier.

"It was just about 15 of us meeting in the administration building," Teilh recalls. "And I found it to be a fairly high-level class. It really met my needs, what I was looking for."



OLLI TAI CHI COURSE



Ron Teilh, 74, never got the chance to explore liberal arts courses when he went to San Jose State 35 years ago. But with Sierra College's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, he's been able to study art history, film and even write his own biography.

PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

"I got my degree in financial management. ... I think what OLLI does is provide exposure to a lot of things I might not otherwise have studied."

Ron Teilh
Sierra College OLLI member

Teilh says he probably wouldn't have explored art history, either, but did so through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), a learning community for adults age 50 and up who want to explore new areas of learning — without tests or grades. In addition to art history, Teilh took courses related to current events, literature and film. One of Teilh's favorite recent courses was on the history of rock music, led by a former disc jockey.

Ultimately, Teilh's experience as a student led to his appointment on OLLI's Advisory Board, where he helps in the selection process for courses and instructors. There is an open invitation for suggestions from those who would like to instruct a course.

"I got my degree in financial management. I didn't really have a chance to take many liberal arts courses," he says. "I think what OLLI does is provide exposure to a lot of things I might not otherwise have studied."

Retirees Embrace Lifelong Learning

The numbers don't lie. The country is getting a little grayer and retirements are getting a little longer. The question becomes, what to do with that extra time?

Older adults living near Sierra College have found one possible answer in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), a unique learning community for lifelong learners age 50 and up. The classes, covering topics as diverse as international relations and rock music, offer a chance to explore new areas of knowledge — without tests or grades. But it can be more than that.

"When you're retired, it's pretty easy to become isolated," says Ron Teilh, who began as an OLLI student and now sits on the board.

Teilh says taking OLLI courses "expands your horizons." It also creates a community within a community. Learning new ideas and engaging in social interaction have both been shown to help our brains stay sharper as we age.

Sierra College is one of only three community colleges nationally to receive a grant from The Bernard Osher Foundation to provide this educational opportunity for older adults.

To find out about OLLI course offerings, visit www.sierracollege.edu/olli or give us a call at 916-781-6290 or email us at olli@sierracollege.edu.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Q&A with Sierra College President Willy Duncan

by Michelle Carl

In June 2011, Sierra College Superintendent/President Willy Duncan added his name to the list of administrators who have led the campus over the last 80 years. Here, he talks about staying current with economic trends, challenges (yes, parking is one of them), and why hackers are always welcome at Sierra.

How is Sierra College for everyone?

We really are the higher ed option that is available to the entire community. Whether you are a high school student wanting to begin your higher education career, or an adult who's working and needs a few classes to get a promotion or retrain for another job, or whether you're interested in enrichment courses, all of that can happen at a community college.

Can you give me an example of how Sierra College forms partnerships with the community?

We just finished a project with a local company, Energy 2001, in partnership with Western Placer Waste Management Authority and our energy department that created a solar array at the county waste facility. It's a great example of what I call a public-public-private partnership. We created something that's going to be good for the community, but was also a great training program for our students.



What kinds of challenges face the campus right now in terms of serving its 20,000 students?

Space is one of them. You constantly have to add space if you want to grow, and that's a challenge because it's expensive. Our aging campus is a challenge for us. The original campus was built here in the early '60s. And there's always the challenge of traffic and parking. As we get more and more students, we're faced with that challenge of where do we put them?

What about keeping up with the fast-changing economy?

Technology [is driving] change so quickly that we have to be very nimble to respond to those changes, so that the jobs we're training students for are going to be there when they receive their degree or certificate from us. It's really about being out in the forefront. You want to be so well connected to industry and the economy that you see [changes coming] and can begin to adjust your programs.

What innovations are you proudest of?

Our partnership with Hacker Lab is right on the forefront of what's happening in workforce development and the maker movement that's growing across the country. If I'm a small business and I don't want to go lease a space on my own or operate out of my home, I can go into a space like [Sierra College's] Hacker Lab. It gives the community access to equipment, to technology and to other people with brain power. We're really excited about the innovation that can be created in a space like that.

“Technology [is driving] change so quickly, that we have to be very nimble to be able to respond to those changes.”

Willy Duncan
Sierra College president

What are you doing to support students who need extra help?

The Hub is something we created a couple of years ago. It really recognizes that many of our students might be first-generation college students, so no one at home has the experience to help them go through our processes, which can sometimes be intimidating. So what we've done is hire student ambassadors who call students [and offer assistance].

What does the future hold for Sierra College?

A real focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering, math), as many of the jobs and programs of the future center around STEM. We'll continue to break down silos and partner with high schools, Sac State and other four-year institutions to create seamless pathways. I'm looking forward to the future. I think the future is bright for our community and our students.

SIERRA COLLEGE: OUR STORY HAS JUST BEGUN

Sierra College's value stretches far beyond the people who attend classes there. Whether it's improving the quality of our public safety personnel, providing jobs that fuel our economy or giving us access to arts and cultural programs that enrich our community and our lives, Sierra College is for everyone.

Sierra College offers four campus locations throughout Placer and Nevada counties, including Rocklin (main campus), Roseville, Grass Valley NCC (Nevada County Campus) and Truckee. In addition to the main campus 80th anniversary, the Grass Valley campus is also celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

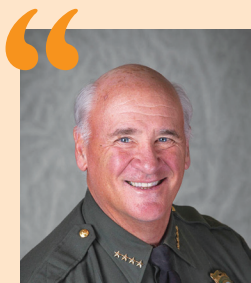


Share your Sierra College story

In honor of its 80th anniversary, Sierra College invites community members to share their experiences at the college. Visit yourstory.sierracollege.edu to submit yours today!



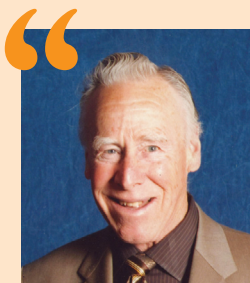
Why Is Sierra College Important to Our Community?



"The foothills for years have been associated with gold. Sierra College is another rare gem found in Placer County. Sierra College has over the years produced members of public

safety, education and business. We are very fortunate to have discovered this treasure and benefited from it the last 80 years."

Ed Bonner
Placer County Sheriff



"Being in the business of senior care for most of my life, our companies have recruited many gifted and compassionate nurses who received their training at Sierra College. I believe that higher education is everything for those seeking to enrich their future

potential, and I am impressed with Sierra's ability to provide access to a quality education at a very reasonable cost."

Martin A. Harmon
Founder and President
Western Care Construction Company, Inc.



"As an adult student and mother of five, attending Sierra College provided me the flexibility I needed at an affordable cost to take the needed courses to complete my bachelor's degree in finance and insurance."

Alice Perez
External Affairs Manager, AT&T