

Starting (or re-starting) your college experience

Did you commit (or re-commit to goals this week that include higher education for yourself or for loved ones? Have you put off finding out how to get started? Maybe you think you'll have to wait now until classes start in the fall semester? Or did you hear that getting enrolled at a community college now is a huge hassle?

As the dean at the El Dorado Center of Folsom Lake College, I can guarantee you that we have a class (or several) that would interest you and/or advance your chances for a better job now or in the future.

Whether you finished high school in El Dorado County recently or you graduated 20-plus years ago from a high school outside our region, you still have the opportunity to enroll at the El Dorado Center of Folsom Lake College to start classes this month (most full-term classes begin Jan. 17). We still have space for you in a wide selection of courses, both during the day and in the evening. Almost all of our classes count toward transfer to four-year schools but you can also take them for general interest even if you don't currently have a transfer or job-skills-training goal.

We also want to make getting into classes for any student as painless as possible and we're holding registration workshops in January to help any potential student with the enrollment process.

If the last thing you heard was that getting into classes at a California community college is next to impossible — that is old news. In all but our most in-demand courses (like math and some sciences) we have plenty of capacity



to accommodate you and your whole family in college courses that can lead to new careers and/or transfer to any four-year college or university in California and throughout the United States.

You may have heard rumors that "life-long learners" are not welcome at our local community college. This is not true. Although in recent years there have been some changes (mandated by the state), we still welcome students who are taking classes just because they are interested.

If you've set a goal around higher education this New Year and want to know more about how to get started right away, stop by one of the registration workshops at the El Dorado Center on Wednesday, Jan. 11, and Thursday, Jan. 12, between 4 and 7 p.m. to begin the steps toward a better future (or just taking a class in which you might have always had an interest). Every potential student in our community is welcome at these sessions, but the focus of these workshops is really on those members of our community who may feel (for whatever reason) that they've lost touch with their local college and want

What do you think?

Have an opinion on these topics? Send a letter to the editor or a My

to start or restart their educational journey.

The workshops are designed so you can drop in anytime between 4 and 7 p.m., get just the information you need or want and then leave when it is convenient for you. Our helpful staff will be there to assist you in any way they can, from completing your Folsom Lake College application to enrolling you in classes. We'll also be able to make appointments at college resource offices (including counseling and financial aid) so you may follow up *at your convenience* to get the information you need.

The El Dorado Center of Folsom Lake College, Placerville's hometown community college, has a well-earned reputation for teaching excellence and a staff whose top priority is seeing you succeed and progress toward your educational goal. Our faculty members are focused on teaching and learning and our staff members are focused on providing the resources you need — counseling, tutoring, financial aid and others — to persevere and reach your goals.

When we hire faculty or staff members, we intentionally seek those who understand our mission and demonstrate through their experience and presentation a bona fide commitment to undergraduate education. We systematically select those teachers who have developed the ability to accommodate diversity (in the broadest sense) in the classroom. We look for instructors with the ability to take students with disparate educational backgrounds (the highest academic performers and those who need a second chance at academic success) and transform them all into college-level achievers. Our class size (generally fewer than 35 students) is appropriate for our mission, we don't employ teaching assistants

and our instructors are selected to be responsive and personable team players.

We hear from many El Dorado Center students that they have particularly valued the time they've spent here because our responsiveness to their needs and our ability to connect them with resources (both on campus and in the community) helped to create a sense of "family" for them. Our relatively small class sizes and our compact physical layout means students have the opportunity to interact extensively with faculty and staff as they take the first (or the next) step in fulfilling their educational goals.

If you're worried about the cost of college — we're still affordable. We offer students the opportunity to get a great start on a college education without incurring huge loan debt. Our enrollment fees (currently \$46/unit) are about 80 percent less than a student will pay at California State University, Sacramento, and 90 percent less than UC Davis. In addition, almost half of those attending community college qualify for a fee waiver, so their costs are essentially reduced to the purchase of textbooks (often a significant expenditure, but at least enrollment fees are waived).

And remember, there is still time to enroll for classes for the spring 2017 semester. The campus is located on Campus Drive, just above the El Dorado County Office of Education (off Green Valley Road) in Placerville.

If you want more information call (530) 642-5644 or connect online at flc.losrios.edu. I hope to see you at our Registration Workshops and enrolled in classes starting on Jan. 17.

Dale van Dam is dean of Instruction at Folsom Lake College's El Dorado Center in Placerville.

Turn column to nstack@mtdemocrat.net and make your voice heard!