

Anthony Beebe: SBCC Proud to Bring Back Adult Education



(Santa Barbara City College photo)

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“Adult Education” has a long and colorful history in Santa Barbara, dating back to 1918! Let me quickly trace a bit of it here.

At the close of **World War I** (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I), there was a great national concern about immigrants who could not speak English. “Americanization” committees were formed across California.

Pearl Chase (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pearl_Chase), a great Santa Barbara civic leader, was appointed chairwoman of our local Americanization committee and recommended to the Santa Barbara Board of Education that citizenship and English classes be offered to foreign-born community members. The recommendation was accepted, and on April 1, 1918, there were 81 students enrolled in the new “Evening Program.”

The classes were widely popular and grew rapidly. Over the next several decades, a number of principals oversaw the growth of the Evening Division, including Eldon Ford, Grace Ruth Southwick and **Selmer O. “Sam” Wake** (<http://library.sbccc.edu/inthebeginning/memoirs-and-profiles/administrators/sam-wake/>).

In 1959, **Santa Barbara Junior College** (<http://www.sbccc.edu>) was formed, with **Adult Education** (<http://www.sbccc.edu/extendedlearning/>) becoming a division of the college. Dr. Sam Wake continued to lead Adult Education at the college and greatly expanded the courses in a variety of areas enriching the community.

When Dr. Wake retired in 1972, Dr. Martin Bobgan took over Adult Education and continued to grow it. At one point, more than 2,400 classes were offered through Adult Education, and the program was hailed as the finest of its kind in the nation.

In 2009, citing fiscal reasons, the college administration at the time made the decision to end free, state-funded adult education courses, converting them to fee-based courses. The **SBCC Center for Lifelong Learning** (<https://www.thecll.org>) was started to provide a structure for the fee-based courses.

Since beginning at SBCC, I have heard a great deal about the history and lore of Adult Education at SBCC. College and community members alike have shared with me what it was like during the heyday of SBCC Adult Education. It was a model program serving the community like no other in California!

Having looked into all of this, I recommended to the **SBCC Board of Trustees** (<http://www.sbcc.edu/boardoftrustees/>) that we bring back the free, state-funded Adult Education program. The board enthusiastically and unanimously agreed!

Accordingly, the college is moving forward in developing the SBCC "School of Extended Learning," incorporating all the best of what we know works in Adult Education! The **School of Extended Learning** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7533qEd08to>) aims to advance career and life skills for our entire community. We will provide robust offerings of tuition-free adult education classes, career skills courses, community programs such as our Dual Enrollment program with our local high schools, and much more.

This is a special time for Santa Barbara City College — little did we know that it will be our honor to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of adult education in Santa Barbara in 2018! We are planning to celebrate this significant milestone in several ways throughout the year, and will be inviting our community to join us.

As a community college, our core purpose is to provide accessible, high-quality education for all. In that spirit, I am thrilled that the college and community understand and respect the significance of community-focused education programs. What a wonderful opportunity to serve our community!

You don't have to wait for our grand celebration to join us for classes at the School of Extended Learning. This Fall, there are already more than 800 classes to choose from, and many more to come! **Please click here for more information** (<http://www.sbcc.edu/extendedlearning/>).

— **Anthony Beebe** (<http://www.sbcc.edu/presidentsoffice/about.php>) *Ph.D., Ed.D. is superintendent/president of Santa Barbara City College* (<http://www.sbcc.edu>). **Click here for previous columns**

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