

# Delta College classes in Calaveras libraries?

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SAN ANDREAS - San Joaquin Delta College, which never built a campus in Calaveras County despite the hopes of county residents, might someday operate classes in county libraries under a proposal from Calaveras County Supervisor Cliff Edson.

Edson says his proposal could divert about \$450,000 a year in Delta funding to operate learning centers in Calaveras libraries that might otherwise be closed by budget cuts.

It could also give Delta locations to expand classes in Calaveras. Hope for building a Calaveras campus has faded after Delta officials decided to spend \$250 million in bond money approved a decade ago to build campuses elsewhere, including \$15 million trustees voted in March to reserve for a site near Lodi and Galt.

Only part of Edson's plan, however, makes sense to the trustee who represents Calaveras County on the Delta College board.

Trustee Steve Castellanos said that while the college is already working to expand its class offerings in Calaveras, he doesn't understand how it's possible to justify funding the operation of library buildings as learning centers until enrollment grows enough to require it.

"The only way to be successful is to demonstrate you have the demand," Castellanos said. He said that's true whether the college runs courses in its own buildings or in facilities belonging to other entities.

Delta's offerings in Calaveras County in the past decade have been only sporadic, in part because of poor attendance.

Officials with Delta, Calaveras County and the Calaveras Unified School District have been working since late last year to increase college class offerings here.

That paid off Saturday when Delta sent some of its counselors to a college orientation event at Calaveras High, said Terri Tanner, who runs that school's career center.

About 60 students attended, and one of the things they learned was that Delta will this fall offer four classes on the Calaveras High campus. Those courses, English 79, English 1A, political science, and computer science, will meet evenings and will be available to anyone.

"I've had community members contact me, especially about the computer class," Tanner said.

The hope is that the first four classes will be a hit, prompting Delta to add a science class and other offerings until students could complete all their general education requirements toward a bachelor's degree.

Edson also hopes the college will offer vocational classes such as fire science or water utility operation. He sees creation of a viable college path within the county as a building block for economic prosperity.

"What would that do for our economy? Well, it would keep the kids here for a few more years," Edson said. "It sets us up with a work force that is trained just in case we can attract an employer that wants to come in."

Edson argues that persuading Delta to spend more money in Calaveras also corrects an injustice. He said that the college currently takes in about \$1.6 million a year in taxes and bond assessments paid by Calaveras County property owners. And he calculates that Calaveras taxpayers have provided \$19 million to the college since the county became part of the Delta district back in the early 1960s.

"Where's the results of that? I can't see it," Edson said.

Edson hopes to bring political pressure to bear. Although he has not yet pitched his proposal to Delta College President Kathy Hart, he is seeking support from state legislators. And he says he and other Calaveras officials will, if they can't get satisfaction from Delta, start the process to join a different community college district where the county might get better treatment.

Castellanos, meanwhile, says he's glad that all involved have "gotten past" the bitter struggle over whether to build a brick-and-mortar campus in Calaveras and are now focused instead on expanding class offerings in other facilities.

"There is a nice little partnership that is growing between the county and the college," Castellanos said. "We do share the same goal. We want to provide a great quality education to as many folks as we can."