

High School Diploma Application Narrative  
Submitted to Chancellor's Office in June 2009

1. Demonstration of Need

Drop Out Rates

The School of Continuing Education serves a 155-square mile District that is home to 18 communities and 16 school districts. The 2000 Census indicates that in Orange County, 51.3% of residents are White, 30.8% Latino, 13.8% Asian and Pacific Islander, 1.5% African-American, and 2.7% all other races.

According to the California Postsecondary Education Commission, in Orange County, the graduation rates (compared to the number of freshman enrolled four years earlier) are showing evidence of decline. In both 2005 and 2006, the overall graduation rate in Orange County was 72%, while in 2007 the graduation rate was 67%. Furthermore, according to the California Department of Education, dropouts rates in Orange County for the most recent year available (2006-2007) was 10.0% across four years of high school, at a rate of 2.5% of students per year dropping out of high school. Dropout rates in Orange County were disproportionately high for Latino (16.1%) and African-American students (22.5%) across 4 years.

Of the school districts served by SCE, which include Anaheim Union, Brea-Olinda, Fullerton, La Habra, Los Alamitos Unified, and Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified among others, 4-year dropout rates ranged from 2.2% to 8.3%. These statistics provide strong evidence for the need to provide a flexible, lab-based adult High School Diploma program in the service area.

CAHSEE Rates

When total CAHSEE pass rates are combined across the 7 administrations per year, rates look favorable in Orange County for the 2007-2008 school year. Statistics show that 86% of students in Orange County passed the Mathematics portion of CAHSEE and 85% passed the English-Language Arts portion. SCE's local schools districts' CAHSEE pass rates ranged from 80% (Anaheim Union) to 95% (Los Alamitos Unified). However, these statistics take into account students that may have taken CAHSEE multiple times, thus inflating the overall rates.

When examining just the November administration in Orange County in 2007, the rates are much lower at 43% for both Math and 42% for English-Language Arts. In the school districts SCE serves, pass rates ranged from 36% to 61%. These statistics illustrate the need for bolstering the basic skills of students both statewide and in Orange County.

Education Required for Local Employment Industries

Overall, Orange county employment is expected to increase 18.0% from 2004-2014. The top 5 fastest growing industries include administrative and support services, food services, local government education, full-service restaurants, and specialty trade contractors.

According to the Orange County Workforce Investment Board, in 2004 it was estimated that in Orange County 70.4% of jobs did not require a high school diploma, 7.5% required post-secondary education, and 22.1% required a bachelor's degree or higher. Of the three categories, it is projected that jobs requiring a bachelor's degree or higher will grow the fastest (23.2%).

However, jobs that do not require a high school diploma will still continue to grow, albeit more slowly (16.0%).

Yet in Orange County, as of 2007 the median price of a home was nearly \$470,000, while the median family income for a family of four in 2007 was \$78,700. At this income, the purchasing power is approximately a \$245,000 home. This suggests that while residents of Orange County may continue to find jobs in the area without a high school diploma, their low incomes will render them unable to purchase a home. Many low-income earners will either live in crowded conditions within the County or will commute long distances from locations outside of the County.

In SCE's local service area, as of 2007 it was estimated that between 18.2% and 20% of jobs required a bachelor's degree or higher, while nearly 70% of jobs required less than a high school diploma. Consequently, approximately 30% of jobs in the local area of North Orange County will require a high school diploma or higher, which provides support for offering an adult high school program in the area. Due to the high cost of living, it is likely that an even greater number of residents will seek out a high school diploma to increase their earning potential. This is corroborated by the US Department of Labor statistics, which indicate that an earnings increase of up to 42% occurs when one achieves a high school diploma.

#### Impact on Similar Programs at Neighboring Colleges

There are 4 major community college districts in Orange County – North Orange County CCD, Rancho Santiago CCD, Coast CCD, and South Orange County CCD. At these community college districts, excluding SCE, \_\_ others offer adult high school diploma programs.

However, Orange County is home to just over three million residents, dispersed over a large geographic area. The need and demand for an adult high school diploma program in North Orange County is strong, as evidenced by SCE's steady and dramatic increases in enrollment in the adult High School diploma program. In 2006, 2,618 students were enrolled at SCE, in 2007 4,144 students were enrolled, and 2008 has seen an enrollment of 3,551 and the school year has not yet come to an end.

As of the 2000 Census, North Orange County had a foreign-born population of 263,390 residents, and 130,540 residents without a high school diploma. The number without a high school diploma, projected to 2010, is expected to increase to 138,114 residents. This represents an enormous future pool of students in the service area that will potentially seek to obtain a high school diploma.

SCE's student population is consequently very diverse, and the high school diploma program attracts ESL students who may have received advanced education in their home country but wish to obtain a United States high school diploma. The school also attracts low-level readers who may have repeatedly failed the CAHSEE exam in English-Language Arts. In addition, the school attracts previously incarcerated students who are currently on probation and are mandated to obtain their High School diploma.

The high school diploma programs offered by other community college districts have also seen steady growth in student enrollment, and serve different communities in service areas that are at a considerable distance from North Orange County. These findings suggest that SCE's adult high school program will not have an adverse impact on other Orange County community-college based adult high school programs.

## 2. Student Assessment

### Student Academic Placement

At the School of Continuing Education, the Matriculation Department delivers an Orientation to all students who have registered to enroll in the Adult High School Diploma Program. During this orientation, students learn about the structure of the program and the requirements for graduation. SCE also administers the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE), Form 9, during this session.

Students are asked to bring any official transcripts from previous high school(s) attended to the orientation. These transcripts are then sent to the SCE Records Office, where an SCE Transcript Evaluator reviews the students' transcripts, determines the prior coursework that the student has successfully completed, and indicates the courses and number of units the student will need to complete at SCE in order to obtain the High School Diploma. Consequently, students' academic placement in the program is primarily based on the subjects and number of credits students need to complete in order to meet SCE's diploma requirements.

However, the transcript evaluation is not the sole source for student academic placement. One week after orientation, all students are required to return for an appointment to meet with a matriculation counselor. At this appointment, the counselor reviews with the students their previous High School transcripts, a student educational plan is created, and TABE performance is interpreted.

The TABE is a standardized assessment developed by CTB McGraw-Hill that was normed on an adult population. Following the testing manual, SCE first administers a 25 minute "Locator" test, which then determines which level of TABE the student should take. SCE offers all four levels of TABE – ranging from Level E, which reflects content typically taught in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade – to Level A, which reflects content taught between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

The TABE Survey assesses the skill areas of reading, math computation, applied math, and language. While SCE currently does not use the TABE for placement, during the past year SCE's Research Analyst has conducted an empirical validation of TABE to determine its appropriateness for the student population and for the ability of this assessment to predict students' performance in the high school curriculum.

Results of the TABE validation overwhelmingly supported the use of this assessment at SCE, and the TABE overall battery score significantly predicted students' performance across high school subjects. SCE is in the process of submitting these results to the Chancellor's Office in order to secure TABE as a locally managed approved instrument. Once this approval has been obtained, SCE intends to use TABE scores for "advisory recommendations" to students. Based on the empirical validation of cut scores, and in conjunction with multiple measures, counselors may refer some students for additional remedial or educational support in SCE's Learning Center, either prior to beginning subjects in the High School program, or concurrently. Additional diagnostic tools may be used as needed in the Learning Center to target the students' academic weaknesses. Furthermore, the High School lead instructors and Learning Center faculty communicate with each other on the progress of each student, and work together to devise the best action plan for helping students' succeed.

## Tracking Student Academic Progress

Once the student begins subjects in the High School curriculum, students' progress is continually monitored. Students use workbooks to complete credits for the High School subjects, and these workbooks contain tests at the end of each chapter. Once all chapter tests have been taken, test scores are averaged, and the overall average score must represent a passing grade in order to receive credits for that subject. Instructors in the lab work closely with students that are not performing well on the tests, and are also available when students are having difficulty understanding any of the material in the workbooks.

Student test scores are entered electronically in SCE's Electronic Class Record, an online system that tracks students' performance on tests, credits and subjects completed, and final grades in each subject. Once a student completes individual subjects, this information is also rolled into SCE's management information system—Banner.

Students that are struggling in any area are given individual support by instructors and instructional assistants, and may be referred to the Learning Center if additional remedial support is needed. Students may also be referred back to Counseling or other matriculation services.