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Counselor Helps Grads Battle Writer’s Block

I t can happen to any student. Heading into the homestretch on the way to a master’s degree he or she hits a brick wall. Somewhere between the “all but” and the “done” looms the thesis. Francine Toder, a counseling psychologist at the Psychological Counseling Services Center, says the sheer magnitude of the thesis is often paralyzing to students. To help them cope, she runs a writer’s block support group for students trying to complete their theses.

“The thesis seems so big,” Toder says. “No matter what students are told, it’s still a monster in their eyes. They can end up immobilized by the stress.”

Part of the problem is that thesis students aren’t in regular classes. “As a result, they feel alienated,” Toder says. “A thesis is different than other projects. There is not much guidance so it seems vague and terrifying.”

Toder says the support group doesn’t deal with writing per se. Instead it focuses on the psychological underpinnings that interfere with the process. She says procrastination can be the result of:

• Childhood barriers. Students can get bogged down in the perfectionist expectations of their parents. Toder says. Or they can get caught up in their own unrealistic standards that if something’s not perfect, it’s a failure.

• Advisor concerns. Dealing with an advisor can be inhibiting when the student sees the advisor not as a person but as a judge. “Sometimes advisors are bad,” Toder says. “But mostly it’s projection on the part of the student.”

• Fear of finishing. “Some students have been in school so long that it’s frightening to think of a life with no school. Not finishing the thesis is a way to avoid what comes next,” Toder says.

• Satisfying someone else. Toder notes. “If someone else wants you to finish very badly and they keep hounding you, there’s a feeling that ‘It’s not what I want, it’s what others want.’”

Fear of judgment. Students often fear being judged, both by others and by themselves. “The funny thing,” Toder says, “is once the thesis is a finished project, the last person to look at it is usually their advisor. But students get caught up in the fact it will be published and available to anyone.”

Toder spreads the word about the support group through a flyer she sends to all thesis coordinators and the graduate studies department. The group, of usually eight to 10 students, meets weekly for an hour and a half in the fall and goes through the end of the school year. Toder says the University population is usually pretty near the American River.

Training Targets Computer Failures

aking aim at computer failures that have cost business and government millions of dollars, CSUS has begun intensive new training for seasoned technology professionals.

The Professional Development Program focuses on strategies for managing groups of software developers, cost and scheduling, quality assurance and related issues. It’s designed to help managers avoid snafus such as the $100 million child support system California was forced to abandon in 1997.

It is one of just five such programs established this year in partnership with the Institute for Electrical and Electronic Engineering Computer Society (IEEE-CS). Others are at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Southern Polytechnic State University in Georgia, the Oregon Graduate Institute of Science and Technology, and the University of Strathclyde in Scotland.

Many computer projects have proven difficult to manage because of the large number of possible configurations. They often require hundreds of contractors, technical personnel and managers.

“This will be a tremendous service to this region’s technology community,” says Basil Sherlund, who directs the new CSUS program.

“I’ve seen so many failures of software-intensive systems, and there is just absolutely no reason for it,” Sherlund says. “The problem is not that the people managing the projects don’t have good intentions. They don’t have the knowledge, and we can teach them.”

Sherlund helped the IEEE-CS create the new program and get it started at all five universities before being hired to direct the training at CSUS. He has worked in software development for a number of companies, including AT&T, General Motors and Chrysler. He also has been involved in developing software standards since the early 1980s.

About 250 professionals from business and government are expected to enroll in the new Professional Development Program this year, with the number growing to more than 1,000 in coming years.

The program was a good fit at CSUS because of the interest of a number of faculty members in developing software engineering standards. In addition, many CSUS graduate students have worked with the IEEE-CS on software engineering standards and other software engineering management issues.

Its establishment is also the latest in a string of accomplishments for the University’s College of Engineering and Computer Science. Last fall, the College began offering a master’s degree in software engineering, the first public university in the state to do so. That same semester, U.S. News and World Report ranked its engineering program 26th in the nation among those focused on undergraduate education.

More information is available by contacting Sherlund at 452-3340 or b.sherlund@computer.org.

Conference to Feature Top California Journalists

The Center for California Studies at CSUS will host its sixth annual California Journalism Conference and Awards Dinner on Thursday, Feb. 24.

The event will honor the best public affairs reporting in print and broadcast, and will bring together some of the top journalists in the state. Awarded to be honored at the conference will be announced next week.

The event will be in the University Union, with panels in the Orchard Room and dinner in the Redwood Room.

The first panel, on “Pandora’s Polls: The Uses and Misuses of Polls in the News Media,” will feature George Skelton of the Los Angeles Times; Alice Scott, a media consultant and former KCRA reporter; and Val Smith, chair of the CSUS communications studies department. It will be moderated by Tim Hodson, executive director of the Center for California Studies.

The second panel, on “The Business of Journalism,” will feature Rick Rodriguez, executive editor of the Sacramento Bee; Cynthia Craft, managing editor of the California Journalist; and Virginia Ellis of the Los
Jean Houston at CSUS Feb. 18-20

Jean Houston, an influential thinker in human potential, will present a three-day workshop at CSUS Feb. 18-20. The workshop will explore ways of engaging with the ancient myths and modern society.

Jean Houston has written 15 books, spoken in more than 40 countries and worked personally with leaders throughout the world. Houston often led seminars with the late Joseph Campbell on the relationship between ancient myths and modern society. For the last 30 years she has co-directed the Foundation for Mind Research and she founded the Mystery School.

For all her achievements, however, Houston may be best known for helping First Lady Hillary Clinton write It Takes A Village. Their imagined exercise on what Eleanor Roosevelt might have said about improving society for children was leaked to the press in 1996 and portrayed as new-age mysticism.

The upcoming workshop is 7 to 10 p.m., Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Sunday. Registration is $224 and $100 for CSUS students, and space may be reserved by calling Regional and Continuing Education at 278-4433 ext. 0.

The keynote speech, is $25. Attending the conference and the keynote speech, is $25. Attending the conference is $25.
Campus Events Set for Prospective Students

Prospective CSUS students can take part in two upcoming outreach events. Transfer Day 2000, designed for community college students interested in transferring to CSUS, is Monday, Jan. 21 in the University Union Lobby Suite. The event runs from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Registration begins at 8 a.m. Prospective students can take a campus tour and attend information sessions on financial aid, transferring community college coursework and hot careers. They can also learn about services and programs such as housing, childcare, parking and shuttle service and student activities.

Drop-in admission for the fall semester will be available for students who meet the admission requirements. "College: Making It Happen," a workshop for parents who want their children to attend college, will take place Saturday, March 4. It will be 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the University Union Lobby Suite.

The session is designed to help parents of students in grades six through nine ensure their children are academically and financially prepared for life after high school. Information, materials and presentations will be available in both English and Spanish.

"College: Making It Happen" is co-sponsored by CSUS, UC Davis, the Los Rios Community College District and the University of the Pacific.

More information on either event is available by calling the CSUS Outreach Office at 278-7362.

Salmon, Taxes and More in Series

The first talk in the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies’ and the graduate program in public policy and environmental studies’ spring 2000 colloquium will be on "Impact of Competition on the Death and Growth of Government Programs." It will be presented by James Cox, CSUS professor of government.

The remaining lectures in the series are as follows:

- Timothy Gage, director of the California Department of Finance, will speak on "The Governor’s 2000-01 Budget for California: Priorities and Policies" at 4 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 29 in the University Union Lobby Suite. Jim Meyer, director of California’s Little Hoover Commission and a CSUS alumus, will speak on "Problems Inherent to All Statewide Social Policy in California" at 4 p.m., Wednesday, March 15 in Amanda Hall 216.
- Mary Brentwood, CSUS professor of governmental studies, will speak on "Salmon Fisheries and Politics in California" at 4 p.m., Tuesday, March 21 in the University Union Lobby Suite.

Angus Wright, CSUS professor of environmental studies, will speak on "Citizen Oversight of Development Banks: Success or Failure?" at 4 p.m., Tuesday, April 5 in the University Union Student Board Chambers.


with the needs and direction of other campus programs and the Sacramento region at large. Details: 278-6504.

Campus Diversity Forum

The Faculty Recruitment Group, under the direction of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Jolene Koester, will hold an open forum meeting on campus.

The forum will take place from 1:30 to 3 p.m. in the University Union Ballroom and is designed to encourage campus input into the group’s discussion. Details: 278-6504.

Capital Fellows Program

The Center for California Studies at CSUS is now taking applications for three of the four segments of its Capital Fellows Program, which places CSUS graduate students each year in an 11-month fellowship program in public service.

Fellows in the program work as staffers in the legislative, executive or judicial branch of state government. They enroll as graduate students at CSUS and receive 12 units from the government department or the public policy and administration program.

Fellows receive a monthly stipend of $1,882 and health benefits. Applications for the Assembly Fellowship, the Executive Fellowship and the Senate Fellowship must be postmarked by March 1. Selections will be made in May. The application deadline has passed for the Center’s Judicial Administration Fellowship.

More information is available by contacting the Center for California Studies at 278-6906.

Free Eating Disorder Screening

Psychological Counseling Services at CSUS will offer free and anonymous screenings on eating disorders Tuesday, Feb. 15.

The screenings are designed to help those suffering from an eating disorder. It will be held on the second floor of the Suzanne A. Sinively Student Health Center in conjunction with Eating Disorders Awareness Week (Feb. 14 - 18). Those who would like to complete the screening are welcome between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Participants will watch a video, hear a presentation, complete a brief written questionnaire, meet individually with a health clinician, and, if needed, receive referrals for treatment.

Eating disorders are illnesses associated with severe body image distortion and an obsession with weight. Left unchecked, eating disorders can be deadly. Sufferers binge, purge, and/or excessively diet despite severe physical symptoms. An estimated 5 million Americans suffer from anorexia nervosa, bulimia and binge eating.

More information is available at 278-6416.

Eating disorders are illnesses

Available at OCE

There are a number of potential internships, service learning partnerships and other opportunities available for faculty and/or students through the Office of Community Collaboration.

• working on an HIV project with the Community Services Planning Council,

• teaching students to work on computers at an after-school program with the Sacramento Police Athletic League,

• designing and supervising after-school recreation activities for at-risk schoolchildren with the Sacramento Police Athletic League,

• mentoring students with various organizations, including Oak Park Care, Sacramento Police Athletic League, Kenneth Avenue Middle School, Jonas Salk Middle School, and the Boys and Girls Club,

• new initiatives with dance and music activities with Kenneth Avenue Elementary and the Sacramento Police Athletic League,

• working on the cross response line, advocating on behalf of victims and helping with fund-raising and special events for Volunteers in Victim Assistance, and

• helping develop a computer network, survey clients or work on the newspaper for the YWCA of Sacramento.

More information and additional opportunities are available at 278-4769 or oec@csus.edu. The Office of Community Collaboration’s website is at www.csus.edu/ ecc.
Ongoing

Work of Gustavo Reynoso, paintings, 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday - Friday and from 5 - 8 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday, University Union Exhibit Lounge. Continues to Feb. 18.

Monday, Feb. 14

Reading East: California’s Asian Pacific Experiences Traveling Exhibit, created as part of the Sesquicentennial Celebration, noon to 4 p.m., Library South Reading Room. Continues to Feb. 29.
Student art exhibition reception, time to be announced, Robert Else Gallery, Kademi Hall. Continues to March 15.
“Preparing for Academic Challenges,” Black History Month, Chisolm Isaac, outreach counselor, noon, University Union Orchard Suite.

Tuesday, February 15

“African Americans in Music: A Historical Account Past and Present,” Black History Month, Sonya Blake, student activity advisor, noon, University Union Foothill Suite.
“Densifying Library Databases,” 1 - 3 p.m., drop-in workshop, Library Instruction Lab, Library 2024.
Screenings for eating disorders, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m., Psychological Counseling Services, Suzanne A. Stuvev Student Health Center. Drop-in welcome. Details, call 278-4610.

Wednesday, Feb. 16

Dallas Black Dance Theatre, Black History Month, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m., University Union Ballroom. $22/50 CSUS students with I.D. Tickets at Central Ticket Office, 278-4723, or at BASS.
“Don’t Get Caught in the Web,” 7 - 9 p.m., drop-in workshop, Library Instruction Lab, Library 2024.

Thursday, Feb. 17

Distinguished Service Awards Banquet, 6:45 p.m. reception, 7:30 p.m. dinner, University Union Ballroom. RSVP by calling 278-6255.
“Problem-Based Learning,” Kathy Jarvis, nursing, Center for Teaching and Learning teacher workshop series, noon - 2 p.m., Lassen Hall 1102.
“The Impact of Competition on the Death and Growth of Government,” James Cox, government, 4 - 5:30 p.m., University Union Delta Suite.
“Youth Peace and Cultural Experience in Ghana, West Africa, Summer 1995,” Black History Month, criminal justice professors Cecil Cotton and Ernest Uwazie and students, noon, University Union Orchard Suite.
Visiting scholar speaker, Elizabeth Langland, Victorian scholar and dean of Arts and Letters at University of California, Davis, 4 p.m., University Union Auditorium.

Friday, Feb. 18

Women’s gymnastics vs. Seattle Pacific, 7 p.m., Hornet Gym. $5/$4 seniors/2 kids under 12 CSUS students free. Tickets at Central Ticket Office, 278-4723, or at BASS.
“Jump Time - Year 2000,” Jean Houston, motivational speaker, 7 - 10 p.m., University Union Ballroom. Continues Feb. 19 - 20. Registration is $224 for the 3-day event. Call 278-4433.

Saturday, Feb. 19

Women’s basketball vs. Eastern Washington, 7 p.m., Hornet Gym. $6/4 other students and seniors/children 12 and under. Tickets at the door, or to reserve tickets call 451-3732. Continues Feb. 24 - 26 and March 3 - 6.

Swing dance exhibition, Hepcat Swing Club, noon, University Union Redwood Room. Free.

Thursday, Feb. 24

Tom Deluca, Annual Zany Hypnotist Show, 7:30 p.m., University Union Ballroom. $8/$5 CSUS students with I.D. Tickets at Central Ticket Office, 278-4723, or at BASS.

Monday, February 21

“Demystifying Library Databases,” 1 - 3 p.m., drop-in workshop, Library Instruction Lab, Library 2024.
“Don’t Get Caught in the Web,” 10 a.m. - noon, drop-in workshop, Library Instruction Lab, Library 2024.
Men’s basketball vs. Montana, 7 p.m., Memorial Auditorium, $16/8 and 1-sts. $6/5/10 reserved CSUS students free with I.D. Tickets at Central Ticket Office, 278-4723, or at BASS.

Friday, Feb. 25

Head ing East, musical depicting the history of Asian Pacific people in California, part of the Sesquicentennial Celebration, the East West Players, 8 p.m., University Theatre, $15/13 seniors and children 12 and under. Tickets available by calling the Interactive Asian Contemporary Theatre at 452-6174 or at the intersection gift store, 423 S. St. at 446-6645.