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Right time to teach: CSUMB trains professionals for a new career

By Claudia Melendez Salinas

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Bill Schrier was away from high school classes for more than 20 years when he accepted an invitation to speak at Carmel High.

The former federal prosecutor gave an advanced-placement class lecture about *Marbury v. Madison*, the landmark 1803 Supreme Court decision that helped define the "checks and balances" of the United States' federal government.

Schrier was hooked on being in the classroom. He kept returning as a guest and later as a long-term substitute.

When he was asked to fill in full time for the chemistry teacher — his undergraduate degree at the University of Miami combined chemistry and math — Schrier realized that substituting one day is not the same as being responsible for dozens of students year round.

Schrier enrolled at CSU-Monterey Bay's teacher internship program, a pathway for professionals who want to start a second career as teachers but don't have the time or resources to return to school full time.

"We often speak of them as late deciders," said Mark Oshea, director of the internship program. The program is "for those who now consider that teaching is right for them, having pursued other careers or other possibilities previously."

CSUMB is part of a network of 70 programs that provide alternative teaching credentials that have come together as the new California Teacher Corps to strengthen recruiting efforts.

The organization started two weeks ago with the goal of credentialing 100,000 teachers by 2020.

The reason for the push is a projected shortage of teachers in California as baby boomers retire and student enrollments continue to increase, said Catherine Kearney, president of California Teachers Corps.

"We felt it was time to get the word out that the California Teacher Corps produces some of the finest teachers in the state," she said.

Although alternative credential programs vary, would-be teachers are generally required to pass a background check from the U.S. Department of Justice, demonstrate extensive knowledge in their area of expertise, and complete 120 to 160 hours of intensive training.

In CSUMB's 12-year-old internship program, teachers are placed with school districts in Monterey County and begin earning a salary as they receive support from teaching professionals at the university.

"We look for individuals committed to serving underserved communities," Kearney said. "It's maturity, combined with knowledge. That's the package that all our programs look for."

These qualities often make for the best teachers, she said.

Since becoming a full-time teacher five years ago, Schrier has been named mentor of the year and teacher of the year. He won the 2008 Allen Griffin Award for excellence in teaching from the Community Foundation for Monterey County.

But it is not his experience as a trial lawyer and a Navy pilot, or his knowledge of the subject matter that makes him a good teacher, Schrier said.

He said it is an ability to empathize with students and realize that some days, perhaps, are not good days to absorb lessons.

"If adults were going through the same things the students go through, they would stay at home or see a therapist," he said.

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