Chico State reaches out to Redding students

Students praise Chico State offerings

By Joe Szydlowski

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Now in its sixth year, Chico State University distance learning in Redding is continuing to grow, and graduates say the distance didn't dampen the experience.

It allows students to earn degrees in several fields at Shasta College. Students take their general education classes through a community college and then transfer into the program, said Jeff Layne, director of distance education/university center at Chico State.

They also pay the full tuition of a traditional Chico State student.

He said most of the growth has been in the sociology program, an online program that was relaunched last year, that doubled in enrollment to 50 students.

Other programs, he said, have grown slightly. The business program has about 55 students in it, and another 60 students in online courses. The program doesn't track graduates after enrollment.

Rikkilynn Hale, 24, graduated with a bachelor's degree in 2009 from the business program. She went on to study for her master's in business administration.

"I was working full time in the Redding area. It was an opportunity for me to keep a full-time job and still further my education … without having to lose hours commuting back and forth to Chico," she said.

She said she's studied business to develop her own portrait photography company and also works as a consultant.

Theresa Moor graduated in 2008 with a bachelor's in liberal studies and intends to teach. She said she finally found a job this year as a sixth-grade teacher in Redding.

"I knew other people applying for teaching positions and it sounded very tough," she said. "In the Redding area it was very, very difficult."

Staying in Redding allowed her to save around $10,000 in room and board, she said.

The program has online courses, live classes and televised classes, in which students can interact with the professor in Chico, Hale said.
"Some are combos — one week in the Redding area, with the video feed going to Chico, and one next, with the video feed going to Redding," she said.

The distance can provide a challenge and students must rely heavily on email, she said. She initially worried about not having the professor in the classroom to approach with questions.

But professors understand that issue and were very responsive to phone calls and emails, she said.

"It really didn't have that great an effect on the class, whether the professor was there or not," she said. "It really is just a preference on learning style."

However, the program does have limits, Layne said. Students who want to expand into other disciplines, even ones related to their courses, may have to finish at Chico State.

"That's why we have more people at the junior level; I'm going to do one year of junior level and then I'm going to come to Chico," he said.

Hale said she had to do that for her final year because her area of concentration's required classes weren't in Redding.

Layne said the program's enrollment has closed for the spring 2013, but the fall semester enrollment begins Oct. 1.