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Less is More; CSUMB 'dejangons' departments

By Alex Friedrich

When CSU-Monterey Bay resumes land on employers' desks next year, recruiters will notice a change.

They won't need a translation guide anymore.

The university, known for its spacey education jargon, has scaled back on it this year so people can better understand what it's teaching. It has restructured its curriculum, renaming many departments and degrees to sound like those at mainstream universities. It has also consolidated some degrees and split others.

Gone are gems such as "Community Collaborative Studies," which is now known as "Health, Human Services and Public Policy." And far fewer academic areas are endowed with the lofty title of "institute." Instead, they're just plain old divisions, schools or programs.

"People on the outside and inside can understand a little more what we have to offer," said CSUMB public information officer Holly White.

Outsiders have long scratched their heads at the university's terminology. Even officials from a regional college accreditation organization quipped during one interview that they'd had to get used to CSUMB-speak.

David Castillo, a CSUMB junior, said friends ribbed him and potential employers wondered aloud when they saw his credentials.

"They'd ask, 'Institute for Management and International Entrepreneurship? What's that? Business?'"

Exactly.

CSUMB alumna Tracy Burke said she often had to clarify "what the Human part meant" in her Human Communication degree. It presented no problem for the 24-year-old in getting a job at a local radio station, she said, but "going into the real world, it was hard at times to explain myself."

No longer. The Institute of Human Communication -- as opposed to plant or animal communication, one could guess -- is now the Division of Humanities and Communication. That covers programs such as journalism and pre-law.

The renaming reflects the maturing of the university. In its ninth year, CSUMB's White said, the old organization was out of date. CSUMB had added new programs, and others had not grown as much as expected. So a restructuring was in order.

The university still aims to be more progressive than conventional universities, she said. But it no longer has to signal that through offbeat language.

Still, some at CSUMB say they miss the old terminology and the way it made their majors seem special.

"Once you adjust to it," said CSUMB junior Khouen Khith, "you grow to like it."

Don't you despair. CSUMB still has a few linguistic pearls left. Take the department covering fields such as physical education and sports management.

The title? "Human Performance and Wellness Education."