

Cover Sheet / Introduction to
Resolution Supporting the Creation of a
Thematic Learning Opportunity on the SRJC Petaluma Campus

Santa Rosa Junior College Academic Senate 7 May 2025

Introduction by Petaluma Faculty Forum Incoming Chair Dr. AC Panella

Students benefit when faculty collaborate, model, and demonstrate how complex world problems are addressed and resolved through interdisciplinary dialogue. Dr. Vincent Tinto's Interactional Model suggests that students' persistence in higher education is linked to their integration into the academic and social systems of the institution. Specifically, students who feel academically and socially connected are more likely to stay in school. By linking in-class content to out-of-class experiences, students can connect to ideas and resources that validate their experience, support their success, and engage their curiosity.

Similar to the Work of Literary Merit (WOLM), this thematic learning opportunity would support students by modeling interdisciplinary dialogue and integrating student support services and campus enrichment activities. In alignment with SRJC's mission to cultivate learning through the creative, intellectual, physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, and ethical development of our diverse community and the Chancellor's Vision 2030 to promote success, access, and equity in community colleges, the Petaluma Faculty Forum recommends that the Academic Senate support of the creation of a Petaluma specific thematic learning opportunity starting in the 2025-2026 academic year.

Resolution Supporting the Creation of a Thematic Learning Opportunity on the SRJC Petaluma Campus

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Whereas, the Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) Academic Senate recognizes the importance of innovative pedagogical strategies to enhance student engagement, retention, and academic success; ([Senate Bylaws Article 1.A.4](#))

Whereas, the establishment of a thematic learning opportunity (TLO) can foster a cohesive learning environment by linking courses around a central theme, thereby promoting interdisciplinary learning and a sense of belonging among students; (*see references below*)

Whereas, research indicates that participation in learning communities, particularly those with a thematic focus, can lead to improved academic outcomes, increased retention rates, and enhanced student satisfaction; ([SRJC Institutional Outcomes 2, 4, 5, 6, 7](#))

Whereas, the implementation of TLOs aligns with SRJC's mission to provide accessible, high-quality education that supports the holistic development of students; ([SRJC Mission Statement](#))

Resolved, that the SRJC Academic Senate supports the creation of a thematic learning opportunity on the Petaluma campus;

Resolved, that the TLO will work with voluntary instructors who wish to center their courses around a central theme, incorporate collaborative learning strategies, and provide additional support services to enhance student success.

References:

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- Otto, W., et al. (2015). The Effect of Learning Communities on Student Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of College Student Development*, 56(8), 785–803.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Zhao, C.-M., & Kuh, G. D. (2004). Adding Value: Learning Communities and Student Engagement. *Research in Higher Education*, 45(2), 115–138.