



Logistics professor Skip Sherwood took a calculated risk when he climbed aboard this Santa Fe engine. He and his colleagues are desperately trying to convince people that there's more to logistics than trains and trucks. In the classroom, the emphasis is on how logistics and the physical distribution of goods contribute to customer service and corporate profitability.

Skip Sherwood's teaching style can be described in one word — "imaginative." In front of a classroom of 30 students, he is never still. Pacing back and forth, his voice carries so well that even Rip van Winkle would wake up and ask, "What's going on?"

That's all this professor needs. This grown-up kid is on a roll and has your interest, so he pulls out the Pringles and your favorite beverage and says, "Hey, let's talk about logistics."

"Education should be fun and there should be some levity in the classroom," Sherwood affirms. "I usually try to use products that the students can somewhat relate to. We analyze distribution system requirements for potato chips, 10-speed bicycles, personal computers and our Valley's agricultural products."

"My primary goal is to get students excited about a subject and make them glad that they are taking this course. If they are comfortable with that, the tendency is for them to want to come to class, try to learn something, and retain some of that knowledge."

Another thing this professor does is "integrate." He says students have a tendency to put "blindlers" on when they walk into an individual classroom. They say, "OK, I just came out of finance, so I don't have to remember anything from that class because this is logistics."

Sherwood responds to this attitude by showing his students how logistics interfaces with finance ... or marketing ... or how accounting data is used in logistics. "I try to make them realize that we're dealing with an integrated enterprise. I get concerned when students say they don't need a course because it's not

a part of their major but they're taking it because they 'have to.' They don't realize how important it is to understand how business disciplines are related. So, I spend a great deal of time integrating these things."

But students aren't the only people Sherwood is educating. In fact, he feels it's his mission to educate the rest of the world — or a good piece of the world — in terms of what logistics is.

"Everyone always asks me what is logistics," he says slyly, prepared to give his stock answer. "A good piece of logistics, of course, is transportation. Consequently, my friends send me things like toy trucks. But the way my colleagues and I look at it is that marketing stimulates demand, and logistics and production service it. In marketing, you 'sell, sell, sell,' but if the product isn't available or doesn't get there, nobody is going to 'buy, buy, buy.' It's like every time the grocery store is out of a product, that's a breakdown in their logistics system."

If you get the impression that Sherwood is pushing the logistics and operations management degree program, you're right. CSU, Fresno is one of three universities on the West Coast offering this program. You'll find schools offering a degree in production; they may even have one in purchasing. But very few schools have advanced to the point where they are putting it altogether the way CSUF is — the way it should be.

CSUF offers a program that deals with everything in the value-added chain — the management of supply systems which move raw materials and component parts to the point of production, the design and management of production operations, and the management of transportation and distribution of finished goods to the consumer.

"Right now, our students are our best ambassadors in terms of trying to educate the world," says Sherwood, noting that many graduates have landed some very impressive positions. "The students graduating from this program are doing very well. It's a tough major, but when they come out of it, they've really got something to contribute."

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