

A LOVE OF LEARNING

By Jennifer Dennis • June 1st 2021



JOSE LANDAVERDE



JOSE AT A CONSTRUCTION SITE

Inquisitive, curious, receptive... Jose Landaverde continues to expand and develop without allowing barriers such as age or language limitations to deter him.

When he first settled in the United States in 2017, leaving his home country of El Salvador, he imagined that he would retire. Flagstaff was a peaceful town and his daughter was near. Yet, the change of environment only ignited his enthusiasm to investigate new opportunities. But, the first thing he had to do was improve his English.

In the beginning, he says that he tried to avoid speaking. Instead, he read as much as he could, spending days at the local library. It wasn't until he began classes at Coconino Community College's (CCC's) Adult Education Program that he found the means to practice using the language in conversation.

As Jose considers himself an introvert, ironically, he claims that he now speaks more in English than he normally would in Spanish.

In-person interaction motivated me. I had to speak out of necessity since there were people of different cultures, languages, and accents. The attitude of the group gave me confidence to speak about my thoughts. I felt at ease; Everyone was approachable.

Additionally, he maintains that his classes have not only enabled him to speak English in general situations, but he began to converse easily on issues related to the environment, human behavior, politics, or technology due to the array of topics addressed in his classes.

Jose began taking advantage of any new course or opportunity offered to him.

After a year in the adult education program, he took part in an Integrated Education and Training (IET) program called the Certificate for Apartment Maintenance Technician Course (CAMT) at CCC. This is a month-long intensive course offered annually to students seeking a career related to building and maintenance. This required Jose to have an understanding of the English vocabulary used in his textbook, and to be able to communicate effectively about the topics covered in the course. This involved an extensive amount of preparation and study that the other students in the course were not faced with; however, the adult education program provided a foundation of terminology to prepare him.

In El Salvador, Jose had been an architectural designer. While this course was not his exact field of study, it was related, and he enjoyed the challenge of it.

I was not very attracted to the career in maintenance, but I was excited about the opportunity to be able to work in the US. Without my English classes and CAMT, I didn't feel confident to look for a job, I wouldn't have written a resume; I wouldn't have learned the right behavior for a job interview or a work situation.



A CAMT INSTRUCTOR IN THE CLASSROOM

Shortly after his success in the CAMT program, Jose began applying for jobs. He had several interviews, and finally found the perfect position, working for an architectural firm in Flagstaff.

I decided to start my job search. I didn't care what job I found as long as I liked it and I knew how to do it. I was so excited that it wouldn't even be an obstacle to move to another location. I had to learn new software to do drafting and to design houses. I worked 25 hours every week. My boss was very nice. The office had a friendly atmosphere. I worked in the studio until March 2019 due to a decrease in projects.

Along with CAMT, Jose also participated in a student leadership course facilitated by Debra Goldenstein, an instructor in the adult education program. The goals of this class are to learn about advocacy and representational leadership while also improving basic English skills, as well as gaining valuable employability skills. In the class, students apply these skills towards becoming representational leaders by meeting with decision makers and/or writing for publication.

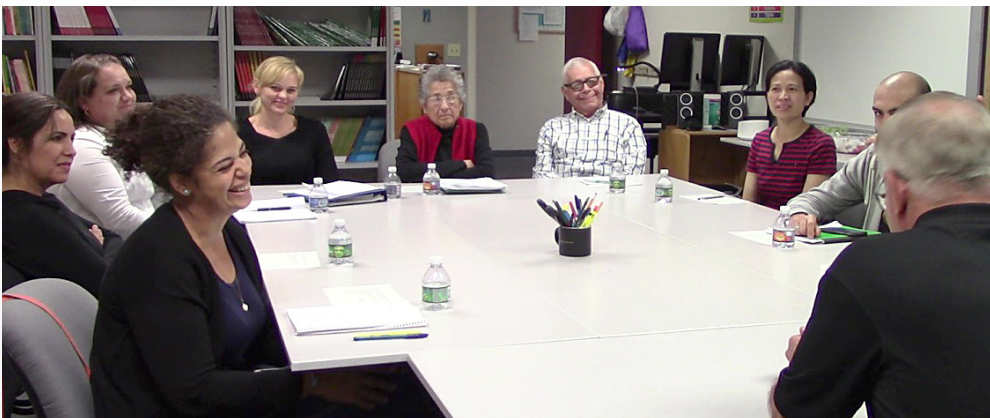
The central idea of the class is for students to learn how to tell their stories through writing and speaking, sometimes using video as a medium. These stories might be based on personal life obstacles, challenges, or successes. Each has the purpose of sharing experiences in order to represent peers in similar situations, and contribute their voice to advocate for themselves and others.



JOSE, TOGETHER WITH CAMT INSTRUCTORS AND CLASSMATES

Jose gained a lot of valuable experiences and knowledge through this opportunity. He used his skills not only in writing his own story, but sharing it verbally in a meeting with our then dean of career and technical education. Jose proved to be a strong advocate for our English language classes.

Recently, Jose was invited to participate in Capitol Hill Days, traditionally a week-long series of events sponsored by the Coalition for Adult Basic Education (COABE) and organized in our state by the Arizona Association for Lifelong Learning (AALL) in which supporters of adult education express concerns to policymakers and practice representational leadership.



JOSE, TOGETHER WITH CLASSMATES, IN A REPRESENTATIONAL LEADERSHIP MEETING WITH FORMER CCC DEAN OF CAREER AND TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION (CTE), JEFF JONES

In April of this year, Jose was invited to share his story of coming to the U.S. and seeking out opportunities with the help of our adult education program. Via a virtual meeting, he spoke with Charlie Burgin, the Education Staffer for Arizona Representative Tom O'Hallaron.



JOSE IN HIS OFFICE

Adult education programs are very important. If I hadn't had these classes, I would not be useful in my new country. I believe my experience could motivate my age group to keep learning, keep trying new things.

For Jose's continuous persistence and dedication to learning while participating in the adult education program, he was inducted into the National Adult Education Honor Society. Each year, this society provides recognition to adult students who demonstrate perseverance in achieving their educational goals.

As for the future, Jose will continue to share his story, as he desires to be a model for others who have found themselves in similar circumstances. While maintaining his career in architectural design, his current ambitions are with the Stock Market, which he has been studying for the last two years. He also plans to apply for U.S. citizenship.

Jose considers himself to be a lifelong learner, and he will never cease his drive for discovery and exploration.

I try to take advantage of any opportunity to read, to listen, to try to understand more. I want to be a good teacher or mentor, an influence for my family, and so I try to learn about everything. If I want to speak with my grandchildren, if they ask me questions about something, I want to have the answer; the correct answer; to those questions.

I want to say thank you to my teachers - their teaching, effort, and patience has been very important to me.

