



Big plans on campus

San Mateo County Community College District is making improvements to its campuses in the nick of time, since enrollment is increasing rapidly in the economic downturn, Gary Toushek discovers

The San Mateo County Community College District consists of three colleges located between San Francisco and Silicon Valley. The College at San Mateo has the largest campus, Skyline

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College is in San Bruno, and Cañada College is in Redwood City.

Total enrollment is currently about 50,000 students. Academically, the District offers the first two years of instruction in a wide variety of transfer programs to all major California universities and colleges, as well as more than 90 vocational or technical programs. Students can earn an associate in arts or science degree or receive a certificate of proficiency in their chosen fields.

José Nuñez is Vice Chancellor for Facilities Planning, Maintenance and Operations, which includes about 80 people on maintenance, engineering, custodial, groundskeeping, access controls monitoring and video surveillance. For the capital program planning side, he has about 15 people in construction planning and another 25 people from Swinerton Management & Consulting of San Francisco which handles all construction management activities. He's also the District Safety Officer, with about 30 public safety officers on the three

campuses for community patrolling and parking enforcement, as well as being responsible for emergency preparedness for unforeseen events like earthquakes or a shooter on campus. The capital improvement program (CIP) is currently valued at about \$900 million, with about \$400 million already spent so far on renovations and new capital construction.

There are two major sources of funding for his department. Major construction projects are locally funded by bond measures; \$207 million

was approved by local voters in 2001, and another \$468 million in 2005, and through project planning, another \$170 million in California Educational state funding. "The local money is good to go, but \$70 million of the state money is being challenged, due to the current budget cuts in California," Nuñez says. "It's affecting us heavily on the capital side, but on the operational and maintenance side we have to look at reducing staff and services. We're a public entity, funded by the state, and if the resources aren't there, our funding is limited. The three college presidents also have to reduce staff, as does probably every other department in the District. In the meantime, enrollment is increasing due to the poor economy, because people want to improve their skills, become better educated and competitive for improved opportunity at a job. As the University of California decreases its new admissions, a ripple effect is that the overflow is also coming to the community colleges. It's becoming a huge budgetary challenge to balance the demand for capital construction and modernization of facilities and the reduction of services against available resources."

For the college at San Mateo, his department signed a design build contract for \$160 million with McCarthy Builders of San Francisco to construct two buildings: a four-story 140,000-square-foot commons building (LEED Silver) designed by LPA in Sacramento that would house an independent learning center with bookstore, food service, dining facility, an executive suite for the college president and vice president, about 80 faculty offices, and student services; and an 88,000-square-foot wellness center (LEED Silver) designed by Kwan Henmi Architects in San Francisco containing a 24-hour fitness facility with a 50-meter Olympic pool and a 25-meter adapted physical education pool (for the disabled), the nursing program, dental assisting, dental hygiene and the cosmetology program.

Also included in this contract is the demolition of five former buildings and "redeveloping our main campus spine," says Nuñez. "We're tearing out 4,000 parking spaces, the two main entrances to the campus are being re-done, including a lot of hardscape [masonry work, woodwork, other non-plant elements of a landscape], irrigation

upgrades, and we're adding a chiller plant [to provide cool air on hot days] and underground utilities and expanded vistas. Our intent is to enhance our academic facilities for the new technology age with state of the art equipment as well as creating an environmentally friendly, sustainable and inviting campus."

So far the College of San Mateo has completed the modernization of several general lecture buildings, to include the fine arts and the music buildings. Recently approved is the demolition of nine old seismically unsafe buildings to make way for a North Gateway Plaza, now in design by Noll & Tam Architects in Berkeley, highlighting a huge amphitheater for concerts, as well as parking. There are also recently renovated athletic fields, a new football stadium with a new synthetic field, new synthetic baseball and softball fields with bleachers, and new tennis courts, washrooms and parking. This athletics improvement was part of a \$20 million multi-campus design build contract with Robert A. Bothman General Engineering based in San Jose.

At Cañada College, Big D Pacific Builders in Pleasanton recently remodeled an \$18 million biology and engineering building and another for nursing, dentistry, X-ray technician and chemistry. S. J. Amoroso Construction Company in Redwood Shores built a new 75,000-square-foot learning resource center, a \$30 million project that Noll & Tam designed. The main quad plaza in the campus was also constructed by S. J. Amoroso.

A two-story 25,000-square-foot \$2 million executive suite for the college president and vice president was recently completed by Schembri Construction, designed by Bunton Clifford & Associates in Pleasanton. Currently under way and nearly complete is a \$9 million project by Robert A. Bothman General Engineering of San Jose to build new parking, renovate 3,000 parking spaces, build two new main entrance gateways to the campus to include access for the disabled, a fountain plaza, and install new lighting throughout the campus. John Plane Construction Inc. is building a new



14,000-square-foot maintenance facility (LEED Silver), designed by Bunton Clifford & Associates, which is nearly complete. The athletic fields have been renovated to add a synthetic turf covering for baseball and soccer, new tennis courts, bleachers and washrooms as part of the multi-campus project.

At Skyline College, there's a recently completed 30,000-square-foot Allied Health Building for programs in biotechnology, emergency medical technician, dental, nursing and operating procedures. Steinberg Architects of San Jose were the designers of the building while John Plane was the builder. Just off campus is a 13,000-square-foot maintenance facility (LEED Silver), designed by Bunton Clifford and also built by John Plane. Under a \$65 million design-build contract with Hensel Phelps Construction is an 80,000-square-foot cosmetology multicultural and administration center (LEED Silver) designed by WRNS of San Francisco, a 12,000-square-foot automotive technology transmission facility, an inner quad plaza, parking, and two new main entrance gateways.

In terms of energy efficiency and sustainability, the District recently completed almost \$25 million of improvements to its energy systems with Chevron Energy Solutions in San Francisco. These improvements included the installation of co-generation units at College of San Mateo which produce 560kW and at Skyline College which produces 375kW, over half of the electricity required for the campuses. The excess heat generated by the units is used to heat the

swimming pool and in the closed loop heating hot water systems. The installation of over 9,000 lighting fixtures, 900 air handlers, boilers, pumps, and direct digital controls has resulted in over \$1 million of energy savings.

All of the construction and renovation activity calls for detailed coordination, since classes must continue with minimum interruption. “We hold logistics meetings; we monitor noise levels, dust in the air, safety aspects, and so on. The three campuses are like small cities and any interruption of service creates havoc. We attempt to coordinate all utility shutdowns and switch over during winter and spring breaks. Even with all the coordination, there are still unscheduled events that unfortunately interrupt classes. You can imagine trying to take a final with a jack hammer going on outside or the lights going out

in the evening. On the home front, we try to be proactive for as much cooperation as possible in the local community, giving people advance notice, on posters, on the Internet, and I give briefings at open campus forums. We also do outreach with local trades and builders to tell them what’s upcoming. We send emails to our business partners to generate interest. It all helps stimulate the local economy.”

All said, the colleges are supportive of the improvements and do see a light at the end of the tunnel. The District is approximately 65 percent complete with its Capital Improvement Program and unfortunately does not have the funding necessary to complete the job. The current economic downturn and resulting budget crises doesn’t help matters.

– Editorial research by Joe Louis ■

