



MERCED
COLLEGE

2020 Annual Report



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Merced College Board of Trustees' purpose and aim is to support the mission, vision, core values and motto of the Merced Community College District.



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



In the midst of a worldwide pandemic and social unrest, Merced College has remained committed to serving our community through quality, innovative educational programs and services. In response to COVID-19, our College was able to quickly pivot to providing highly engaging online instruction and support services to ensure educational continuity for this incredible community.

As a result, the 2019-2020 academic year took us on an accelerated path to new and innovative approaches in education. Despite this, the 2019-2020 academic year still brought us the highest enrollment numbers in a decade and the largest graduating class in our institution's history—putting an exclamation mark on a year for the record books.

Despite the challenges, the College experienced many successes, including significant progress on our master and strategic plans, a record number of degree and certificate completers, innovative technology solutions to serve our students, and a renewed sense of commitment to student equity—to name a few.

We continue to provide the most affordable—free for most—education with the highest quality programs leading to degree completion, transfer, workforce development, and career technical education certification. As the largest institution of higher education in Merced County, with 16,762 students served in 2018-19, we are committed to student success and access—one student at a time.

Our motto, “Students are our focus and we are known by their success,” represents the core of our mission. For nearly 60 years, Merced College has been leading innovation through best practice educational programs and services. We have model, fast-track career technical education programs, accelerated curriculum, high profile transfer agreements, robust degree and certificate programs, and one of the nation's best workforce development and training programs.

When the year started, no one could have predicted a situation requiring us to be quarantined in our homes, temporarily transitioning to fully

online modalities, wearing facemasks and gloves on “normal” outings, and debating whether or not we should “re-open” the country. Furthermore, our faculty and students could not have imagined a situation requiring them to transition to online instruction within days. Yet, we did it and that speaks volumes to the quality institution of higher education that Merced College brings to this community.

I am confident, however, we will be a stronger, more adaptable, better equipped, and nimble College at the end of this crisis—and that is because of our dedicated team of professionals, our Merced College Family, and our amazingly supportive community of alumni and friends.

As you read this report, I am confident you will recognize our institution's strengths and opportunities. Additionally, you will see a reflection of our mission, vision, and core values. We welcome your support in helping us advance our mission and innovations to better serve our students and this amazing community. I continue to be proud of the consistently great work completed at Merced College. On behalf of Merced College, the Board of Trustees, and the Merced College Foundation, thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Chris Vitelli, Ed.D.
Superintendent/President

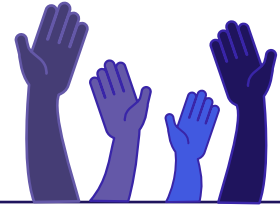
OUR MISSION

Growing our community through education and workforce training:

- Lifelong Learning
- Basic Skills
- Career Technical Education
- Transfer
- Degree/Certificate Programs

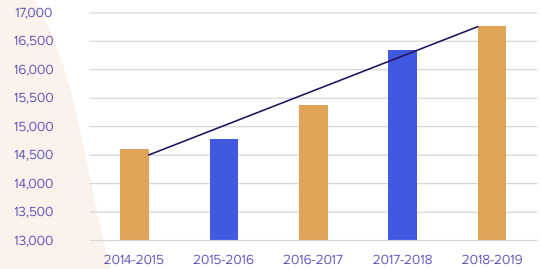
Ensuring student success through equitable access, continuous quality improvement, institutional effectiveness, and student achievement.

WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS?

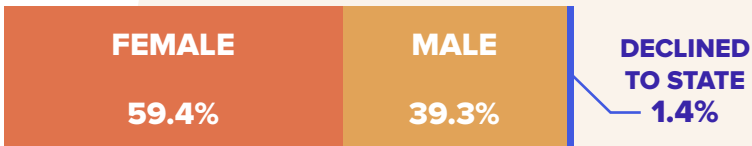


**TOTAL STUDENTS
2018-2019**
16,762

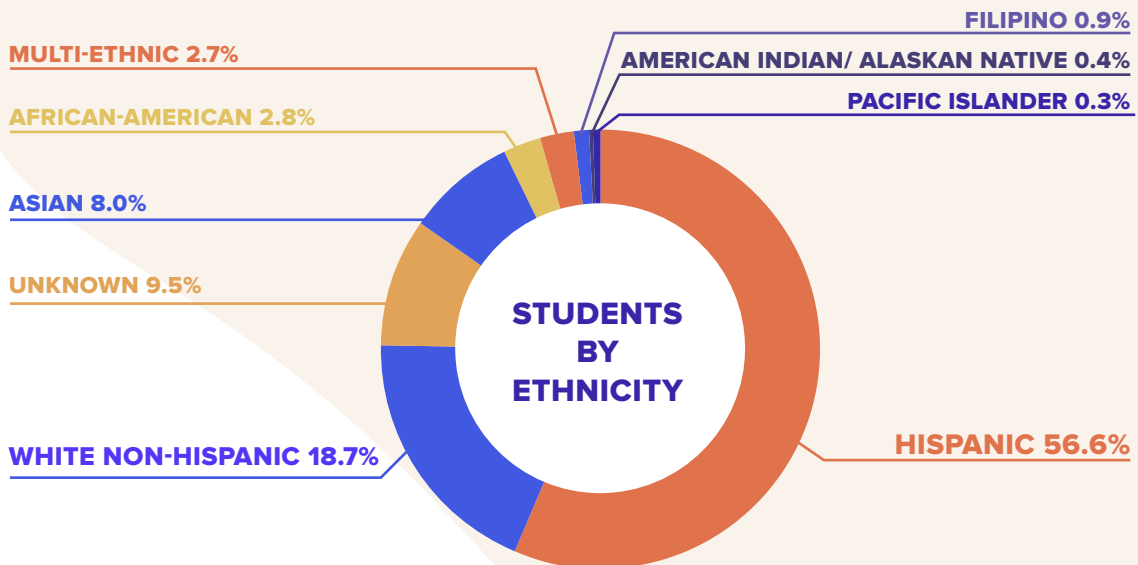
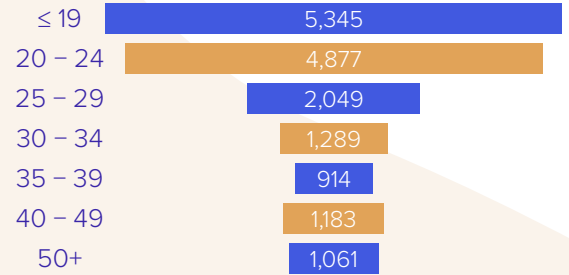
5 YEAR ENROLLMENT TRENDS



GENDER



AGE GROUPS





WHAT ARE THEY STUDYING?

TOP 10 DEGREES & CERTIFICATES AWARDED IN 2018-2019

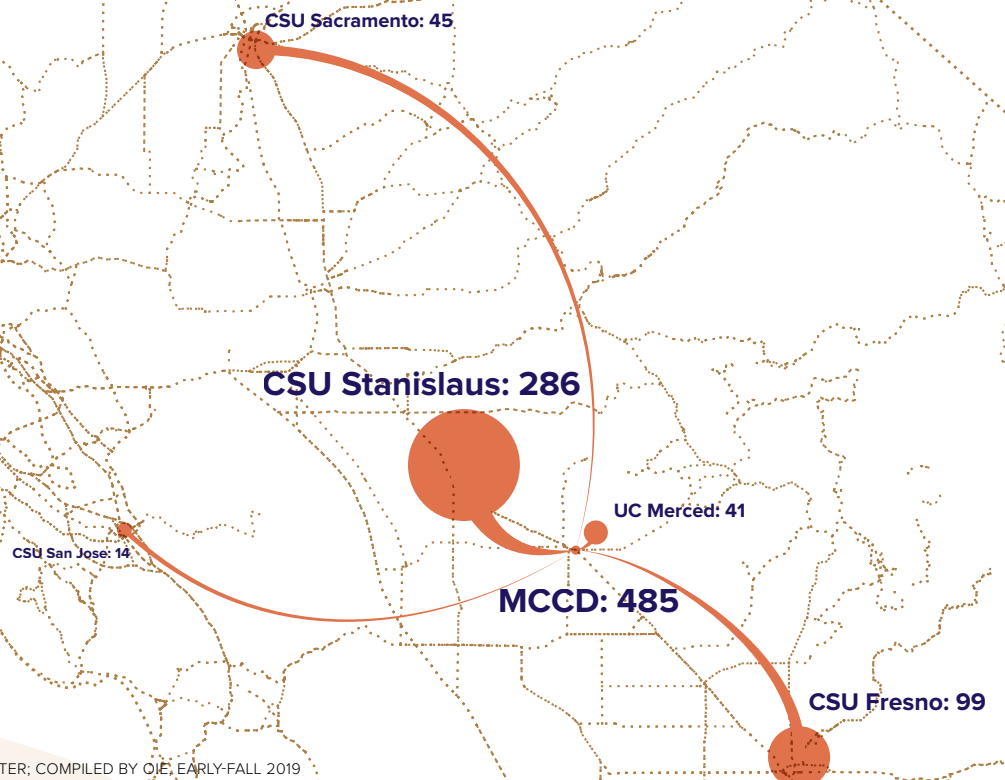
CSU General Education Breadth (CT)	Certificate requiring 30 to < 60 units	813
Social and Behavioral Science (AA)	Associate in Arts (A.A.) Degree	234
Psychology (AAT)	Associate in Arts for Transfer (A.A.-T) Degree	177
Business Administration (AST)	Associate in Science for Transfer (A.S.-T) Degree	133
Psychology (AA)	Associate in Arts (A.A.) Degree	131
Sociology (AAT)	Associate in Arts for Transfer (A.A.-T) Degree	98
Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (CT)	Certificate requiring 30 to < 60 units	97
Administration of Justice (AST)	Associate in Science for Transfer (A.S.-T) Degree	81
Nursing Assistant (CT)	Certificate requiring 30 to < 60 units	66
Health Sciences (AA)	Associate in Arts (A.A.) Degree	57

SOURCE: INTERNAL MC DATABASE COMPILED BY OIE



WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

TOP 5 CSU & UC TRANSFER INSTITUTIONS

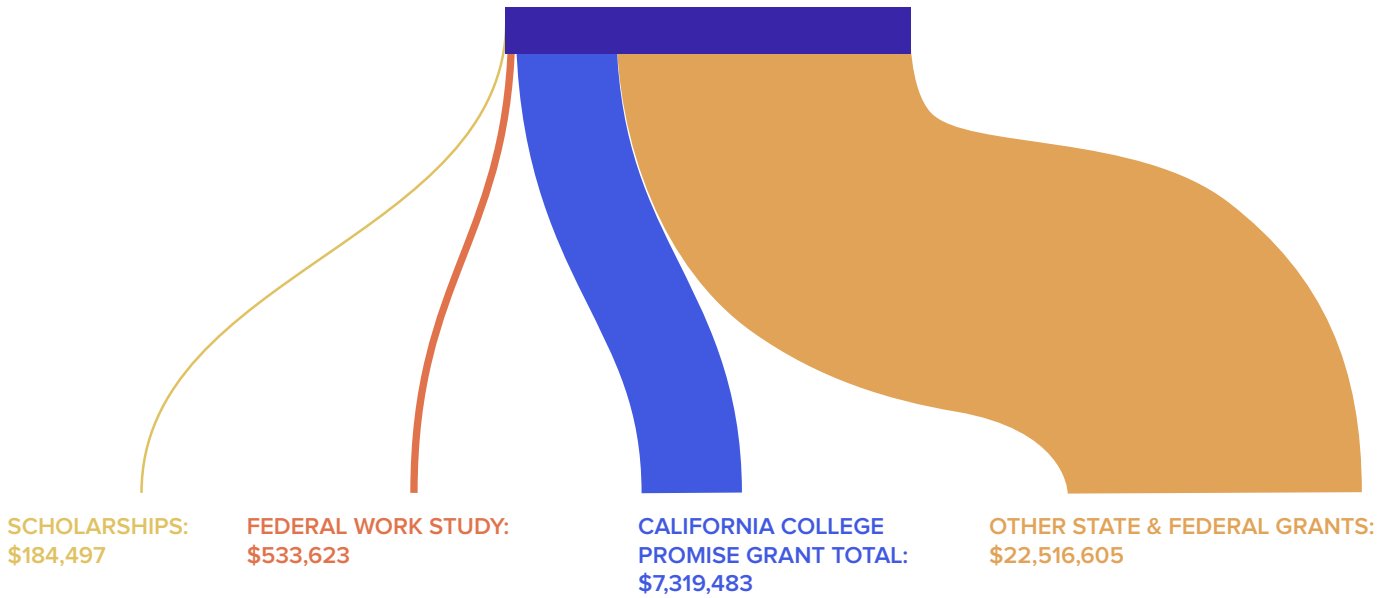


SOURCE: CSU STUDENT ORIGIN DASHBAORD / UC INFOCENTER, COMPILED BY OIE, EARLY-FALL 2019



HOW WE HELP STUDENTS

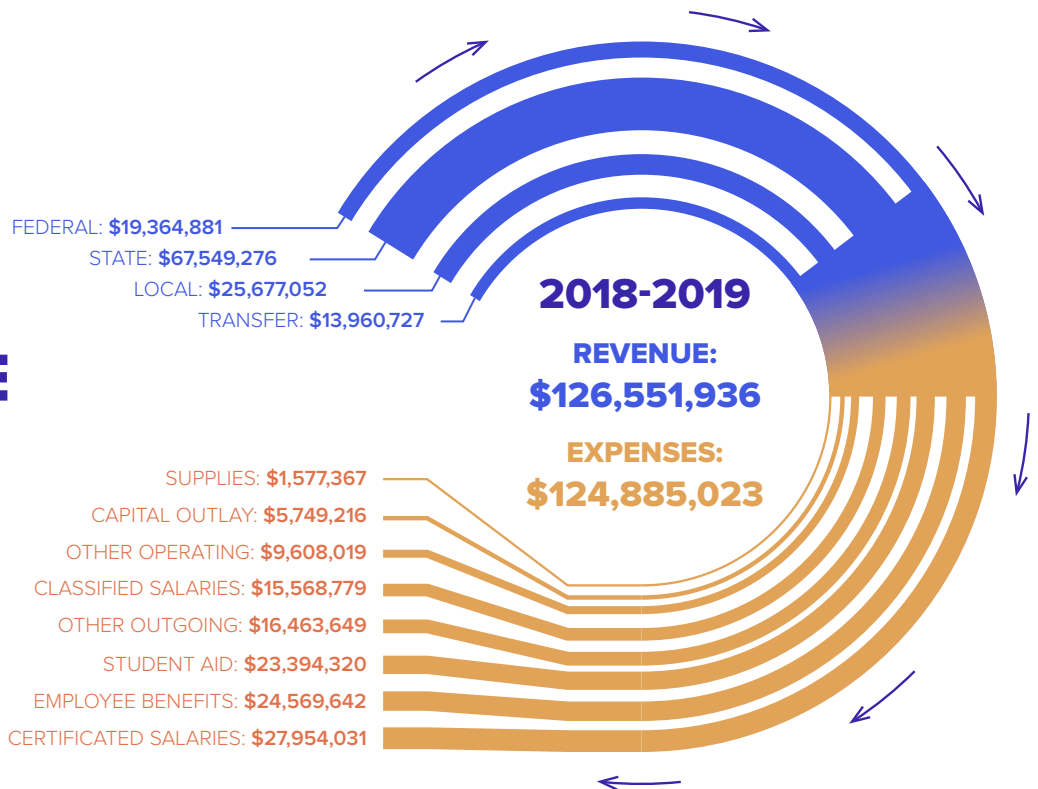
**TOTAL AID AWARDED:
\$30,554,208**



OUR FINANCES AT A GLANCE

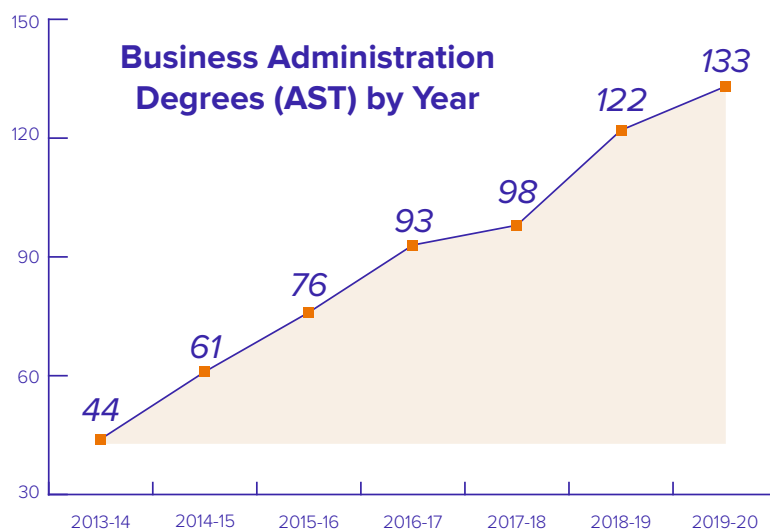
We regularly monitor our budget throughout the year and continue to maintain a stable fund balance above the recommended minimum prudent level of 5%.

For the year ending June 30, 2019, we received another flawless audit report on our financial statements and internal control processes and procedures



CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Merced College CEO Club students attend Intuit's Connect conference in San Jose, CA in September, 2019



More than ever, students are seeking a business education. Business and business-related careers offer competitive wages for 2-year college completers with earnings ranging from \$34,600-\$51,700 within five years after earning their degree.

Merced College offers an increasingly popular Associate in Science for Transfer (AS-T) degree in Business Administration. The AS-T degree completions have grown tremendously since it was launched in the 2013-2014 school year. It offers students a well-rounded business education, with the added benefit of being seamlessly transferable to a four-year institution.

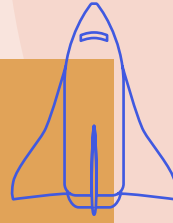
Other related degrees and certificates include disciplines such as, General Business, Entrepreneurship, Marketing, Management,

Accounting, Computer Science, and Administrative Office Management.

In addition to traditional academics, Merced College has hosted the CEO Club since 2010, creating a network for students to learn and share their entrepreneurial goals. CEO stands for Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization. Merced College

CEO Club students have traveled to places like Chicago, Kansas City, Fort Worth, San Francisco and more, to attend entrepreneurial-focused conferences, elevator pitch competitions, and Small Business Development Center workshops. The club has created a network of over 300 students and counting!

NASA PROGRAM WELCOMES MERCED COLLEGE STUDENT



Angelica Walker, a Merced College Computer Science student, participated in the NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars (NCAS) program at the NASA Ames Research Center in Mountain View on October 8-11, 2019. The competitive program welcomes community college students seeking careers in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.

Walker is not a NASA engineer. She hasn't been to the moon or the International Space Station (ISS). Still, she got the full NASA experience to stretch her STEM skills, boost her STEM career, and earn a mission patch—one of the coolest wardrobe accessories ever conceived.

She earned entry into the NCAS event after submitting applications and completing an online class. She credits her current computer science instructor Kathleen Kanemoto for encouraging her to apply.

With Walker, seven MC students have earned spots in the six years since Kathleen Kanemoto, who leads the computer science program at MC, began pushing students to apply.

Yes, pushing.

"A lot of times, students lack self-confidence," Kanemoto says. "They don't feel they can do it."

She starts small with hands-on tasks, like the

ones building up to Walker's five-week rover design project, and increase in intensity and complexity, like whatever Walker will tackle over four days with a team in October.

"Not many community college students study computer science in high school," Kanemoto said. "They don't realize they can do it. Once they complete some tasks, they know they can do it."

Walker has that confidence now. Teachers noticed her talent years ago. She first heard of the NCAS program from Joe Gaestel, her computer science teacher at Merced High, as a sophomore. Gaestel, who retired this summer, had been in cahoots with Kanemoto for years, both searching for promising STEM students, especially girls and minorities.

"We have AP computer science students who are on the fence, thinking, 'Can I really do this?'" Gaestel says.

Experts say 65 percent of jobs next-generation workers will hold, don't exist right now. The need for people who can think across disciplines is immense and growing.

Walker is that generation.

"I hope my experience inspires others to pursue what they want to do in life," Walker says. "Just take every opportunity."

AGUIRRE PROVES ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

This interview began with COVID-19, took a dirty left into an exchange in French, and came in strong at the tape when the interviewer directed Jose Chapa “JC” Aguirre, “Now go fix the world, OK?”

Aguirre, currently a high school student at Merced Scholars Charter School and a Merced College sophomore, has confidence to burn and an impressive résumé.

Meet the March 2020 Merced College Student of the Month.

“I would have to say [the honor] was unexpected, but I was extremely flattered to be chosen,” Aguirre said. “It was an honor for me just to be able to thank the people who have supported me . . . They’re part of my village, so to speak, the community that has raised me.”

Despite being both blind and deaf on his left side, Aguirre takes an upbeat and unflinching approach to the future.

“Because of my condition, I would say that I do spend the majority of my time looking forward,” he said.

“Productive” doesn’t scratch the surface for the 4.0 GPA student. In addition to carrying full loads on two campuses, Aguirre has also been a consistent and vocal advocate for other students with disabilities.

“It was like I had a stroke in the womb,” he explained.

Aguirre has a physical processing delay. The sides of his brain need extra time to talk to each other. You don’t notice the delays right away. Because “technically half of my body is still good” Aguirre said he’s had to push hard to prove he needs the help provided through the Americans with Disabilities Act.

His biggest success thus far came from a letter-writing campaign to the State Senate while in elementary school. In 2013, the 10-year old was sitting alongside state senator Ed Hernandez to push for the Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs Bill. It passed.

He is currently a voting member of Merced County’s Whole Child Model Family Advisory Committee, which ensures children receive medical care.

“I’ve done a lot but mainly because I’ve been in a position to do so,” he said.

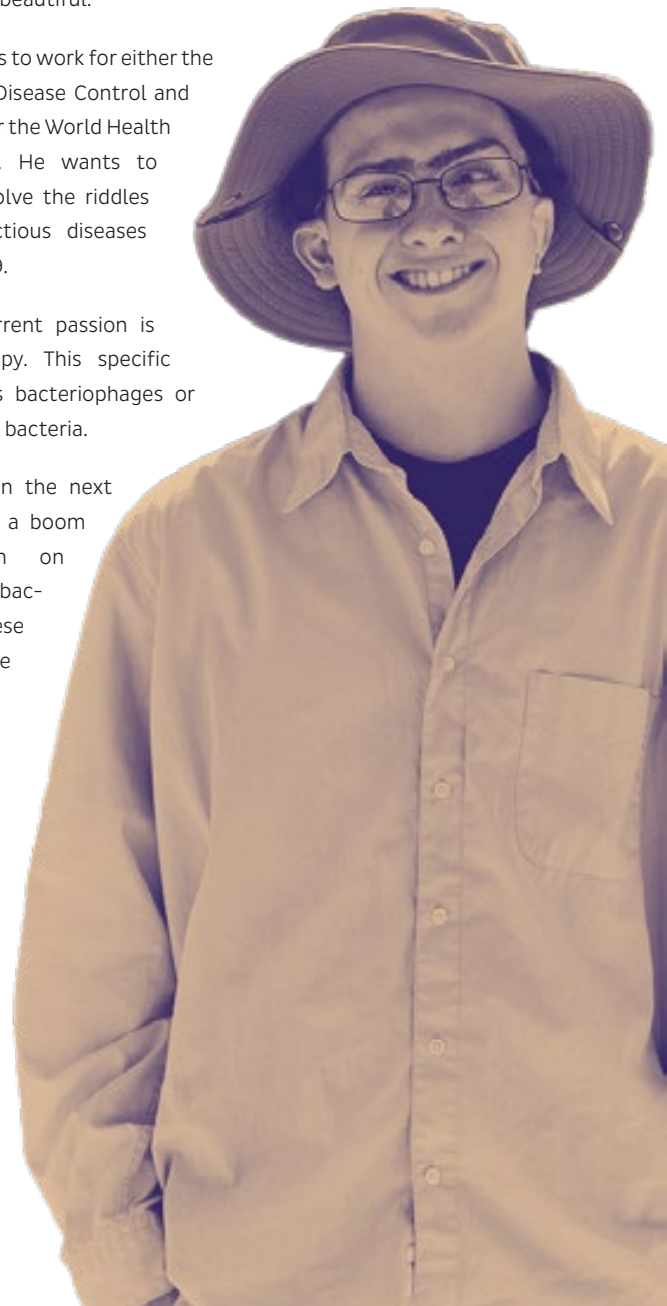
“I believe ‘if you can, you must.’”

The Atwater native also dances with a Polynesian dance troupe in Merced and writes poetry and songs. He’s also working on a young adult series that he hopes will do for Polynesian mythology what the Percy Jackson books did for Greek mythology. He will transfer to CSU Stanislaus to study biochemistry in the fall. Why biochemistry? He finds viruses beautiful.

Aguirre wants to work for either the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the World Health Organization. He wants to study and solve the riddles behind infectious diseases like COVID-19.

Aguirre’s current passion is phage therapy. This specific therapy uses bacteriophages or viruses to kill bacteria.

“I can see, in the next 10-20 years, a boom in research on viruses and bacteria for these uses,” Aguirre said. “And I’ll be on the forefront.”





OUTREACH: BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS LIKE SAIYA LAKIREDDY CAN DUAL ENROLL IN COLLEGE WHILE STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL.

High school students make up an important and substantial portion of incoming students to Merced College. To this end, the Office of Relations with Schools (ORS) has built strong partnerships with the 16 high schools in Merced College’s service area, as well as with six private, charter, and alternative schools in the area.

The ORS team consists of one Dean and six Outreach and Inreach Specialists serving Merced and Los Banos campuses. During the 2018-2019 academic year, the team:

- Held 81 events at area high schools
- Hosted 127 group tours, CTE tours, and individual tours
- Participated in 13 community outreach events
- Completed comprehensive student planning for 1,678 new students
- Welcomed 849 high school seniors to Merced and Los Banos campuses for Blue Devil Preview Days

65%
OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO APPLY TO MERCED COLLEGE ATTEND MERCED COLLEGE

Percent of Area High School Applicants Enrolled in Fall 2019

Atwater High	62.94%
Buhach Colony High	73.83%
Chowchilla High	48.31%
Delhi High	61.29%
El Capitan High	77.25%
Golden Valley High	58.11%
Independence High	60.00%
Le Grand High	70.59%
Livingston High	67.72%
Los Banos High	62.03%
Mariposa County High	64.29%
Merced High	73.19%
Pacheco High	72.87%
Stone Ridge Christian High	75.00%

HARD CHOICES & CAMARADERIE:

THE EARLY DAYS OF 2020 PANDEMIC AT MERCED COLLEGE

Kelly Fowler was hustling through the airport, off to catch a flight to Seattle for the Innovations Conference, when she saw English professor Keri Ortiz heading in the other direction.

The Merced College's Vice President of Instruction knew Ortiz and her English department colleagues Pam Huntington and Jon Stocker were also scheduled to attend a conference in Washington State that first week of March. She wondered.

"Hey, where are you going?" Fowler called out.

"Home," Ortiz said back.

It was March 1, just 41 days after the novel coronavirus first unceremoniously landed in the United States via a case in Snohomish County, roughly 20 miles north of both conference destinations.

Ortiz was leaving the airport. Her Educause Conference in Bellevue, roughly 10 miles outside of Seattle, was canceled due to fears of spreading the virus.

She, Huntington and Stocker were told to steer clear of the storm.

Fowler got on the plane. She had two presentations to do at the League for Innovation in the Community College conference in Seattle. She ended up delivering them.

She walked straight into it.

Then the world flipped upside down.

Fowler flew to Seattle on a full plane, but then she saw hand sanitizer dispensers everywhere she turned the next couple of days. On the way back, she was the only person in her row on a half-empty plane.

This is insane, Fowler thought.

She wasn't alone in that analysis. The team at Merced College—and, let's be honest, most human beings on the planet—would agree for the rest of 2020.

Yet, the Merced College contingent would have to set their feelings aside if they hoped to carry out a herculean task—protect the 2019-2020 school year for 16,308 students, 548 faculty and 327 staff who had all chosen Merced College as their academic home.

The next month tested and stretched every employee at Merced College.

How did the administration, the people under their charge, and the faculty get the mountain of work done in record time? How did they get it done with little push back and a successful launch of what amounts to a fully online college?

Visit www.mccd.edu/rd/covid-19-feature or scan the QR code to read the whole grueling tale—**HARD CHOICES & CAMARADERIE: EARLY DAYS OF 2020 PANDEMIC AT MERCED COLLEGE.**



WIFE OF LATE AIRFORCE COMMANDER MAKES \$1-MILLION GIFT TO MERCED COLLEGE



Local rancher Susie Downey, on behalf of herself and her late husband Russell Downey, has committed to donating \$1 million to Merced College over the next five years, the College's Board of Trustees proudly announced during its regular meeting on October 13.



“When you’re part of a community like this, you want it to grow.”

-Col. Russell Downey

“We look forward to honoring the Downeys, and their commitment to lifelong learning, by naming the Merced College Learning Resources Center after them,” said Board President Ernie Ochoa.

The gift was set in motion prior to Col. Downey’s death in 2017. That’s when the former Castle Air Force Base commander told his wife that their life’s work running several local ranches would allow them to eventually make a large donation to an organization.

“My husband told me, ‘Susie, I know you worked hard for [this success], but without [children], it’s not enough.’” the 76-year old native of Vietnam explained during an interview last week. “He said, ‘When you’re part of a community like this, you want it to grow. Give it to someone here.’ So I honor his wish.”

Susie Downey’s generous donation matches similar gifts from the Lakireddy family [2008] and from Bill and Dorothy Bizzini [2003]. They all rank among the largest private donations Merced College has ever received. Local farmer Raj Kahlon committed \$5 million, the largest gift in school history, in 2019.

Downey has already paid the first of five annual \$200,000 installments that will total \$1 million by 2024.

Jill Cunningham, Executive Director of the Merced College Foundation, said it has been an honor getting to know Downey while working with her on this project.

“This is another wonderful example of community members who believe in the transformational power of a community college and, more specifically, in all that Merced College has done for this community for over 58 years,” Cunningham said.

Susie Downey, born near clear blue beaches of Nha Trang, Vietnam, met the colonel while working at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon during the Vietnam War. After falling in love, surviving the war and serving a two-year posting in Panama, the Downeys landed at Castle AFB. Susie then attended Merced College to improve her English.

Fast forward to 2019 when Downey, now retired and a widow, was bored living on an 80-acre ranch. Her close friend, current Board of Trustee member Carmen Ramirez, knew this and invited her to the Merced College’s State of the College address that spring for some socializing.

“And I knew everyone there,” said a chuckling Downey, an effervescent charmer who has long orbited within Merced County farming circles.

Among friends and business associates, she felt energized by the event and decided she would get more involved with the school. Raised with 10 siblings by a French professor father and a school teacher mother, Downey said she knew then it felt right to give the money to the school she had attended.

Merced College President, Chris Vitelli, was pleased to accept the largesse from a former student.

“This donation comes at a time when student equity and access is paramount to all other priorities,” Vitelli said. “This gift will significantly contribute to our mission of student success.”

The donation will not be the last we see of Downey, who now wants to take other classes at the College. Her enthusiasm for learning is another gift.

“If you want to put your mind into it, you can do anything,” Susie Downey said. “Here I came to the U.S., and I spoke very little English. But I’m a success today. Think about that and follow that example.”

LOS BANOS CAMPUS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT



THE LOS BANOS CAMPUS
SERVES THOUSANDS OF
STUDENTS EVERY YEAR.

The Los Banos Campus is a full-service educational center of Merced College that has continued to evolve its course offerings to better serve residents of the west side of Merced County.

One of the newest additions to the curriculum is a noncredit Medical Assistant Program, which began fall 2020. The Medical Assistant Program is geared toward the adult learner who desires vocational training in a clinical setting. This free program will provide Los Banos, and the surrounding communities with the opportunity to attain a much needed skill set, and the only cost is materials.

The Food Forest is now a working lab for students that allows them to not only care for the garden, but learn about plants and soil in an outdoor experiential environment. This new lab has allowed the Los Banos Campus to expand our STEM offerings by including two CSU transfer breadth courses, Plant Science 10 and Soil 10.

The Los Banos Campus is also proud to highlight the expansion of our College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) to include Dos Palos High

School and doubling of offerings at Los Banos High School and Pacheco High School.

Another proud Los Banos moment is the implementation of a Welcome Center. This one stop shop allows students to receive help from application to registration, as well as complete their financial aid requirements.

In an effort to meet the Merced Community College District's sustainability goals, Los Banos has completed a solar panel system that provides covered parking with an estimated first-year savings of \$108,267.

The Los Banos Campus is proud of its accomplishments and has continued to improve services by offering online remote support in order to change and meet the needs of the community during this ever changing educational landscape.

PHYSICIAN & MC ALUMNUS EARNING WAY BACK HOME

Joseph Trujillo, MD is 11 months away from being free to practice medicine wherever he wants.

He'll do that in Merced County.

Trujillo didn't grow up dreaming of becoming a doctor. It came from seeing his mother, Catalina Sanchez, earn her GED, then graduate from Merced College after her divorce. Watching her then care for people with dementia and multiple sclerosis, Trujillo silently dreamt of a medical career.

But what education would he need? How would he pay for it? His sister Lisa Veentra says Sanchez forced her brother to go to Merced College to be a nurse because she couldn't afford to send him to medical school. After graduating from Merced College, Trujillo followed friends to UC Davis.

Trujillo graduated from UC Davis in 2012, then did a post baccalaureate year with the UC Davis School of Medicine.

"Everything about that year resonated with me," he said.

The UC Davis post-baccalaureate program nurtures disadvantaged students on their way to medical school.

Excelling during the extra year helped Trujillo then earn a spot in the San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education. SVP PRIME is a medical pipeline for places like Merced County that struggle to attract doctors from the outside.

Trujillo knows our area. The Merced High graduate met his wife Alyssa on his first day of sixth grade at Cruickshank Middle School.

That background proved invaluable while working rotations at facilities throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

He was matched with hospitals in Brooklyn for his residency after graduating from UC Davis School of Medicine in 2018.

Trujillo has thrived while rotating between the King's County Hospital Center and the Brooklyn Veteran's Administration Hospital. Still his final year began in a blue funk courtesy of the coronavirus.

He says one day a rumor was floating around that the hospital had admitted its first COVID patient. Three days later, they had 50.

Trujillo lost count by the time his family began asking how bad it was. Meanwhile the death toll rose.

"It flipped our hospital upside down," Trujillo said. "It got very real and very dark. My residency will change me forever. I think we'll be ready for anything once we're done."

Trujillo will finish his Brooklyn residency in 11 months, but Merced beckons.

He misses family. He dreams of the grilled veggies on tacos from Tacos Hidalgo on 16th and 140.

He belongs in the San Joaquin Valley, though no one in New York understands why he would return here after succeeding in one of the most dynamic cities on earth.

"You could go anywhere!" they whine.

They imply that this place isn't worthy of his talent, even while it badly needs his skills.

Dr. Trujillo disagrees.

"New York is great," he politely replies, "but I want to go home."



COMMUNITY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Merced College offers our community various educational opportunities to succeed. Through our community partnerships, we are able to connect with local businesses and industries to meet their workforce development needs. Our workforce training programs include: the flagship Customer Service Academy, serving hundreds of businesses over almost 20 years, with training in areas such as team building and communication in the workplace; the Emerging Leaders Institute, which focuses on developing core leadership skills for new managers, high-potential employees, or those seeking new skills; and the new Well-Being Institute starting in fall 2020, with classes dedicated to workplace and personal well-being. Our new Unconscious Bias in the Workplace and Community class focuses on addressing bias and equity issues.

Industry and regulatory classes are also offered, such as Sexual Harassment, Notary, ServSafe, and BAR Smog Update Certification. Customized curriculum is also available in response to business and industry needs to cater to unique work environments.

The Community Services program provides opportunities for education, enrichment, and adventure with classes such as Aikido, Ceramics, and Lap Swim. Through the ever-popular College for Kids program, hundreds of kids get their start on a college campus by spending their summers in fitness and enrichment classes.



ADULT EDUCATION



The Adult Education & Noncredit Program offers over 100 sections each semester at over 25 sites throughout Merced County and the surrounding area. Noncredit courses are free community college courses with no credit associated with them. Our course offering includes: Medical Assistant, Technical Office Occupations, GED Preparation, Basic Skills, ESL, Citizenship, Performing Arts, Mature Driver, Sewing, and many others. We serve students 18 and over. Students who enroll in noncredit courses do not receive grades, can repeat the course as many times needed, and benefit from an encouraging, stress-free environment. Be sure to visit our website (www.mccd.edu/noncredit) to view our Horizons Schedule of Classes to learn more about us and help spread the word to our community.

COMPUTER LOANER PROGRAM DEBUTS



The curbside parade out in front of Merced College clocked a steady pace the week before the Fall 2020 semester began.

Was someone giving away Golden State Warriors tickets?

Was Post Malone surprising fans with a concert?

It was better.

Merced College was busy distributing nearly 1,500 new laptop computers to students who, stuck at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, could not complete online classes without them.

“My sincerest hope is that we have removed obstacles to any student who wants to continue their education at Merced College,” said Greg Soto, Merced College Dean of Dual Enrollment, Outreach, Guided Pathways and Admissions & Records.

The shutdown prompted a serious question, if everyone went to remote learning, how would students without computers or WiFi complete schoolwork?

Normally, Merced College students could use one of roughly 100 campus computers. So when the pandemic cleared out campus, it was bad news for a large number of students.

“To be honest, we know that students here struggle with that financial limitation, maybe more than students in urban settings,” said Ivan Peña, Dean of Student Equity and Success.

With coronavirus infection rates climbing in July, Merced College leadership had to ensure everyone enrolled for fall could work online.

They began by having students apply for laptop help during virtual regis-

tration in July. Soto and Financial Aid Director Traci Veyl created a schedule filled with blocks of 50 students. Their arrivals curbside on campus were staggered to maintain social distancing.

“We didn’t want to create a Black Friday situation,” Soto said.

Merced College Associate Vice President of Information Technology Services Arlis Bortner led the effort to find and prepare 1,500 computers.

Merced College invested roughly \$874,000 to buy 1,500 Lenovo ThinkPads. It used money allocated to them by the federal CARES Act, which covers COVID-19 related expenses.

They also added several WiFi hotspots on campus. Students can scoot by and work in the parking lot, or at outdoor tables.

“Our students have a lot on their plates. But right now, those who need them have laptops. And they can still ride the bus for free and get to campus if they need WiFi.”

Setting up so many computers was a master feat of elbow grease led by Bortner and his IT team.

Soto was happy at how efficiently the College acquired and distributed the laptops. Some laptops were even delivered to students unable to visit campus.

Vice President of Students Services Michael McCandless said they would like to make the program a permanent one.

“I do feel like we are ready to roll,” Soto added. “I hope we make it through the fall and push that effort into spring.”

PLANTING FAMILY TREE AT MERCED COLLEGE



When you are born an Allison, they enroll you at Merced College while filling out your birth certificate.

OK, they don't. It might, however, save time.

Joe Allison is not one of a few family members to matriculate at Merced College. The Vice President of Administrative Services, and former Blue Devil basketball star, is one of 10.

Allison's wife Danielle, sons DeShaun and Jaylen, daughter Jordyn, mother Michelle, sister Alecia, brother-in-law Shawn Mims and parents-in-law John and Pat Mims, are all Blue Devils.

Said DeShaun, "Maybe it's something in the DNA."

The Roots

Joe and Danielle Allison met at Atwater High, but forged their life partnership as Blue Devils.

Danielle came to Merced College for the dental assistant program. Her 18-month commitment has turned into a 30-year, and counting, career.

Joe wasn't ready to leave out of high school, and wanted to play basketball. He spent the spring of his senior year playing pickup ball with older Blue Devils.

"Knowing everyone made the transition so much smoother," Joe said. "That made it so much easier to concentrate on school."

Spot-on decision. Joe still holds Blue Devil records for most assists in a game (14) and a season (221) playing for two of the best teams in school history.

He finished his basketball career and a BA at Grand Canyon University, and then became a CPA. He cut his teeth doing business services work for Merced County before taking his first Merced College position as director of fiscal services. He is celebrating 18 years here this month.

"It has been a family [here]," Joe said. "I wouldn't change it for anything."

The Trunk

Danielle's parents Pat and John Mims paved the way to Merced College for her family. Pat

took classes there and John graduated from the College before going on to a 30-plus year career with PG&E.

Michelle did the same. She had college credits and work experience, but no degree yet when the Allisons moved to Atwater when Joe and Alecia were in high school.

She first took a job at the College as Southeast Asian Training Coordinator, before earning credits at the College, and then a degree from the University of Phoenix.

The former Merced County NAACP president has also served the College on a bond oversight committee and while performing in concerts and plays.

The Branches

Joe and Danielle's siblings also used Merced College as a springboard.

Danielle's brother Shawn Mims, an IT expert, started his computer sciences career with a Merced College degree.



Joe's sister Alecia Allison-Thomas, who hated school as a teenager, gave the College a brief shot before joining the workforce. She was married and raising a child seven years later when a divorce brought her home and back to school.

Alecia earned her AA in 1997, a BA from Sacramento State in 1999 and an MA there in 2000. She said she should have gone straight to law

problem with me going there," said DeShaun, who earned a transfer degree in May and now studies sociology at Stanislaus State. "I never stopped going to classes. It just took me longer to hit my stride."

Middle son Jaylen wasn't ready to start adult life at age 18 either.

"My brother was [at the College] and I was like,

Whether or not she lands there, she'll always love it, remembering days playing in her dad's office.

New Growth

Every Allison has a different reason why Merced College is a chapter in the family storybook.

"It's because family is here and it's not scary," Jordyn said.

Danielle added, "The classes, the social aspects, the theater, College for Kids, basketball games—it provides so much."

DeShaun thinks they gravitate there because they've all made great friends there.

Michelle says, "We don't raise children to stay home. We raise them to be able to leave. A community college prepares [them for that]."

It makes financial sense, says Jaylen, adding, "My parents were living at home with their parents when they went to Merced College."

Joe says they know they'll do well because everyone else has.

"We feed off of that," he said. "Whether it was my mom teaching and attending, or me through basketball and work, or the staff, even the grounds, it does feel like home."

***"We recognize that it's a great place.
It feels like home."***

—Joe Allison on family pipeline to Merced College

school then, but again waited, this time 17 years.

Alecia just completed law school in October. Delay, schmelay. She knew she could do it, just like she had in Merced.

"It's a really loving community at Merced College," Alecia said. "There was a lot of love and support."

The Leaves

As for Joe and Danielle's children, it wasn't a given DeShaun would go to Merced College after graduating high school in 2015. He had a few false starts.

"My family reassured me that they had no

"He's still at home. He's still treated as an adult," Jaylen said. "I can do the same. It made financial and emotional sense for me."

Jaylen is acing his second year studying biology and chemistry at Merced College. He wants to transfer to UC Davis to eventually study at the renowned veterinary school.

Jordyn, an aspiring actress and Atwater High junior, said she picked up her basketball skills at College for Kids camps at Merced College. She wants to get a jump on college by learning sign language there this spring.

Asked if she would go to Merced College full time, Jordyn said diplomatically, "I don't know yet."

ATHLETICS



The 2019–20 athletics year ended on March 12, 2020 with the COVID-19 shutdown, truncating the seasons for six of the 12 sports offered by Merced College: baseball; softball; men's and women's swim and dive; and men's and women's track and field. COVID-19 notwithstanding, the year was notable on and off the field.

- BLUE DEVIL ATHLETICS** continues to matriculate at a higher rate than the general student body. The football roster, for instance, included 11 sophomores. Nine of them have met all requirements for an AA degree and/or four-year school transfer, and seven of the nine have received football scholarships. Volleyball listed only three sophomores. Two have already transferred, and the third currently is finishing her degree requirements.
- WOMEN'S BASKETBALL HAD** another banner season. The Lady Devils were state-ranked all year. They went undefeated in conference, 12-0, tying a school record. Sophomore point guard Malaya-Jaye Kendrick was named conference MVP. She and Jaydon Williams were voted first-team All-State. Hope Salsig made the All-State academic team. All five sophomores have transferred to four-year schools, three of them on basketball scholarships—Kendrick, Shamany Suarez, and Jada Johnson
- WOMEN'S WATER POLO** under head coach Billy Halpin continued to grow. The Blue Devils made it to the NorCal playoffs with a 19-8 record. Grace Mello and Stephanie Hart were named JC All-America. Six of the seven sophomores have transferred to four-year schools.
- UNDER HEAD COACH** Scott McCall, the Blue Devils finished second in the Coast Conference and through the state playoffs, third in northern California. Of the nine sophomores, two earned athletic scholarships to four-year schools, and six others have met the academic requirements and have transferred.
- AT THE SHUTDOWN**, the baseball Blue Devils under second-year head coach Nate Devine were 13-7, in second place in the Central Valley Conference, and headed toward the regional playoffs. Of the 12 sophomores on the squad, 11 have received baseball scholarships to four-year schools, including two at the D-1 level, pitchers Clayton Hall and Mark Sellers. Five Blue Devils were named Academic All-America.
- THE MERCED COLLEGE** Board of Trustees approved the addition of inter-collegiate soccer, opening with the 2020 fall season. Faculty members Josh Daughdrill (humanities) and Ian Stapleton (business) accepted assignments as women's and men's head coaches respectively. They had begun developing rosters through spring 2020 off-season athletics classes when the shutdown occurred. Soccer, as with all sports, awaits the resumption of participation.

ARTS



Merced College offers degrees and certificate programs in the Fine and Performing Arts fields that support and encourage students in realizing their full potential in both their personal and academic pursuits. Students explore creative strategies and applications within the visual and performing arts fields that promote enhanced career development choices and problem-solving abilities.

Particular areas of study include Fine and Digital Arts, Music, Photography and Theater Arts. Students can study curricula that includes design,

drawing and painting, sculpture and ceramics, as well as printmaking and art history.

One of the arts' most exciting area of growth is in digital media, which includes instruction and career technical skills development in game design, animation, motion graphics, web design, graphic design, and the integration of digital audio and video components. Merced College offered students the opportunity to complete an AA degree in Digital Arts for the first time in Fall 2019.

MC FOUNDATION



What an interesting time we are living in. As I write this, we are over 6 months into COVID-19, and our neighboring towns and forests are burning. I am struck by the contrast between last year and today. But what remains, what stays the same in these changing times, is this community's commitment to our students.

The Merced College motto, "Students are our focus and we are known by their success" has never held more meaning than it does in this moment in history. Our alumni are working tirelessly on the front lines as first responders, nurses, agriculturalists, and teachers among many others. Merced College has always provided the workforce for Merced County and we are proud of that fact.

As I'm sure you know, college students are facing new and more difficult challenges; housing and food insecurities are at the top of the list. The majority of our students are disproportionately impacted and are some of the most vulnerable to economic downturns and health crises. The Merced College Foundation responded to this challenge by establishing a Student Emergency Fund in March 2020 to help cover unplanned financial expenses such as housing, technology,

childcare and food insecurities as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ensuring access to an affordable, high quality public higher education has never been more rewarding, challenging or critical. The success of our students and our institution today, depends on those who support our mission to transform lives and enhance the quality of life in our region. There is no doubt that challenges will remain

as we continue to adapt to a rapidly changing world. What won't change is our belief that what we put in today to support our students will create a foundation for success for generations to follow.

The Merced College Foundation is committed to helping our students stay in school, earn their degrees or certificates and build a better future for themselves and our community.

It is our hope that, with enough support from generous donors like you, we can help our students finish strong and go out into the world and do incredible things.

We invite you to donate at mccd.edu/foundation.

Sincerely,

Jill Cunningham

Associate Vice President of External Relations
Executive Director of Merced College Foundation

The Merced College Foundation is a 501(c)3 incorporated, tax-exempt non-profit overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors. Our tax ID number is 23-7385578.

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