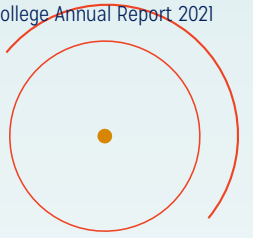


MERCED  
COLLEGE



# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT





# We've missed you!



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



The challenges we faced in 2020 tested us, pushed us beyond our perceived limitations, and shined a spotlight on who we truly are as individuals and as organizations. Stripped bare of our pretenses — and our formal work attire — we emerged from the year exhausted but brimming with hard-earned wisdom.

In 2021, that wisdom is being put into action, and evidence of this can be seen all over Merced College. From facilities to curricula and everything in between, this is a year in which the Merced College family began to move forward and build a future that everyone in our region can be excited about.

Innovation often looks like evolution, and that is certainly the case in our Library building. Now named the Downey Learning Resource Center (LRC) — in recognition of the \$1 million gift from alumna Susie Downey and her late

husband, Col. Russell Downey — has been not just renovated, but reimagined. The first floor is now a welcoming and collaborative space for our students, while the second floor provides a quieter environment for study and instruction. We also relocated our tutoring services to the LRC, providing students with a one-stop shop for all the academic support they need.

Another exciting advancement for students at the Merced and Los Banos campuses are our virtual anatomy dissection tables. Students interested in sciences and nursing careers can study the human anatomy using life-size, ultra-realistic, 3-D models on state-of-the-art touch screen technology — and students learning remotely can access the same technology from home — this is a remarkable sign that the future has already arrived at Merced College.

Sometimes, innovation happens behind the scenes. New technologies — including a much-needed wi-fi upgrade and new classroom technology at both the Merced and Los Banos campuses — is allowing for more robust and engaging online instruction, which is critical as we move to offer an increasing number of degrees and certificate programs fully online. We are also finding better and more creative ways to support our faculty as they seek to adapt to online modalities and

create engaging experiences for our students.

One thing I find to be consistently true of innovation is that it results from collaboration, which comes about through strong partnerships. Thousands of local residents were vaccinated on our campus this past spring, thanks to our community partnerships. High school students are graduating with associate degrees, thanks to our educational partnerships. New programs to train the workforce — such as paramedics, hospitality workers and truck drivers, among others — are either in place or being developed, thanks to our industry and agency partnerships.

As we look ahead to an exciting next chapter, I hope you enjoy this look back at what can only be described as a pivotal year in the history of Merced College, our region and our nation. We are all in this together, and when we all work together, the possibilities are endless.

Sincerely,

**Chris Vitelli, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent/President

# FOUNDATION



For the Merced College Foundation, and for our entire team in the Office of External Relations, relationships are at the heart of everything we do. Donor relations, alumni relations, government relations, community relations, public relations — relationships are our job, but they are also what bring us the most joy.

Being physically separated during the pandemic has been a major challenge, but as things have begun to open up, our recent advertising campaign might have said it best: We've missed you!

We were thrilled to be able to host commencement ceremonies in person this year, honoring two classes of new Blue Devil alumni. And it has been great to reconnect with colleagues and to see students back on campus.

This fall has been a breath of fresh air. From our annual Convocation event in August to the kickoff of our new soccer programs in Septem-

ber, the State of the College event in October, and the Los Banos Campus 50th Anniversary celebration in November, Merced College is back in a big way.

As we continue to meet the needs of our community and support our students, the importance of private giving has never been more clear. Two of our most exciting new projects on campus — the Raj Kahlon Agriculture and Industrial Technology Complex and the Col. Russell and Susie Downey Learning Resource Center — could not have been possible without the generosity of our donors.

We are so proud of our alumni successes, community partnerships and innovative new programs, and we are grateful for the opportunity to share our story with you. As always, thank you for your support, and go Blue Devils!

Sincerely,

**Jill Cunningham**

Assoc. Vice President of External Relations  
Exec. 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

## EMPLOYEE GIVING PROGRAM ADDRESSES STUDENT NEEDS

A successful and voluntary employee giving program puts its money where its mouth is, freeing organizations to help charities they believe in or causes their employees choose. At Merced College, the beneficiaries are the Blue Devils themselves.

Since the program at Merced College was revived in 2018, participation has grown dramatically. Today, over 50 percent of the college's employees give anywhere from \$5 to \$200 per month, for a total of about \$3,000 per month.

"We told people, 'If everyone who works here puts in something, we can help students in ways that align with our mission and vision,'" said Associate Vice President of External Relations Jill Cunningham. "Every dollar that comes in via employee giving goes straight back out to support our students."

Mini-grants from the program have helped fund trips for baseball and debate teams, prizes for students during extreme registration and other recruitment events, refurbished athletic training facilities, a remodel of the pool office, and a wireless microphone for campuswide events. In Los Banos, the mini-grants have bought gift cards for students of the month and a raffle for non-credit students to entice them to use campus services.

## DOWNEYS RECOGNIZED FOR GENEROUS SUPPORT



Local rancher Susie Downey, on behalf of herself and her late husband, Col. Russell Downey, donated \$1 million to Merced College in 2020 to support student success and access initiatives.

In honor of their generosity, the Merced College Learning Resource Center will be named after the Downeys, and the couple are being honored with 2021 President's Medallion Award at this year's State of the College event.

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.

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.

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, and to support future generations of students in achieving their goals.

"If you want to put your mind into it, you can do anything," she 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."



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Joe Doyland**

**Mary Robinson**

**Yolanda Brewer**

**Emily Haden**

**Steve Hobbs**

**John Pedrozo**

**Grey Roberts**

**Kari Ross-May**

**Vinton Thengvall**

**Andre Urquidez**

**Nanette Villegas**

**Bud Wallace**

**Cary Yanagi**

# 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.



**Ernie Ochoa**  
President  
Area 2



**John Pedrozo**  
Vice President  
Area 7



**Joe Gutierrez**  
Clerk  
Area 5



**Kory Benson**  
Trustee  
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**Mario Mendoza**  
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Area 1



**Carmen Ramirez, J.D.**  
Trustee  
Area 3



**Tarence McCullough**  
Student Trustee

## "Students are our focus and we are known by their success"



### VISION

Merced College will provide transformative and empowering educational experiences to meet student and community needs.

### 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.

### CORE VALUES

#### Student Success

We focus on student access and success.

#### Supportive Environment

We promote an atmosphere of trust where communication and teamwork cultivate a rich environment for teaching and learning.

#### Proactive

We utilize agility, innovation, and responsible risk-taking to create our preferred future.

#### Partnering

We actively engage with the community and community partners to respond to cultural, educational, economic, and technological needs.

#### Diversity

We embrace diversity and equity as community strengths and celebrate these qualities in our institution.

#### Self-Reflection

We strive for continuous improvement based on data-driven self-reflection, objective assessment, and dialogue.

#### President's Cabinet

Chris Vitelli, Ed.D., *Superintendent/President*

Karissa Morehouse, *Vice President of Instruction*

Michael McCandless, Ed.D., *Vice President of Student Services*

Joe Allison, *Vice President of Administrative Services*

Kelly Avila, *Associate Vice President of Human Resources*

Jill Cunningham, *Associate Vice President of External Relations/ Executive Director of Merced College Foundation*

Arlis Bortner, *Associate Vice President of Information Technology Services*

#### Annual Report Staff

James Leonard, *Director of Communications and External Relations*

Anton Boyadjian, *Graphic Designer*

Dee Sigismund, Ph.D., *Dean of Institutional Effectiveness*

Juan Rodriguez, *Digital Media Specialist*

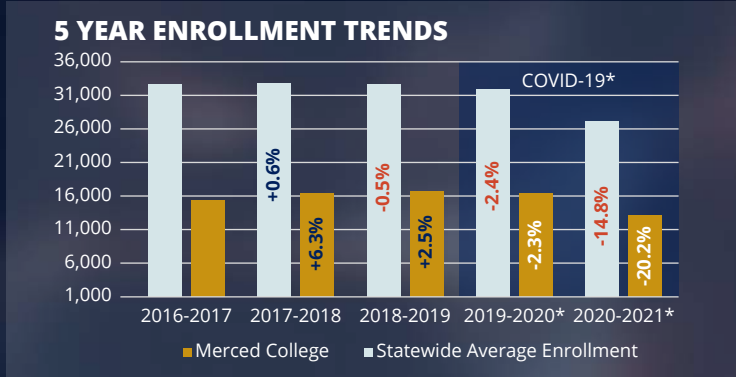
Luci Chavez, *Contributing Writer*

Printed by Merced College Print Services

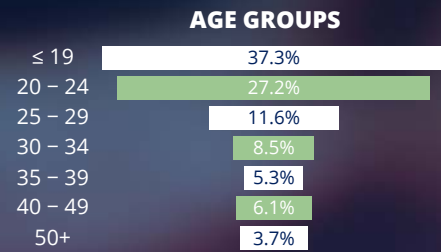
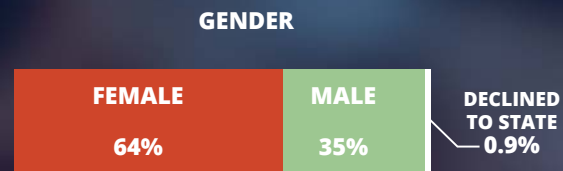
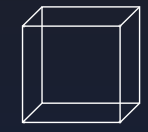
# WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS?

# WHAT ARE THEY STUDYING?

**TOTAL STUDENTS  
2020-2021  
13,065**

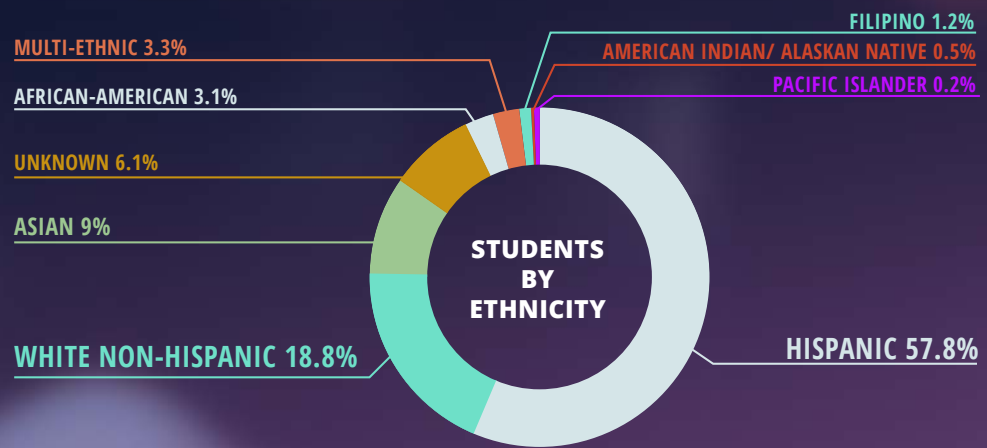


## TOP 10 DEGREES & CERTIFICATES AWARDED IN 2020-2021



CSU General Education Breadth (CT)	Certificate requiring 30 to < 60 units	746
Social and Behavioral Science (AA)	Associate in Arts (AA) Degree	240
Psychology for Transfer (AAT)	Associate in Arts for Transfer (AAT) Degree	220
Psychology (AA)	Associate in Arts (AA) Degree	157
Business Administration (AST)	Associate in Science for Transfer (AST) Degree	107
Sociology for Transfer (AAT)	Associate in Arts for Transfer (AAT) Degree	107
Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (CT)	Certificate requiring 30 to < 60 units	99
Administration of Justice (AST)	Associate in Science for Transfer (AS-) Degree	75
Health Sciences (AA)	Associate in Arts (AA) Degree	67
Elementary Teacher Education (AAT)	Associate in Arts for Transfer (AAT) Degree	67

SOURCE: INTERNAL MC DATABASE COMPILED BY OIE

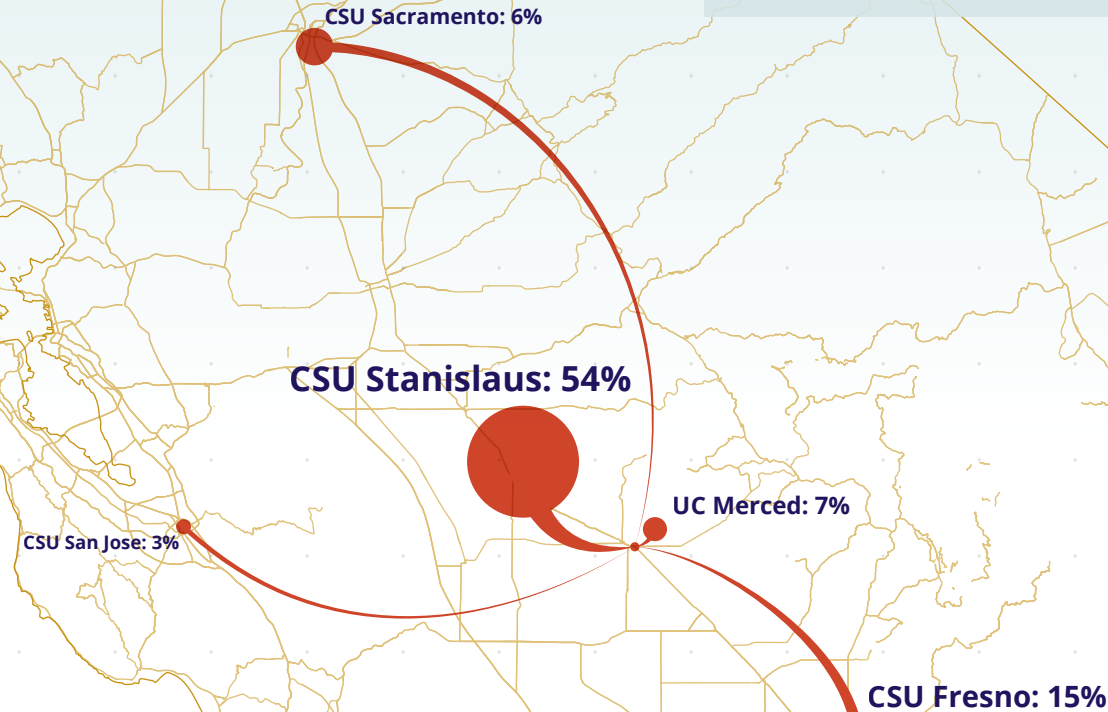


\*Statewide community college enrollment has declined during COVID-19.

SOURCE: [HTTPS://DATAMART.CCCCO.EDU/STUDENTS/STUDENT\\_TERM\\_ANNUAL\\_COUNT.ASPX](https://datamart.cccco.edu/students/student_term_annual_count.aspx)

# WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

Merced College is committed to helping students transfer to four-year universities, and has worked to develop pipeline programs like Warriors on the Way with CSU Stanislaus and the Merced Promise partnership with UC Merced.

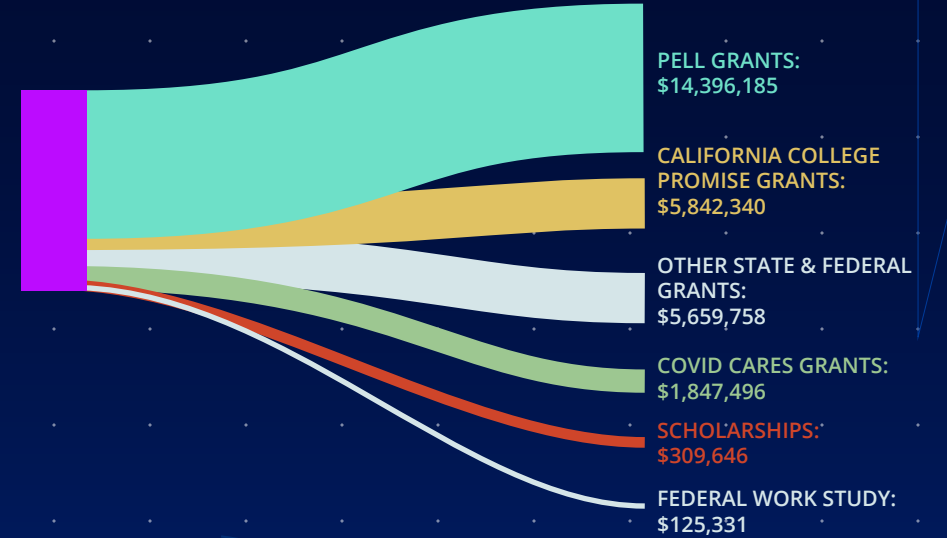


## TOP 5 CSU & UC TRANSFER INSTITUTIONS

Other institutions: 15%

# FINANCIAL AID AND BUDGET

**TOTAL AID AWARDED:**  
**\$28,180,756**



FEDERAL: \$21,298,596  
STATE: \$71,012,937  
LOCAL: \$26,385,117  
TRANSFER: \$8,171,961

## 2020-2021

**REVENUE:**  
**\$126,868,613**

**EXPENSES:**  
**\$126,154,386**

SUPPLIES: \$1,360,478  
CAPITAL OUTLAY: \$6,744,994  
OTHER OPERATING: \$10,313,710  
OTHER OUTGOING: \$11,015,307  
CLASSIFIED SALARIES: \$16,811,958  
STUDENT AID: \$24,743,622  
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS: \$25,928,688  
CERTIFICATED SALARIES: \$29,235,630

## BUDGET

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

SOURCE: INTERNAL MC DATABASE COMPILED BY OIE

# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## NEW PARTNERSHIPS TO ENHANCE CAREERS IN HOSPITALITY, TRUCKING



**M**erced-area residents can pursue careers in hospitality and customer service while earning college credits, thanks to a new and innovative partnership between Merced College and downtown Merced's new El Capitan, a JdV by Hyatt Hotel, and Mainzer.

The Hospitality Career Academy, which launched in the fall, will end with a community interview day and graduation. Students who complete the program earn a local certificate of achievement and will be well positioned for careers in hospitality and customer service, including immediate opportunities with El Capitan and Mainzer.

The partnership is part of El Capitan's Heart of Merced program, focused on positively impacting the Merced community, particularly in the areas of education, jobs and economic development. Since opening, the property has brought more than 100 jobs to the Merced area, and

the company is committed to hiring locally and supporting community organizations.

### TRUCK DRIVING PROGRAM

Truck driving is an in-demand profession, and Merced College is once again rising up to meet a community need. The Merced College Truck Driving program will begin in Spring 2022, with courses that include behind-the-wheel training and internships.

Students who complete the program will earn their Class A Commercial Truck Driving License, which includes the option for multiple Class A endorsements, and gain knowledge and additional skills necessary to become a professional truck driver.

## GRANT SUPPORTS DISTANCE LEARNING, RURAL OUTREACH

**M**erced College will enhance many of its education and outreach offerings to rural areas thanks to a \$436,772 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The award is part of the USDA's Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants program, which funds projects designed to help rural education and health care entities remotely reach students, patients and outside expertise.

The funding will enable programming at county high schools, as well as the college's Los Banos Campus and Business Resource Center:

- Interactive distance learning via videoconference to rural high schools, including dual credit courses.
- Expanded adult education and workforce development programs in rural areas.
- Increased and enhanced learning opportunities for students at the Los Banos Campus.

It is estimated that the Merced College project will serve nearly 4,000 students, including more than 1,600 students at four rural high schools: Dos Palos, Granada, Le Grand and Mariposa. It will also serve nearly 800 adults with professional development, workforce development, first responder training and more.



Director Kitty Cazares (left) and Merced College nursing students were critical to the success of the vaccine clinics.

### VACCINATING THE COMMUNITY REQUIRED A TEAM EFFORT

**I**n Spring 2021, COVID-19 vaccine distribution through the State of California had been slowed by a number of factors—particularly so in the historically underserved San Joaquin Valley—and it took a true team effort to ensure local residents could be vaccinated.

Thousands of Merced County residents received vaccines during a series of clinics held on the Merced College campus, thanks to a collaborative effort by the county, the City of Merced, Dignity Health-Mercy Medical Center, Merced College, University of California Health, and UC Merced.

And it could not have gone so well without help from dozens of trained volunteers from the college's staff, as well as nursing students and instructors. In August, at the college's annual Convocation, the nursing programs and Allied Health were named the President's Blue and Gold Award recipients for their work during the clinics.



# ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS



## FIREFIGHTING ALUMNI DRIVE NEW PARAMEDIC PROGRAM

A chance meeting with Merced College President Chris Vitelli put two Merced firefighters, both Blue Devil alumni, on a yearlong journey to bring a paramedic training program to their alma mater.

City of Merced Fire Chief Derek Parker was just a volunteer administering shots to Merced County residents when he met Merced College President Chris Vitelli at the school's COVID-19 vaccination clinic back in February.

"Chief Parker explained to me there was an increasing workforce gap in regional paramedics, and a local program would greatly benefit the community," Vitelli said. "My usual answer to a common sense solution is 'Let's make it happen.'"

The chance meeting and response put Parker and City of Merced Battalion Chief Mickey Brunelli, also a Merced College alumnus, on a quest to bring a paramedic training program to their alma mater.

The Merced College program will welcome its inaugural class in January.

"Paramedics provide the industry standard for excellence of care in a prehospital setting," Parker said. "And I want to be involved in the excellence of this city. That's important to me. It's an easy solution to build up a local program with local people and train them to provide great service."

Parker will direct the program; Brunelli is the clinical coordinator. Both are experienced paramedics and instructors, as well as career firefighters. They have a clear idea of how to get it done.

"When you're from a place and work there, you feel pride and a sense of duty to that community," Brunelli said. "We also feel responsible for recruiting the next generation. Once we get that cycle up and running here at Merced College, then it feeds itself. We can sustain it."

## ADVOCACY AWARD FOR WORK SUPPORTING WOMEN



Liliana Prado Nava, R.D., works with pregnant women, new mothers, infants and toddlers every day. For more than two decades, she has given new mothers training and resources to feed themselves and their babies so everyone can live a healthy life.

In May, Prado Nava received the Phyllis A. Bramson Advocacy Award at the California WIC Association's annual conference, an honor that goes to the biggest champions of the program that supports new mothers and their children.

Prado Nava, who currently works as the Livingston site manager of the Merced County Community Action Agency Special Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). She knows how important it is for new mothers to ask for help.

"New moms have to do a lot and so many things happen in those first few weeks," Prado Nava said. "Babies don't grow on their own. It does take a village to raise a child. Knowing who can give you support is really important."

## FINDING AN ACADEMIC HOME AT THE LOS BANOS CAMPUS



Noel Felix never felt at home in higher education, but something about grinding at work every day without advancement left him craving more. The Los Banos High graduate moved back home and began taking classes at Merced College's Los Banos Campus.

With renewed discipline and just the right support system around him, he began to thrive. Jazmin Serrano, Felix's counselor at Los Banos, said younger freshmen gravitated toward the older Felix, who quietly attacked his studies with brutal efficiency, acing five classes per semester.

Now a semester shy of earning his bachelor's degree, Felix is full of hope for the future. He wants to work for one of the biggest companies on the American business landscape—Apple, Google, Amazon. He wants a shot at Silicon Valley.

"I think having a degree will open up a lot of doors to companies I could never have imagined working for, or for networking with people and starting up a business," Felix said. "Who knows what will happen in another five years?"





Lab technician John Espinosa demonstrates a new Anatomage table at the Los Banos Campus.

# THE FUTURE IS NOW

The latest technologies. A modern, adaptive curriculum. Innovative approaches to collaboration. These aren't just pillars of a long-term plan at Merced College – they're already here.

*By Luci Chavez and James Leonard*

The human cadaver last used by Merced College students in anatomy classes had already been disposed of years earlier. Faculty and students were making do, learning from plastic models and doing dissections on animal cadavers.

Then the future arrived on campus. And like many recent innovations at Merced College, the COVID-19 pandemic played a role. Using federal CARES Act money set aside to help institutions implement remote learning during the pandemic, the college purchased four state-of-the-art virtual dissection tables from Anatomage in Silicon Valley.

"Our ability to teach human anatomy has increased dramatically in just a few weeks," said Biology professor Brenda Schneider, the first faculty member to use the tables in a Merced College class.

It was easy to make the case to spend CARES Act money for the purchase since the Anatomage tables can be used inside the classroom—like a huge 3-by-8-foot tablet—but can also be accessed virtually, with the same functions

There are three units in Merced and a fourth on the Los Banos campus. Each contains a detailed, complete, 3-D visualization of four different human bodies. Each of the bodies, digitally imaged from real cadavers, can be dissected and rotated on any axis to see inside every structure and system.

The Anatomage tables make classes more intimate and accessible for



The Downey Learning Resource Center has been reimagined and renovated to better serve students, who returned to campus in Fall 2021.

Blue Devils who need to fulfill a gross anatomy requirement for the registered nursing and radiology tech programs, as well as anyone looking to transfer to four-year kinesiology or pre-med programs.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for everyone, but we have found a number of silver linings and new approaches that will benefit us in the future," President Chris Vitelli said. "We are so pleased to be able to offer this incredible technology to our students, and we are continuing to look for ways to innovate and adapt our operations to serve them in the future."

## LESSONS LEARNED, CHANGES MADE

The theme of 2020 was change, with students, instructors and staff alike forced abruptly to shift gears and move their lives and livelihoods online. For a college whose stated values begin with "student success" and end with "self-reflection," the approach for 2021 was clear—learn from the past while working to anticipate student needs that will continue to evolve.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 18**

# STUDENT SUPPORT REIMAGINED

The Downey Learning Resource Center has undergone a substantial renovation, consolidating student support services, enhancing collaboration among students and tutors, and providing new amenities.



## UPGRADED SECOND FLOOR

A QUIET ENVIRONMENT WITH WORKSTATIONS FOR GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL STUDY, ALONG WITH A LARGE COLLECTION OF BOOKS, PLENTY OF COMFORTABLE SEATING, AND AREAS FOR INSTRUCTION.



## WELCOME DESK

FRIENDLY STAFFERS GREET STUDENTS AT THE NEW WELCOME DESK IN THE RENOVATED LOBBY, AND HELP DIRECT THEM TO THE SUPPORT THEY NEED.

## STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER

NEW INDIVIDUAL AND COLLABORATIVE WORKSPACES HAVE BEEN ADDED TO HELP STUDENTS WORK IN A VARIETY OF WAYS. FACULTY AND STUDENT TUTORS ARE AVAILABLE TO WORK WITH STUDENTS.



## CAFÉ

STUDENTS CAN FIND HEALTHY OPTIONS TO FUEL UP AND MAKE IT THROUGH THE DAY. SNACKS AND DRINKS ARE AVAILABLE TO KEEP STUDENTS ENGAGED IN THEIR STUDY TIME.



## HELP DESK

STUDENTS CAN FIND ASSISTANCE IN LOGGING INTO DISTRICT RESOURCES AND TROUBLESHOOTING TECHNOLOGY, WITH SERVICES AVAILABLE IN PERSON OR ONLINE.



## STUDY ROOMS

NEW COLLABORATIVE TECHNOLOGY ALLOWS STUDENTS TO SHARE CONTENT ON DISPLAY SCREENS AND WORK THROUGH ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECTS TOGETHER. STUDY ROOMS ARE AVAILABLE ON BOTH FLOORS.



To learn more about the \$1 million gift from Susie Downey and her husband, the late Col. Russell Downey, see Page 3.

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15**

“The pandemic forced us to use technology in new ways, to teach using innovative practices,” said Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Instruction Karissa Morehouse. “We’re asking, ‘How do we take Merced College into the future and create more accessible and dynamic learning experiences for today’s students?’”

With that in mind, Merced College put together a team of faculty, along with the IT department, to identify new technology for classrooms to incorporate Zoom and other online resources.

Morehouse and her team are also working to provide new programs and schedules to meet the needs of local employers and prepare students for high-paying jobs in our region, like new academic offerings for highly sought-after paramedics, truck drivers and hospitality industry workers.

In addition to new programs, the college is looking to expand successful program structures like Fast-Track, where students are in the same classes together with a counselor over an accelerated time-frame, and will also add more six-week classes to allow students to jump into the semester at various times.

“We are already serving students better,” Morehouse said. “The key for us is utilizing the momentum of the pandemic. It was nothing anyone asked for and nothing anyone wants to do again, but we learned important things.”

**STUDENT HUB GETS AN OVERHAUL**

The two-story structure now known as the Downey Learning Resource Center (LRC) has been a student hub and a jewel of the Merced College campus since it was built in 2007. But after undergoing a \$1.4 million renovation, and moving tutoring operations into the building this summer, the LRC can now fully live up to the promise of its name.

A \$1 million gift from alumna Susie Downey in 2020 made the remodel possible. In recognition of their support, the center has



**The Student Success & Tutorial Center (SSTC) has been relocated to the Downey Learning Resource Center, making it easier for students to find the academic support they need.**

been named after Susie and her late husband, Col. Russell Downey.

The college has repainted the building, replaced the flooring and updated the signage. It replaced wooden furniture with comfortable chairs, couches and tables.

Then it packed the space with more power outlets, charging stations, loaner battery packs, 60 new loaner laptops, upgraded wi-fi, and click-and-share collaboration screens in the study rooms.

The technology is cool, but the biggest change might have been geographic: Moving the Student Success & Tutorial Center to the LRC is a lifesaver for time-strapped students in need academic support.

“I always thought it didn’t quite make sense to have students doing research in the library, then have to cross campus to go to a tutoring session, then hike back to the LRC to study,” Vice President for Student Services Mike McCandless said. “We can better accommodate students by putting them all in one place.”

**COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION**

The space formerly occupied by the Student Success & Tutorial Center was in the middle of a complete overhaul of its own as the Fall 2021 semester began. The newly created and aptly named Innovation Center will take its place, providing a formal home for the innovative spirit the college seeks to embody.

The Innovation Center is designed to support new approaches to instruction, and to work in general. A remote worker lounge will provide plenty of room for employees who are increasingly working off campus, while collaborative work spaces provide open alternatives to conference rooms and offices. Instructional designers are on hand to help instructors who want to get creative in their online classes, and state-of-the-art recording studios are being developed to enable high-quality lectures and other visual presentations.

When it comes to curriculum, college leadership knows online learning is not just a feature of the pandemic, but a wave of the future. That’s why they’re in the process of developing Merced College Online, a robust collection of programs that will be offered fully online. For Spring 2022, there are already 44 degrees and certificates that students will be able to earn entirely through online courses, and that number is expected to grow.

It all points to an exciting future for the college, but Vitelli knows that innovation is futile without the right people to implement it. He describes the campus community as a family, with similar annoyances and disagreements, but with an overarching commitment toward a greater purpose, and with deep respect and care for one another.

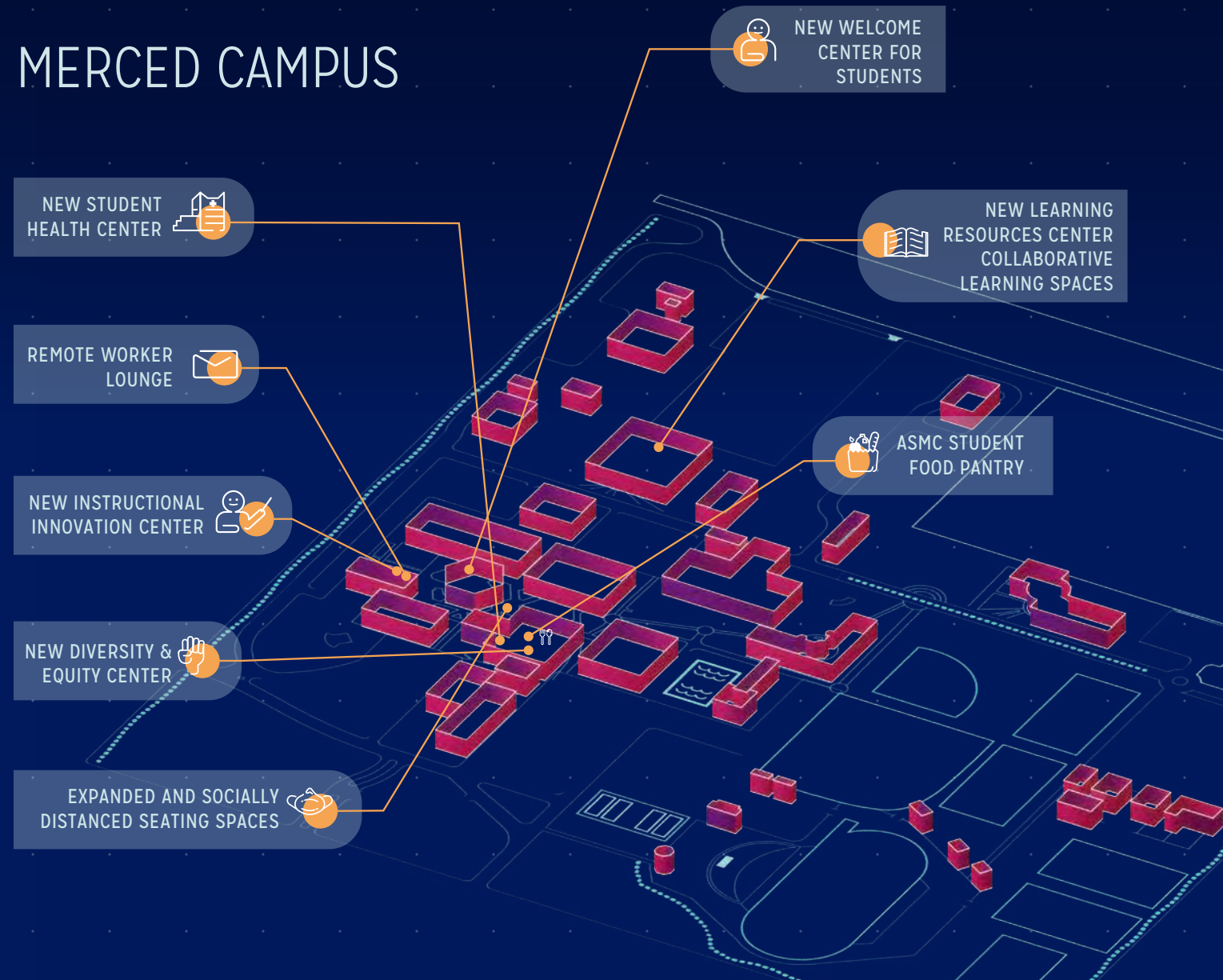
With that kind of spirit, and innovative ideas, the possibilities are endless.

“Our world will never stand still, and neither will Merced College,” Vitelli said. “We will face our challenges together, and we will plan for the future together. And if we continue to support each other, and keep our students in our minds and hearts, we will continue to thrive.”

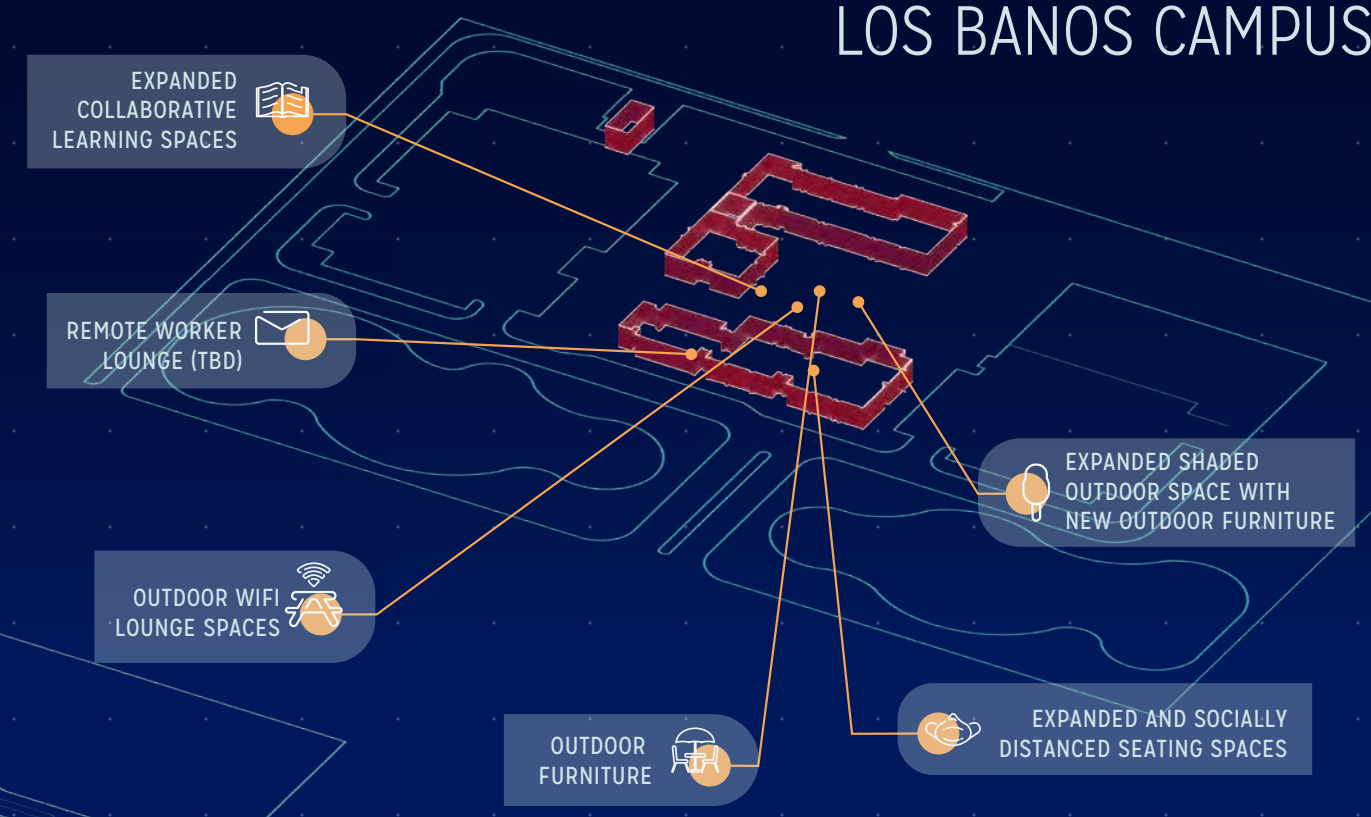
# SPACES REIMAGINED

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Merced College implemented major upgrades designed to help students and employees transition back to in-person classes and operations in Fall 2021.

## MERCED CAMPUS



## LOS BANOS CAMPUS



### Campuswide Projects:

- PAINTING THE ENTIRE CAMPUS
- EXPANDED ZOOM AND SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING TECHNOLOGY IN ALL CLASSROOMS
- EXPANDED WI-FI
- OUTDOOR CLASSROOM TENTS
- EXPANDED SHADED OUTDOOR SPACE WITH NEW OUTDOOR FURNITURE
- OUTDOOR WI-FI LOUNGE SPACES

# CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Career Technical Education is one of the most important ways that a community college supports a region, with programs that lead directly to high-demand jobs in areas that meet community needs. Over the past year, Merced College has expanded its CTE programming and begun construction projects that will increase capacity for enrollment while providing students with a robust experience using industry-standard facilities and equipment.



## GRAB A BITE, SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING

The Nutrition and Foods Department is expanding their offerings with a certificate in Culinary Management, in which students will experience hands-on application of all they have been learning in food safety, menu development, baking, food costing and customer service. Students will learn the many aspects of a food business by way of a food truck that is already beginning to appear on campus. Chef Vinnie DeAngelo has teamed up with the Nutrition Department in this venture, bringing enthusiasm and his unique skill set. All are encouraged to support students in this new program by visiting the food truck on campus.



May Groundbreaking (from left): Joe Gutierrez, Board Clerk; John Pedrozo, Board Vice President; Jim Costa, U.S. Congressman; Eleni Kounalakis, Lieutenant Governor; Raj Kahlon, Donor, Owner of RHM Farms; Chris Vitelli, Superintendent/President; Adam Gray, State Assembly Member; Carmen Ramirez, Board Member; Mario Mendoza, Board Member; Joe Doyland, Foundation Board President.

## CONSTRUCTION, RENOVATIONS WILL BENEFIT ENTIRE COMMUNITY

### AG/IT COMPLEX

Construction of the state-of-the-art, 29,000-square-foot Raj Kahlon Agriculture and Industrial Technology Complex was commemorated with a groundbreaking ceremony on May 26. The AgIT facility will be the first new building on campus since 2009, and it replaces original facilities that were built in the 1970s.

Local farmer Raj Kahlon donated \$5 million, the largest sum in the college's history, for the effort in 2018.

"I live in this community and always want good things to happen here," Kahlon said. "My family and I care about nurturing future farmers from this area. Inside of this new facility, students will learn so much and go

on to great careers in agriculture. The whole community will benefit, and it makes me very happy to know that."

In addition to Kahlon's gift, the complex is publicly funded using \$12.6 million from a 2002 local bond and \$12.3 million in matching funds from the state via Proposition 51, a community college capital projects bond from 2016.

Construction is expected to take 15 months and should be completed in August 2022.

### VOCATIONAL BUILDING

Another major construction project on campus will be the renovation of the Vocational Building, funded in part by a \$3 million construction renovation grant from the Department of Commerce's Economic Devel-

opment Administration (EDA). Measure H Bond funds from 2002 will cover the remainder of the \$9 million project.

The Vocational Building, originally constructed in 1967, houses Merced College's business programs and is home to labs for Computer Science, Administrative Office Management, Accounting, Foods and Nutrition, and Drafting Technology. The International Student Services Office is also located in the Vocational Building, promoting awareness, perspective and understanding of international cultures.

"Our students and instructors are going to love the new spaces we're creating for them, and our community will continue to benefit greatly from these career technical and instructional programs," Merced College President Chris Vitelli said.



# OUTREACH



## A HYBRID APPROACH TO STUDENT SUCCESS

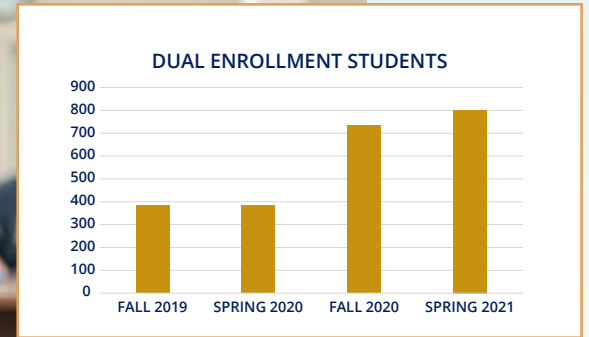
From dual enrollment programs designed to give high school students a headstart on their college journeys to extreme registration events — both virtual and in-person — that make it as easy as possible for new students to enroll, the Outreach team at Merced College has worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to provide

the services and support students need to help identify their unique paths to success.

When the Fall 2021 semester began, it marked the long-awaited return of in-person classes and a vibrant campus environment. Welcome Week was a true team effort, with staff, campus

leaders, volunteers and trustees joining forces to create a supportive and helpful presence as students navigated their return to campus. With an eye on the ever-changing present and an evolving future, Outreach staff at Merced College are reshaping what it means to support students at a modern community college.

## HIGH SCHOOLERS ACCELERATE PROGRESS THROUGH DUAL ENROLLMENT



As a student at Atwater High School, Alfonso Belmonte played basketball and volleyball, worked middle school hoops games, volunteered with the homeless, had friends and fun, and nailed his academic workload.

Belmonte was also taking classes at Merced College all along the way, and when he received his high school diploma in June, he'd already completed four associate degrees at Merced College.

There is a strong movement afoot within secondary education to encourage students like Belmonte to earn college credits while in high school via dual enrollment.

“When I first started, it was kinda like people telling me I needed to do it,” Belmonte said of his accomplishment. “But as the years went by, I felt more like, ‘Hey, I can do this. I can finish it.’ And people believed in me.”

Learn more at [mccd.edu/cte/articulationdualenrollment.html](https://mccd.edu/cte/articulationdualenrollment.html)

## MAPPING PROGRAM PATHWAYS

A key part of the Guided Pathways initiative at Merced College is the Program Pathways Mapper, a customized visual representation of the Merced College catalog. Students can find courses organized by Learning and Career Pathways, which are groupings of similar programs that make it easier to select a program of study and speed progress towards completion. In addition to course offerings, students can also find information on occupations and careers commonly associated with each program, including typical wages and the labor market demand for California.

Learn more at [merced.programmapper.com/academics](https://merced.programmapper.com/academics)

## FOCUSING ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY

As racial and political unrest continue to plague the nation, Merced College is working with students and the community to ensure it is taking a leadership role in social justice. One of the most tangible outcomes is the creation of a new equity center to act as a hub for students Louis Foy, Assistant Director of Equity and Support Centers, oversees programming that includes a Puente program, Undocumented Student Legal Services, a Dreamer Liaison through the Financial Aid Office, and a new Umoja program. Additionally, partnerships with the food pantry and Associated Students of Merced College are being expanded. The center looks to be a welcoming environment to support students and connect them with peers, programs, services and guidance.



# ATHLETICS



Board President Ernie Ochoa pumps up the men's and women's soccer teams at their Kickoff event in September.

## BLUE DEVILS BEAT THE ODDS, BACK IN ACTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought sports to a grinding halt in 2020, but Merced College student-athletes, coaches and staff pulled together in remarkable ways to get their teams back on the field in 2021.

The baseball, softball, swimming, and track and field programs all defied the odds and were able to practice and compete in Summer 2021, and by the fall, sports like football, soccer, volleyball and water polo were back at it, with men's and women's basketball waiting in the wings for the winter.

"Everyone from our president to the athletic trainers has done a phe-

nomenal job," baseball coach Nathan Devine said in the spring. "They made sure we could get back out there as safely as possible. We feel very lucky."

The culmination of all that hard work—implementing masking requirements, social distancing, regular testing and more—might have been the festive kickoff event for the brand-new Merced College soccer programs in September. The men's and women's teams launched their new campaigns with a well-attended community event, followed by a doubleheader.

# ARTS



The COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly hard on the arts, but there is still plenty to look forward to as Merced College continues to embrace fine and performing arts.

A small 'black box' performance space, complete with a pipe-and-drape curtain system and performance lighting and audio systems, is in the works. The space will allow students and faculty alike to give performances in an educational but authentic environment. Free shows during lunch hours will provide valuable experience to music and theater students and entertainment for the campus community as soon as Fall 2021.



Like many of Merced College's most meaningful innovations, the addition of soccer came in direct response to student demand and strong interest from the community. In 2016, based on the campaign promises of several trustees, a robust discussion was initiated on bringing soccer to Merced College.

"The community kept asking about it, while soccer kept growing in this area," Board President Ernie Ochoa said. "So the Board of Trustees asked President [Chris] Vitelli to conduct a feasibility study on adding men's and women's soccer. Everything else fell into place after that."

Sophomore women's defender Gardenia Rodriguez started playing soccer at El Capitan High School. A friend told her about Merced College coach Josh Daughdrill's passion for the sport, and Rodriguez began following his Instagram account early in 2020. When the opportunity arose, she was eager to return to soccer after a two-year absence.

"My biggest joy? Getting to know all of the girls," Rodriguez said. "When COVID hit, everyone was home. We lost all of our socializing. Now we're getting to play. We've all enjoyed it so much."

# LOS BANOS CAMPUS

## WORKING TO CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

As a Los Banos native and longtime resident, Jessica Moran has seen firsthand how the Merced College Los Banos Campus has evolved. Today, she is spearheading the next phase of that evolution. Moran was named dean of the Los Banos Campus in April, and one of her earliest tasks has been to plan for the Nov. 5 celebration of the campus's 50th anniversary.

Her main focus, however, is on the future. Recent improvements and upgrades to the Los Banos Campus under Moran's watch include:

- A new free noncredit medical assisting program to complement the existing certified nursing assistant program and expand career opportunities in the healthcare field.
- Continued development of the welding program, which is popular among students eager to complete a short-term program that leads to a good-paying career.
- Offering a strong balance of courses that transfer to a university, along with a wide range of career technical education courses that prepare students for a job in as little as six months.
- Upgraded technology throughout the campus, including the expansion of reliable wi-fi into every classroom and office, and new technology that enables instructors to teach in their classroom and at the Merced Campus synchronously using videoconferencing.
- Synchronous technology has also been implemented at the Merced Campus, reducing the need for Los Banos students to travel to Merced to take specialized classes not offered at their campus.

The Los Banos Campus had humble beginnings and has gone through many physical iterations, but President Chris Vitelli is encouraged by what he sees.



"Courses were once held in storefronts and high school classrooms for a time, due to the lack of a stable location," he wrote earlier this year. "But the Los Banos Campus of today is a beautiful and thriving place. Enrollment is growing, programs are thriving, and community partnerships are strengthening."

Moran's own educational journey, which took her from Los Banos to UC Berkeley, is ongoing—she's currently pursuing a doctoral degree in educational leadership through Texas Tech University. She sees herself as proof of the successes available to all students from her hometown.

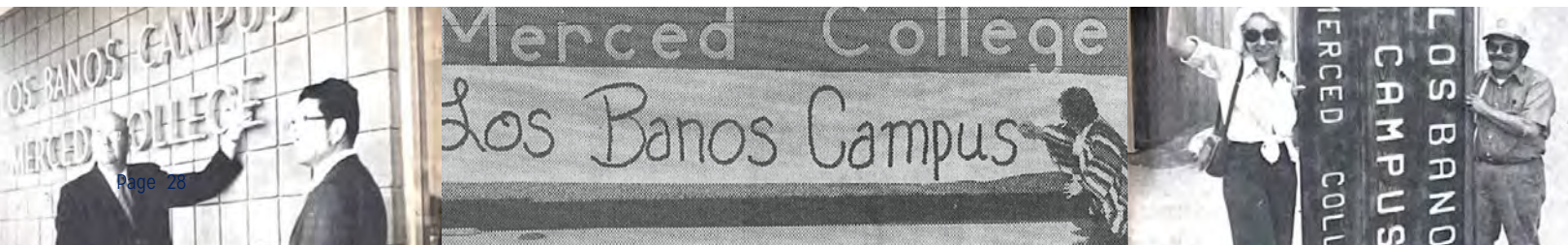
"Leaving my small town of Los Banos to attend UC Berkeley was truly one of the most courageous things that I would ever do," Moran said. "Fast forward to now, I continue the same approach—to see change as a life lesson to learn from, take the good from everything, and keep moving forward."

"I see myself reflected in many of our students and just hope that what I have to contribute to their success is as meaningful as those afforded to me."

# IGNITING NEW CAREERS RIGHT HERE IN LOS BANOS.



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