



**Celebrating Five Years**  
of Success, Achievement, & Innovation



2018 - 2023

The Merced College

**EMP**

Educational Master Plan

2023 - 2028





# The Merced College EMP

## Educational Master Plan

Dear Merced College  
Colleagues and Supporters,

The Educational Master Plan (EMP) is one of the most important documents we produce as an institution. It defines who we are and, more importantly, who we want to be.

In 2018, Merced College developed a five-year EMP designed to guide the district into an exciting future, with a strong focus on student success and institutional effectiveness. That exciting future proved to be an unpredictable and unexpected journey, but

**“...there is no question that our district is in a much better position today due to the EMP and all the great work that has been done.”**

there is no question that our district is in a much better position today due to the EMP and all the great work that has been done in support of the plan’s goals.

Today—equipped with a strong foundation of our previous EMP, lessons learned from a pandemic, and a commitment to innovation and excellence—we are again in the position of creating a new and dynamic vision for the future of Merced College.

In this report, we celebrate some of our biggest accomplishments over the past five years, while looking forward to the next five years under our new EMP.

I want to extend my appreciation to the members of the Educational Master Planning Committee, our consultants, and the many internal and external stakeholders who contributed to the development of our new EMP. Our new plan represents and echoes the collective voices of our internal and external communities, creating a path for a bold, forward-thinking vision for our

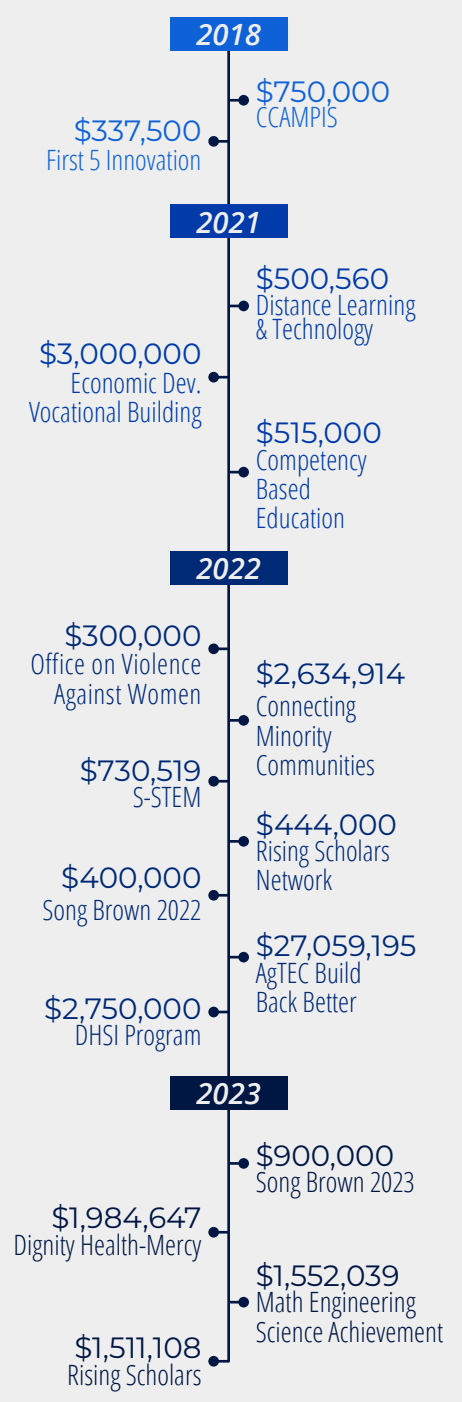
district with a clear-eyed focus on the success of our students.

And of course, I am grateful to every one of you who have contributed to our success as a college. We could not do this without you.

Sincerely,

Chris Vitelli, Ed.D.  
Superintendent/President

### TOP GRANTS SINCE 2018





# 2018 2019



JANUARY

## Dual Enrollment Program Grows

Launched in 2016, dual enrollment at Merced College got a boost in 2018 with the passing of AB288, which expanded eligibility for local high school students to get a head start in higher education by taking college courses. Merced College now serves more than 1,000 students per year through dual enrollment. Many students, including the Schwesinger twins, graduate from high school with full associate degrees or even multiple degrees in hand.



JULY

## Employee Giving Program Returns

The Merced College Foundation revived its Employee Giving Program in 2018. Today, more than 50 percent of employees give anywhere from \$5 to \$200 per month, funding mini-grants for special projects that directly benefit students.

AUGUST

## Welding Facility in Los Banos

Welding has become one of the most popular programs at the Los Banos Campus thanks in part to a new facility that opened in 2018. A new Student Success Center also opened in Los Banos the same year.



AUGUST

## Our Promise: Free Tuition

The Merced College Promise Program launched in 2018, offering free tuition to all first-time, full-time students. The program remains in effect today, and has even been expanded to include returning students.



MARCH

## Raj Kahlon Makes \$5M Donation to Merced College

Wanting to give back to the community in which he has thrived as a pistachio and almond farmer, Raj Kahlon made a \$5 million gift in 2019 to support the agricultural programs at Merced College and a new Agriculture and Industrial Technology Complex. The donation remains the largest gift in Merced College history, and Kahlon was honored with the President's Medallion at the 2019 State of the College Address and Luncheon.

MARCH

## Lady Blue Devils in the Final Four

A new chapter was added to Merced College's storied athletic history in 2019, when the Blue Devils women's basketball team advanced to their second consecutive state Final Four.



AUGUST

## Expanded Short-term Courses

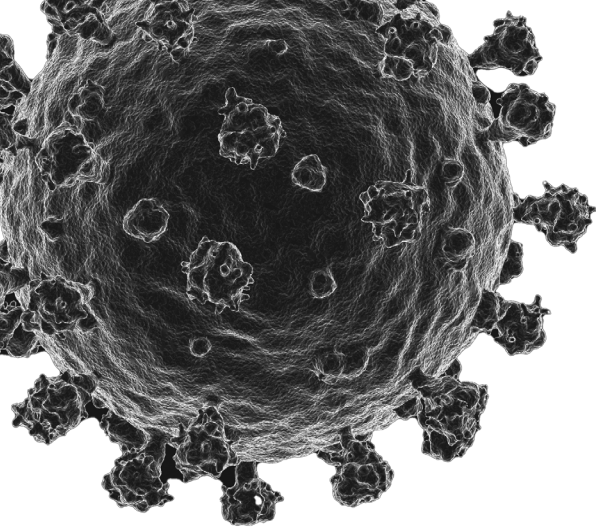
In support of the goals outlined in the EMP, two significant changes were made to directly benefit students: expanding short-term course offerings and centralizing academic support services. These changes were only a starting point—in recent years the college has continued to offer a wider variety of course modalities and schedules, and academic support services have been further centralized to make them easier for students to access.

APRIL-JUNE

## Planning Continues

Following the adoption of the Educational Master Plan in 2018, several new plans were rolled out in 2019, including the Facilities Master Plan, the Technology Master Plan, a new Student Equity Plan, and EEO and Professional Development Plans. A Staffing Plan was also adopted later.





# 2020



## MARCH

### Pivoting in a Pandemic

All the planning in the world couldn't have prepared anyone for the COVID-19 pandemic. After the immediate shutdown of campus and a frantic but successful pivot to online instruction, Merced College began doing everything it could to ensure students and employees were cared for and able to continue their lives and education as effectively as possible.

Free laptops were loaned to students who needed them, a student emergency fund was implemented, and employees were given the hardware and software tools they needed to work remotely. Later, as the campus prepared for the return of students, wi-fi was improved throughout the district and additional outdoor seating was created to allow for better social distancing. Hybrid and online course offerings were expanded, and counseling and other services were offered through Zoom.



The early days of the pandemic were chaotic, and the later months were exhausting, but President Chris Vitelli came away proud of the college's response and confident in the future.

"It was brutally hard, but we're better for it," Vitelli said. "I'm beyond humbled by the initiative and leadership our team showed during a tumultuous and unprecedented time."

## JULY

### The Work Continues

While many campus operations came to a halt and goals were put on pause due to the pandemic, a lot of behind-the-scenes work to benefit students and employees continued. Among the achievements that occurred in 2020 were: the continued development of online degree programs and student-friendly course offerings; the creation of an enrollment

management dashboard; the creation and implementation of a staffing plan; the creation of bridge pathways to increase persistence from noncredit to credit programs; implementing the review of all incoming student transcripts; and utilizing the Jobspeaker online platform for student employment.



## FEBRUARY & NOVEMBER

### Two New Transfer Pipeline Programs

Merced College established new transfer agreements with two nearby universities in 2020.

The Merced Promise program is committed to creating a streamlined transfer process for local students to earn their bachelor's degrees at UC Merced. The new collaboration supports local students and their families, benefits underserved populations, and lays the groundwork for future graduates to stay local and thrive in an economically growing region.

The Warriors on the Way (WOW) program facilitates an efficient transfer path from Merced College to CSU Stanislaus. As part of this agreement, Merced College students who complete their ADT in a similar major as offered at Stanislaus State, and meet all of Stan State's application deadlines, will be guaranteed priority admission.

## AUGUST

### Medical Assistant Training in LB

A new addition to the Los Banos Campus in Fall 2020 was a noncredit Medical Assistant Program, which is geared toward adult learners desiring vocational training in a clinical setting. The free program provides Westside students with the opportunity to attain a much-needed skill set.



## OCTOBER

### Downey Family Makes \$1M Gift

Local rancher Susie Downey, on behalf of herself and her late husband, Col. Russell Downey, made a \$1 million donation to Merced College in 2019 to support student success and access initiatives. In honor of their generosity, the Learning Resource Center was later renamed after the Downeys, and Susie Downey was presented with the President's Medalion Award at the State of the College event in 2021.

## SEPTEMBER

### Prioritizing Well-Being

Undaunted by the pandemic, Merced College's workforce training program developed the Well-Being Institute in Fall 2020, with classes dedicated to workplace and personal well-being. The program launched in a virtual format in 2021 and is now being offered to all Merced College employees.



# 2021



**FEBRUARY**

## COVID Community Vaccination Clinics

In Spring 2021, thousands of Merced County residents received COVID-19 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.

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. At Convocation in 2021, the nursing programs and Allied Health were named the President's Blue and Gold Award recipients for their work during the clinics.

**JUNE**

## Grant to Remodel Vocational Building

Merced College received a \$3 million federal grant to renovate and modernize. Planned renovations will include a new culinary lab along with a rebuilt interior.

**JULY**

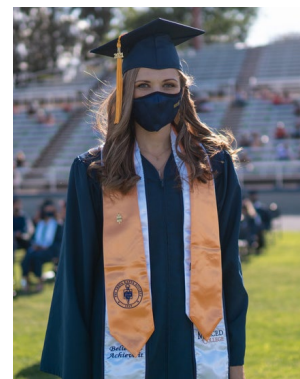
## Mapping Success

Launched in 2021, the Program Pathways Mapper enables students to find courses organized by Learning and Career Pathways, plus information on related occupations and careers.

**AUGUST**

## Hospitality Career Academy Launches

In the Hospitality Career Academy—a new and innovative partnership between Merced College, El Capitan Hotel and Mainzer—local residents can pursue careers in hospitality and customer service while earning college credits.



**MAY**

## Commencement Back on Campus

After a year away due to the pandemic, commencement returned to the Merced College campus, with ceremonies honoring the classes of 2020 and 2021.

**AUGUST**

## Learning Resource Center Renovated

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 in 2021, the LRC can now fully live up to the promise of its name.



**NOVEMBER**

## Los Banos Campus Celebrates 50 Years

During the past half-century, many who might not have otherwise been able to attend college have benefitted from the Los Banos Campus, earning degrees and certificates, transferring to universities or finding well-paying jobs. In November 2021, the campus celebrated its 50th anniversary with a packed event that attracted many local leaders, businesses and community organizations.



**SEPTEMBER**

## Soccer Returns

Men's and women's soccer returned to Merced College in 2021 with much fanfare. In 2022, just its second year since restarting the program, the men's team made it to the state Final Four.

**SEPTEMBER**

## New Space for Innovation

The space formerly occupied by the Student Success & Tutorial Center is now the Trident Innovation Center, which includes a remote worker lounge, collaborative work spaces, and instructional designers with state-of-the-art recording studios.

**OCTOBER**

## Leadership Academy

President Chris Vitelli launched an intensive yearlong study in leadership and management skills for faculty, classified employees and managers.



**OCTOBER**

## High-Touch Tech

Anatmage tables contain detailed, 3-D visualizations of human bodies to enable simulated dissections and views into every physical structure and system.



**DECEMBER**

## A Family Affair

With a generous \$1 million donation, four brothers honored their late mother, Hermione Isakow, with the creation of the Isakow Plaza, a beautiful new space near the front of the Merced campus.





#### SEPTEMBER

### A New Era for Ag at Merced College

In September 2022, Merced College celebrated the opening of the 29,000-square-foot Raj Kahlon Agriculture and Industrial Technology Complex. The \$25 million complex now houses several of the college's academic programs, and it features a 7,500-square-foot courtyard, a sun room for plant science experiments, and an animal science room to bring in small livestock for demonstrations.



Later that month, Merced College announced the new Agrifood Technology and Engineering Collaborative (AgTEC), led by the Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF). The AgTEC initiative will leverage the strength of community colleges throughout the Valley — with contributions from small farmers and multinational companies alike — to revolutionize how agricultural workers learn the skills they need to pursue rewarding careers in the industry.

Merced College will receive more than \$27 million through the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Build Back Better Regional Challenge to serve as the project lead for the AgTEC Workforce initiative, which will include another new building: the Ag Technology Innovation Center. A \$15 million investment from the state, made possible by Sen. Anna Caballero, will help launch the AgTEC initiative.

#### JANUARY

### Student Support, Services Expand

Supporting the goals of the Educational Master Plan, the college has worked to improve access to student services through virtual options and other modalities, provide students with basic technology and training, and increasing opportunities for students to receive mentoring.



#### MARCH

### Equity Hub Opens on Campus

Merced College has for years offered programs to specifically reach and nurture Black students, Latino students, disabled students, students who are military veterans, foster youth, homeless or anyone struggling academically. The college's new Equity Hub provides an inclusive and welcoming home for students.

#### FEBRUARY

### Food Pantry Expands

Merced College has expanded its food pantry, which offers all students a snack and drink per day and one bag of groceries per week. In addition to the pantry in the Student Union, a food pantry has also been added at the Los Banos Campus.

#### MARCH

### Live Theater Returns

The Merced College Theater Department returned to the stage in 2022, with a production of The Great Gatsby and a unique, interactive haunted house experience called The Last Masquerade.



#### APRIL

### Merced College Online Launches

After a successful transition to online instruction during the pandemic, Merced College introduced four fully online degree programs in 2022. The college continues to pursue innovations in Credit for Prior Learning and Competency-Based Education, as well.



#### APRIL

### New Butch Hughes Clubhouse Opens

The Athletics Hall of Fame event featured a dedication ceremony for the baseball team's newly renovated and renamed Butch Hughes Clubhouse, along with the induction of Hughes' remarkable seven state championship teams.



#### AUGUST

### 'Team' Approach to Student Success

Supporting student success has always been a priority at Merced College. In Fall 2022, it became even more of a "team" effort with the creation of new Student Success Teams. No longer will students be served in a siloed approach, but rather through a cross-department success team designed to meet the various needs of the student population.



#### AUGUST

### New Programs in Popular Fields

In direct response to community needs, Merced College is now offering education and training in the high-demand, well-paying fields of truck driving and paramedics.



#### SEPTEMBER

### New Athletic Branding Launched

The college unveiled a series of fresh new logos and wordmarks for its athletics teams and spirit branding, including a new version of the popular trident logo and a new "MC" monogram logo.

#### NOVEMBER

### Dynamic Plan for Student Equity

With a particular focus on Hispanic and first-generation students, the new Student Equity Plan will track student enrollment, persistence, completion of transfer-level math and English classes, and transfer and completion rates.



#### NOVEMBER

### Nursing Program Doubles Capacity

In addition to its long-standing partnership with Mercy Medical Center in Merced, the Merced College nursing program resumed a previous partnership with Emanuel Medical Center that will double the number of students the college can train each year.





# 2023

MAY

## Isakow Plaza Brings New Life to Campus

The sparkling new Hermione Isakow Plaza was the site of President Chris Vitelli's annual State of the College address in 2023. The Isakow family, whose \$1 million donation in 2021 funded the plaza's design and construction, was presented with the President's Medallion Award.

The plaza, named for the family's matriarch, features a large metal sculpture of a Baobab tree. Known as the "tree of life" in the family's homeland of South Africa, the Baobab provides water and nourishment to elephants, birds and other animals.



FEBRUARY

## Female Officers Make History

Angela Henke and Hermila Guevara became the first female officers in Merced College's history, each bringing a wealth of experience and a community-focused approach to law enforcement.

MARCH

## Merced College Launches New Website

Merced College unveiled its brand-new website in the spring, with improvements designed to better serve prospective students in finding their path to success. The new website has a clean, dynamic and action-oriented design.

JUNE

## MC Goes Paperless

The 2018 Educational Master Plan included the ambitious goal to move toward paperless processes. Information Technology Services was up to the task, aiding departments throughout the district in facilitating the transition to new, paperless processes and practices.

MAY

## Rising Scholars Celebrates Grads, New Grant

The Rising Scholars program, which serves incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students, celebrated dozens of graduates in a pair of commencement ceremonies at Valley State Prison and the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla. Also in 2023, the program received a Rising Scholars Network Juvenile Justice Grant for \$1.5 million over 5 years.

MAY

## First Los Banos Campus Commencement Ceremony

The Los Banos Campus held its inaugural commencement ceremony on May 25. Nearly 100 students from the West-side took the opportunity to celebrate their graduation in their own backyard, joined by hundreds of family members and several distinguished guests from the college and community.

The following day, Merced College held its 60th commencement ceremony at the main campus in Merced, with more than 500 graduates crossing the stage.



APRIL

## Donation Drive for Planada

In response to devastating floods, ASMC leadership held a donation drive that raised \$3,000 worth of backpacks, school supplies and lunch boxes for Planada students, as well as bedding and cleaning supplies for displaced families.

ASMC collected the items from Merced College students, faculty, classified professionals and management in February in the weeks after the flooding.



## Coming Soon!

As we enter a new 5-year Educational Master Plan, 2023-24 is already shaping up to be another banner year. Here are a few upcoming milestones and accomplishments:

AUGUST

Los Banos: Two new CTE programs—agriculture and child development—are launching at the Los Banos Campus this fall, and a new Child Development Center should be open by the end of the year.

SEPTEMBER

Enrollment challenges due to COVID-19 have been common among California Community Colleges, but the tide has turned, and Merced College enrollment for Fall 2023 will be higher than at any time since before the pandemic.

OCTOBER

Accreditation: The accreditation process is well underway. Our Institutional Self-Evaluation Report was submitted in August, virtual meetings are planned for October, and the peer review team is expected to visit the district in February.



# The Next **FIVE**



SCAN HERE TO FIND  
OUT MORE AND READ  
THE FULL PLAN

Reflecting on the work of the previous Educational Master Plan (2018-2023), the aim for the new EMP is to expand on innovation.

Outlined in the 2023-2028 EMP are five strategies that will guide our district's planning and move us toward the realization of our mission over the next five years.

The EMP development process involved many stakeholders who were engaged in a variety of ways: interviews, surveys and in-person panels of students; interviews and monthly meetings with designated administrators, faculty, and staff as part of the EMP Task Force; and a survey of community leaders, community service organizations, and employers. The plan was approved by the Merced College Board of Trustees in May 2023.

## THE 5 STRATEGIES

- **Growth: Invest and grow the Merced student population through new and innovative marketing and outreach and target new populations.**
- **Student Success: Strengthen student degree and certificate completion outcomes.**
- **Career Success: Improve student employment outcomes by engaging the extended community.**
- **Strategic Partnerships: Build and maintain a handful of sustained internal collaborations and knowledge sharing (faculty/staff, students, disciplines).**
- **Student and Employee Engagement: Improve the Merced College experience for students and faculty/staff.**







3600 M STREET  
MERCED, CA

**MCCD.EDU**