

Moreno Valley College reaps fruits of accreditation, bond money

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Moreno Valley College is in the throes of change that will continue to enhance the community school's reputation as a first-rate institution.

"You need state-of-the-art facilities to be the best in the country," said Dr. **Gregory Gray**, chancellor of the Riverside Community College District.

To that end, the master plan for Moreno Valley College calls for expanded curricula, especially in allied health professions; a four-story parking structure with offices and a multipurpose room; an academic building with room for performing arts and food services; an amphitheater, athletic fields and a gymnasium.

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Moreno Valley College President Monte Perez oversees a campus that is busy with planned construction and curriculum improvements. Among them are new classroom and parking structures.

"It's developing into an incredible college," said Virginia Blumenthal, one of RCCD's trustees. "The community really accepted ownership."

Chancellor Gray said the 134-acre campus is poised for a renaissance because of two major factors. The first was an infusion of Measure C money -- about 30 percent of \$350 million in construction bonds for RCCD -- that the voters approved in 2004. The other boost was full, independent accreditation status conferred 10 months ago.

A follow-up review last week supported Moreno Valley College's plans to expand counseling, veterans' and financial aid services, said President Monte Perez.

This past January, a state community college board recognized the Moreno Valley and Norco campuses of the Riverside Community College District as independent entities.

Accreditation confers prestige, allows the three-college district to apply for state and federal funding, issue graduation certificates for students at each campus, and receive more money for disadvantaged populations.

THREE YEARS HENCE

Gray said Moreno Valley College is "a bit late" compared to the other two colleges that have started or completed building projects with their bond money. But within the next three years, he said Moreno Valley will play catch up with its own showcases and revamped programs. Here's some of what's on tap:

Expand general liberal arts offerings beyond the required technical classes at **Ben Clark** Public Safety Training Center, which is run by Moreno Valley College. If the center's status is upgraded as hoped in April, it will make it easier for students to get their associate's degrees and for the college to receive more funding. Perez said down the road the college also wants to replace the 30 portables with a three-story building and at least double the number of Ben Clark's annual graduates.

Expand the popular physician's assistant program from 30 to 40 students a year, aided by a \$2.1 million federal grant. Perez said only two public community colleges in the state offer this program.

Expand the dental hygiene program from 20 to 30 students and move its site from **March Air Reserve Base** into modular units on campus.

Construct a three-story academic building in the quad with classrooms, offices, a performing arts room that holds 150 people and a food services area to accommodate 300 people.

Construct the learning gateway building at the campus's entrance. This is a planned four-story parking structure with 874 stalls, solar-energy panels, a community room and quarters for police services. An access road will ring the campus. The proposed cost is \$31 million.

Construct a gymnasium, athletic fields and an amphitheater. This is a long-range project with no timeline yet.

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