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NEW HEALTH, AUTO TECH FACILITIES

Propositions S, N transforming community college campuses

By **KAREN WEIL**, The Daily Transcript
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To show how Propositions S and N have affected the San Diego Community College District's campuses, Dave Umstot holds up a chart spotlighting each project, with progress noted by a certain color.

Five colors on the chart describe a certain project's status. Purple means it's completed, while white signifies a future project -- and purple dominates the chart.

"Three years ago, this page was 75 percent white," said Umstot, vice chancellor of facilities management for the district.

"Have we made progress? Absolutely. Props S and N have transformed three colleges in a profound way."

According to officials, the Propositions S and N construction program equal \$1.5 billion in bonds, resulting in new instructional and training facilities, renovations, public safety enhancements and expanded parking at the three main colleges -- City, Mesa and Miramar -- and the district's six Continuing Education campuses.

Miramar College, Umstot said, is "now starting to look like a real college campus, rather than a series of portable classrooms."



Ground has been broken on the new 828-space parking structure and adjacent 6,000-square-foot police substation at San Diego Miramar College. *Courtesy of McCarthy Building Companies Inc.*

Building at Mesa College in 2003.

The district has, as of May, spent \$503 million, and "we've committed \$800 million of \$1 billion," Umstot said.

Also, the district has completed more than 30 projects, according to Ursula Krommer, communications director for the Propositions S and N Construction Bond Program.

Each project is unique, Umstot stressed, adding, "We're proud of the LEED-certified police substation at the Miramar campus.

"If the department occupying that particular building is happy, that's what matters."

Mesa College's new Allied Health Building's radiologic technology laboratory is one of two in the entire county.

Margie Fritch, dean of Health Science and Public Service at Mesa, said the Allied Health Building means provides enough room for equipment where students can practice their competency on a regular basis, "which

Mesa College, which 45 years ago had the dubious achievement of being "the cheapest college built," is also undergoing a transformation, and that includes the new Allied Health Building and improved parking.

Twenty-five separate projects are in the design phase, so within the next 18 months, "things will (become) frenetically busy," he added. "We're certainly doing our part to stimulate the local economy, creating more than 5,500 construction jobs, with an additional 1,200 this year."

Ninety-seven percent of those projects are within San Diego County, he said.

Propositions S & N were passed, respectively, in 2002 -- for \$680 million -- and in 2006, for \$865 million.

One of the first completed projects was the Humanities, Languages & Multicultural Studies

benefits the public later on."

"If you saw where we came from ... many of our programs were spread across the campus," Fritch added. "We didn't have one place to call our own."

"Students love to be in a facility with state-of-the-art equipment, which keeps them motivated. Being able to have the facilities we actually need is just incredible."

At City College, there is a new Career Technology Center, and that "will mean a very inviting approach to the East Village," allowing the college to accommodate 25,000 students, Umstot said.

By the end of this year, the district plans to complete the Career Technology Center at City College, along with the Arts and Humanities, Automotive Career Instructional and Technology buildings at Miramar College.

At least 11 projects are anticipated to get under way this year -- including a science facility at City College, two campuses at Continuing Education, a math and science building at Mesa College and an aviation maintenance building technology center at Miramar.

The new Skills Center at the Educational Cultural Complex of Continuing Education offers students a full automotive department, complete with a body shop, and upholstery and auto technology courses.

Before the upgrade, "the body shop was in an old military Quonset hut," said Howard Bass, a Skills Center instructor. "We have much more room to deal with working on vehicles, and it's so much nicer."

Plus, state-of-the-art classrooms feature PowerPoint equipment, making it a more enjoyable experience for students.

Another perk?

"No one really knew about (the courses before)," Bass added. "This facility is available to the community, and all the training is free. We have 120 students on the waiting list."

Overall, the district serves 140,000 students -- the second largest in California, and the sixth largest in the United States, according to officials.

"We have master plans for each of the four institutions," Umstot said. "Most of the work will be done in five years."

There will always be needs, but so long as the state has budget issues, bond issues will be the way to go."

Krommer said the district board takes seriously the notion of taxpayers' dollars being well spent and the wise use of natural resources.

Despite the numerous economic challenges, "We've been able to get a better value for the money we spend, (keeping) costs 25 percent lower," Umstot said.

The district is also "changing gears" on contract delivery by using "lean construction" principles modeled after Japanese auto companies to improve efficiency and performance, "by focusing on what is best for the project, not the pocketbook," Umstot said.

Along with state-of-the-art facilities, the district has adopted a "green" policy, with energy-efficient buildings and LEED standards.

The goal is to deliver 2.4 megawatts of solar power to all campuses, which would account of 18 percent of all power usage.

The district received a best practice award during a recent sustainability conference for water use.

The district is also reaching out to small or disadvantaged businesses, those owned by women and minorities.

"About 30 percent of the construction dollars are going to small or disadvantaged businesses," Umstot said. "We'd like to expand that number, but certain requirements make that difficult."