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California Postsecondary Education Commission

Commission Review of a Proposal by the Santa Clarita Community College District to Establish the Canyon Country Educational Center

The Commission concurs with a proposal of the California Community College Board of Governors to establish a state-approved education center in the city of Santa Clarita as a permanent off-campus center of the College of the Canyons. The Commission concludes that:

- ♦ *Enrollments at the College of the Canyons are projected to nearly double, from 15,053 in Fall 2003 to 29,314 in year 2015;*
- ♦ *The projected annual enrollment growth rate ranks at the top among community college districts; and*
- ♦ *Proposed educational offerings at the Center address the area’s educational needs.*

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The Commission advises the Governor and Legislature on higher education policy and fiscal issues. Its primary focus is to ensure that the state’s educational resources are used effectively to provide Californians with postsecondary education opportunities. More information about the Commission is available at www.cpec.ca.gov.

Commission Report 04-19

Executive Summary

In this report, the Commission considers a proposal by the Santa Clara Community College District to establish an educational center in the community of Canyon Country. The district was created in 1968 when the communities of Valencia, Newhall, Canyon Country, Agua Dulce, and Val Verde voted overwhelmingly for its establishment. It serves a geographic area of 367 square miles in the north-west portion of Los Angeles County.

The College of the Canyons is the only full-service community college campus serving a region that consists of about 213,000 residents. This population base is projected to expand at an annual rate of nearly 3.0% over the next 25 years, which will result in an additional 168,000 residents by 2030.

Strong population and economic growth, along with a rapidly expanding labor market, have resulted in great demand for college services. In response to growing demand, the district added nearly 700 course sections since 1997, and it used funds from voter-approved bond measure to purchase additional modular facilities.

Further expansion of the College of the Canyons does not appear to be a viable option for two reasons: (1) current student enrollments are nearly 3 times the original master-planned ceiling, and (2) lecture and laboratory classroom utilization rates have exceeded capacity standards for the past several years. Given these findings, an off-campus educational center is shown to be an effective option for expanding student access within the district.

Recommendation

Contingent upon receipt of a final environmental impact report and the district's most recent telecommunications plan, the Commission concurs with the California Community College Board of Governor's recommendation to establish the Canyon Country Education Center as a state-approved off-campus education center of the College of the Canyons. State-approved status enables the center to become eligible immediately to compete for State capital outlay and support budget funding. The telecommunications plan is requested so that staff can examine more fully the potential impact of technology in helping to meet student demand within the greater Santa Clarita Valley.

Background to the Proposal

Statutory and Administrative Requirements

The State of California requires that plans for new public institutions of higher education be reviewed by the California Postsecondary Education Commission prior to establishing new educational facilities. A central purpose of the State's review process is to help ensure that new public colleges, universities, and campus centers develop in accordance with broad statewide needs and priorities, and that capital outlay funds are spent wisely. Specifically with respect to community colleges, Section 66904 of the *California Education Code* expresses the intent of the Legislature that California community colleges not receive State funds for acquiring land sites or for constructing new institutions, branches, or off-campus centers unless recommended by the Commission.

Pursuant to legislative direction, the Commission developed a set of guidelines and procedures that impose a number of requirements on governing boards that seek to establish new higher education institutions, or that seek official recognition of existing facilities. It should be noted that State recognition of a facility does not necessarily entitle a district to receive capital outlay funds, but rather it offers a district an opportunity to compete in the capital outlay review process.

The first stage of review requires a community college district to submit a Preliminary Notice to the Commission expressing a need for a new campus or center, or a conversion of an existing center to a full-service community college. If the district elects to formally pursue the project, it is required to submit a formal Letter of Intent (LOI) to the Commission and to the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges expressing its intent to expand. In reviewing a LOI, the Commission considers preliminary information related to such areas as enrollment history and future demand, capital construction planning and time schedules, site location options, and maps of the proposed area showing population densities, topography, and highway configurations. If the LOI is approved by the Chancellor's Office and the Commission, the district is authorized to develop a *Needs Study* and an Environmental Impact Report.

Analysis of the Proposal

The Santa Clarita Community College District submitted a *Needs Study* that complies with the Commission's review criteria for State-approved educational centers. The following subsection describes the Commission's analysis.

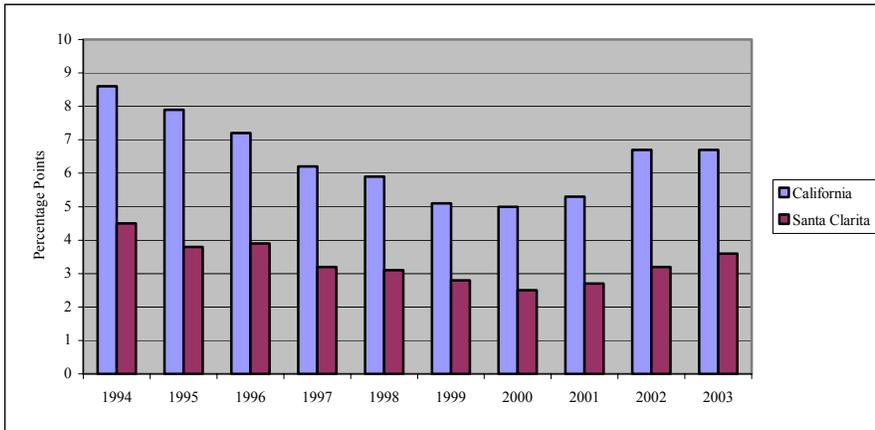
General Description and Overview

A physical description of the site, and a social and demographic analysis of the surrounding area, must be provided. Data describing the socioeconomic profile of the area or region should be included, with income levels and racial-ethnic makeup provided.

As mentioned in the *Executive Summary*, the Santa Clarita Community College District is situated in the northwest portion of Los Angeles County in an area known as the Santa Clarita Valley. The Valley is south of the Sierra Pelona and north of the San Gabriel and Susanna mountain ranges. This puts the district’s about 40 miles north of the Los Angeles International Airport, and about 30 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. Although the valley remains quite fertile, agricultural land has been largely supplanted with housing developments and commercial properties. These properties are well-suited for manufacturing jobs.

The expansion of the region’s aerospace industry and other manufactory industrial markets has helped create a very favorable and robust economy. In 2003, the Valley’s economy created more than 2,100 jobs, after adding 3,335 jobs in 2002. The favorable economy has led to significant increases in single-family building permits, median household income, and demand for postsecondary educational services. Unemployment in the region has averaged approximately half California’s overall rate (Display 1).

DISPLAY 1 Unemployment Rate of the Santa Clarita Valley in Comparison with California Rates, 1994 to 2003



In 2004, median household income was estimated at \$76,852, a 41% increase over a corresponding 1990 figure of \$54,358.

Although a final *Environmental Impact Report* is still in development, the Commission has received information related to the suitability of the proposed Canyon Country site. The site is located along the Antelope Valley Freeway at the northeasterly boundary of the City of Santa Clarita.

Favorable environmental factors were reported to the Commission: (a) the site is directly accessible from Sierra Highway and the Antelope Valley Freeway; (b) its land use is compatible with a large nearby residential development under construction and a planned residential subdivision; (c) the 70+ acre-site will support a plan to develop 300,000 square feet of building space and 2,000 parking stalls; and (e) and environmental issues could be reasonably mitigated.

Enrollment Projections

For a new community college or educational center, enrollment projections for the district proposing the center should exceed the planned enrollment capacity of existing district colleges and educational centers.

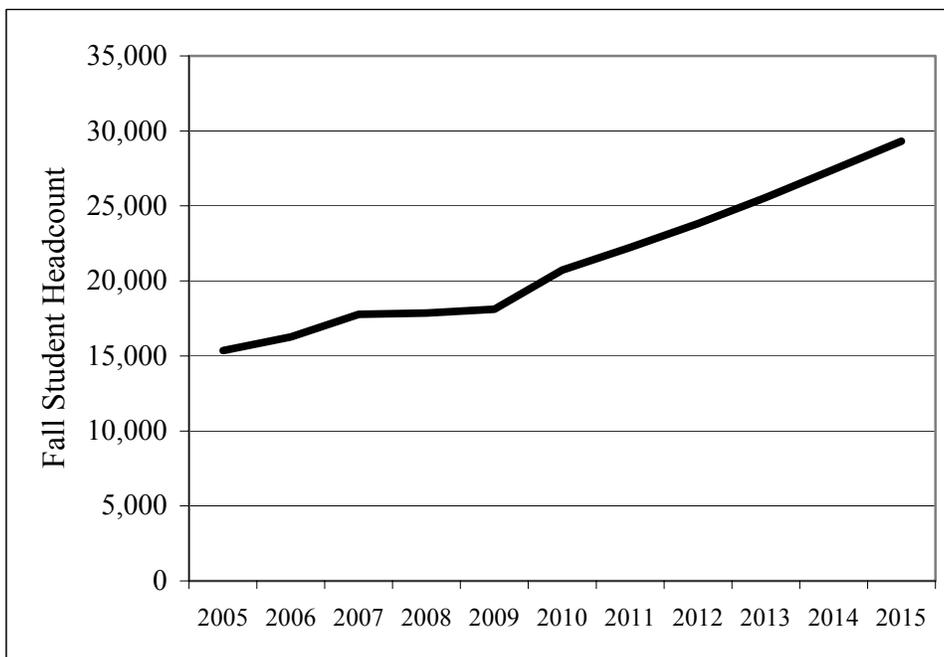
As shown in Display 2, district enrollments have been on a dramatic upswing since 1994. Student headcount increased 145.8% between 1994 and 2003. For example, although total community college enrollments declined by about 5% between 2002 and 2003 -- due primarily to funding restrictions related to the State's economic recession -- College of the Canyons enrollments increased by over 11%, or by 1,510 additional students during the one-year period. The number of students enrolling at the College of the Canyons that reside outside the district has more than tripled during the ten-year period, from 1,527 to 6,197. District planners noted that almost all of the out-of-district students reside in the San Fernando Valley. Students find the College of the Canyons convenient and appealing, because of factors related to traffic, transportation, and class scheduling.

Strong population and economic growth will cause district enrollments to continue to grow. Display 3 shows projections developed by the Community College Chancellor's Office. Santa Clarita district enrollments will increase from 15,359 in Fall 2005 to 29,314 in year 2015.

DISPLAY 2 Santa Clarita District Enrollments, 1994 to 2003 by Area (from within district or from outside district)

Year	Within District	Out-of-District	Total
1994	4,597	1,527	6,124
1995	4,744	1,599	6,343
1996	5,243	1,702	6,945
1997	5,637	1,793	7,430
1998	6,335	2,694	9,029
1999	7,031	3,229	10,260
2000	7,308	3,583	10,891
2001	8,165	4,561	12,726
2002	8,553	4,990	13,543
2003	8,856	6,197	15,053
<u>Change</u>			
Number	4,259	4,670	8,929
PCT	92.6%	305.8%	145.8%

DISPLAY 3 Projected Growth in Santa Clarita District Enrollments, 2005 to 2015



Source: Community College Chancellor's Office, 2003.

The Canyon Country Education Center is expected to open in 2006 with an initial headcount enrollment of 2,794 students, or approximately 1,503 full-time equivalent students (FTES). The later figure is above the 500 FTES minimum enrollment threshold required for State-approved center status. The FTE estimate is based on a fairly conservative adult participation rate of 64 students per 1,000 Canyon Country adults and an average instructional load of 9.7 weekly student contact hours.

To assess the ability of the College of Canyons to expand its capacity, the Commission requested and received additional information related to classroom and laboratory capacity. The campus has some excess laboratory space. Display 4 reveals that classroom lecture space has been in excess of 100% of the State's space utilization standards for the past five years.

DISPLAY 4 Santa Clarita Classroom Capacity Analysis, Academic Year 2000-01 to 2004-05

Year	Room Type	Percent of Capacity
2000	Lecture	142%
	Laboratory	66%
2001	Lecture	108%
	Laboratory	64%
2002	Lecture	108%
	Laboratory	51%
2003	Lecture	115%
	Laboratory	55%
2004	Lecture	104%
	Laboratory	57%

Alternatives

This criterion requires a district to consider several alternatives other than establishing an educational center. This includes consideration given to (1) expanding existing institutions within the region, (2) increasing classroom and laboratory utilization, (3) sharing facilities with other institutions, and (4) greater use of technology and distributed learning arrangements.

The district has explored and implemented a number of student access initiatives as strategic alternatives to establishing the proposed educational center. The main campus added 695 course sections since 1997, while making greater use of classrooms during afternoon, evening, and summer time periods. The district is also leasing about 4,500 square feet in a new library that is located in Canyon Country. The physical space is sufficient for instruction to be delivered in four classrooms. This space is referred to as the College of the Canyons Access Center. Although this initiative has enhanced access to a limited degree, the library's own need for expansion rules out the possibility of greater use of this facility by the district. Third, the district has established successful relationships with secondary schools, hospitals, and the business community to maximize shared-facility uses.

The proposal contained little information on current uses of technology and distributed learning arrangements to help meet student demand. Reference was made to the district's updated technology plan, which calls for expanding teaching and learning opportunities by providing all sites maintained and leased by the district with greater access to voice and video data networks. The Commission requested that the district provide it with a copy of its updated telecommunications plan so that the potential impact of technology in helping to meet student demand within the greater Santa Clarita Valley can be examined more fully.

The district intends to gradually build-out the College of the Canyons within limits outlined in the campus' Long-range Development Plan (LRDP). However, road and highway construction to and from various points east and north of the existing campus have not kept pace with the high population growth occurring in the Canyon Country region of the district. Thus, traffic flow could be eased, and access improved, by constructing the new education center in the high growth area of Canyon Country.

The Canyon Country area is more ethnically diverse than is the overall region. The mean household income of its residents is several thousand dollars lower than the mean income of households situated in other parts of the Valley. Establishing the Canyon Country Education Center would make it more convenient for ethnic minority groups and less-affluent families to obtain a college education, providing these residents with access to academic and vocational course offerings in closer proximity to their homes or work locations.

Academic Planning and Program Justification

The district must include a preliminary description of the proposed academic and certificate programs to be offered, along with a listing of proposed courses. A description of the center's academic/occupational organization must also be included. The description must demonstrate conformity with such State goals as access, quality, intersegmental cooperation, and diversification of students, faculty, administration, and staff.

Periodically, the Santa Clarita Community College District expands, develops, and deletes selected academic and training programs in response to local community and business needs. This process attends to emerging technology requirements, entry and advanced training needs in high demand occupations, basic skills requirements, transfer education, and the need for special services. The district reported that students at the new center will be able to complete most of their education requirements, and that many will be able to complete the core transfer requirements of four-year institutions.

Display 5 provides a detailed listing of the courses and programs being planned at the Canyon Country Education Center. Approximately five years after opening, the center is expected to offer complete two-year programs in geography, geology, physics/astronomy, anthropology, business, computer information technology, economics, history, psychology, and sociology. The center is expected to offer courses in practically all areas offered at the main campus, including in-service programs in administration of justice, fire technology, and real estate.

The district has embarked on an ambitious plan to deliver quality baccalaureate and graduate-level courses and programs to Valley residents. This will be accomplished by developing a University Center on the College of the Canyons campus. The University Center will be a place where seven or eight universities will offer a comprehensive array of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs. A primary objective of the Center is to help curtail adverse regional circumstance wherein community members, business personnel, and former College of the Canyons students have had to leave the area to pursue upper-division, graduate-level, or advanced-training programs. The distance and time required to travel has been viewed as a great barrier to student access, especially for students that might have work or family commitments.

College of the Canyons opened an Interim University Center in January 2002. After two and a half years, the small 10,000-square-foot center in a modular building noted the following results:

- ♦ 1,304 enrollments
- ♦ 315 graduates since 2002
- ♦ 4 partners, including CSU Bakersfield, CSU Northridge, University of LaVerne, and Chapman University
- ♦ 7 undergraduate and 12 graduate degree programs, including liberal arts, social sciences, criminal justice, teaching credentials, and educational administration credentials

DISPLAY 5 Proposed Course Offerings at the Canyon Country Education Center

APPLIED ARTS & TECHNOLOGY – NEW CENTER	ACCESS Center Current	New Center At Opening	New Center Five Years After Opening
Projected Enrollment (Center-wide)	1000	3000	5000
PROGRAM			
Administration of Justice	VO	L	L
Computer Networking	L	L	L
Design Arts & Technology	L	L	L
Fire Technology	VO	L	L
Real Estate	L	L	L
FINE ARTS & HUMANITIES – NEW CENTER			
American Sign Language	L	L	L
Art	L	L	A
Cinema	VO	L	L
Dance	L	L	L
English	L	L	A
English as a Second Language	L	L	A
French	L	L	L
German	VO	VO	L
Journalism	VO	VO	L
Music	VO	VO	L
Philosophy	L	L	A
Photography	L	L	L
Theatre	VO	L	L
Spanish	L	L	A
MATHEMATICS & SCIENCES – NEW CENTER			
Biological Sciences	L	A	M
Geography	VO	L	A/FP
Geology	VO	L	A/FP
Mathematics	L	L	M/A
MESA Program	VO	L	A
Physics/Astronomy	VO	L	A/FP
Physical Education	L	L	L
SOCIAL SCIENCE & BUSINESS – NEW CENTER			
Anthropology	L	A	FP
Business	L	A	FP
Communication Studies	L	L	A/M
Computer Information Technology	L	A	FP
Early Childhood Education	L	L	M
Economics	L	A	FP
History	L	A	FP
Political Science	L	A	A
Psychology	L	A	FP
Sociology	L	A	FP
Codes			
L = Offer a limited number of selected courses		A = Add class offerings	
FP = Offer a full program		R = Reduce class offerings	
M = Maintain offerings relative to campus growth		X = Delete class offerings	
O = Other		VO = Valencia Campus only	

Although the interim University Center has been a success, its capacity is limited. To build a permanent University Center, College of the Canyons has launched a \$10 million capital campaign. The proposal noted that efforts began with a family campaign, during which over 99 percent of campus faculty, staff, administrators, and board members made personal financial contributions. The campaign is entering its final phase, and has raised \$7 million from a variety of sources, including individual and corporate donations, private foundations, local general obligation bond revenue, and use tax revenue. Requests have also been made for state funding and for a grant from the Department of Commerce. The College expects to complete its fundraising activities by Summer 2005 and break ground by 2006.

Student Services and Outreach

The district is required to describe the student services available and planned at the educational center. A description of outreach services to historically underrepresented groups must be included.

The philosophy of the College of the Canyons reflects a clear commitment to a campus climate that embraces diversity, characterized by civility, collegiality, and inclusiveness. All essential student services will be offered at the proposed outreach center. Those services include academic advising, career advising, general counseling, campus bookstore, disabled student services and programs, financial aid advising, and student health services.

Given the demographics of the Canyon Country region, which include a more ethnically diverse population, lower household income levels, and lower educational attainment rates than the remainder of the Santa Clarita Valley, plans are being made for the center to offer all programs that support disadvantaged student groups. Those programs include the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Mathematics and Engineering Science Achievement program (MESA), English as a Second Language services (ELS), general tutorial services, and the Disabled Student Program and Service (DSP&S). The proposal noted that the district is preparing an aggressive recruitment program to inform currently underserved residents about the planned programs.

Support and Capital Outlay Budget Projections

Proposals must include five-year capital outlay projections and a five-year projection of anticipated support costs, including costs for administration, academic programs, academic support, and other standard expense elements.

In November 2001, voters of the Santa Clarita Community College District approved an \$82 million general obligation bond. As shown in Display 6, \$15 million of this bond is for land acquisition, site development, and modular buildings. The district will ask the State to fund Phases

DISPLAY 6 Projected Capital Outlay Cost by Funding Source (State/District) 2004-05 to 2010-11 (in million \$)

Year/Activity	District Cost	State Cost	Total Cost
<u>2004-05</u>			
Site Acquisition & Preparation	\$14.0	\$0.0	\$14.0
<u>2005-06</u>			
<u>Modular Buildings</u>	\$1.0	\$0.0	\$1.0
<u>2007-08</u>			
Lecture & Lab Modular Replacement	\$0.0	\$6.0	\$6.0
Book Store, Food Service	\$0.0	\$1.5	\$1.5
<u>2010-11</u>			
Library/Lab	\$0.0	\$7.0	\$7.0
Site Development	\$0.0	\$1.0	\$1.0
Subtotal	\$15.0	\$15.5	\$30.5
PCT	49.2%	\$50.8	100.0%

2 and 3, beginning with \$6.0 million to construct new buildings to replace the modular facilities. Over the next five years, the total capital outlay cost is estimated at \$30.5 million. The district's capital con-

tribution is quite significant (49.2% of total) and reflects a sound and valued fiscal partnership with the State.

The final development phase of the center is expected to include an Administration facility of about 8,000 square feet, 30,000 square feet of instructional classroom space, about 15,000 square feet of instructional laboratory space, a warehouse of about 5,000 square feet, and 850 parking spaces. Support costs will be funded entirely through the district's general fund.

Geographic and Physical Accessibility

The physical, social, and demographic characteristics of the location and surrounding service areas for the new institutions must be included. There must be a plan for student, faculty, and staff transportation to the proposed location. For locations that do not plan to maintain student on-campus residences, reasonable commute time for students must be demonstrated.

Canyon Country, the general area of the optimal site, lies north of the Antelope Valley Freeway in the eastern portion of the Santa Clarita Valley. The specific location lies on the west side of Sand Canyon Road, about 1.3 miles north of the State Route 14 Sand Canyon Road Interchange. This site is reported to be easily accessible via planned street paving and widening. It is adjacent to an existing urban development, where water and sewer services are available. Of three sites examined, this one is closest to the Canyon Country population that it is intended to serve. The district has received assurance that city bus service to the site will begin with the scheduled opening of the campus in 2006.

Effect on other Institutions

The proposal must show evidence that other institutions were consulted during the planning process. Establishing a new community college center must not reduce existing or projected enrollments in nearby campuses or adjacent districts to a level that would damage their economy of operation.

The expressed intent of the proposed center in Canyon Country is to enhance service to neighborhoods that are served less optimally by the College of the Canyons in large part because of traffic flow restrictions. Thus, it seems likely that there will be little, if any, negative impact on other postsecondary institutions in the region. The district has consulted widely with other jurisdictions. Letters in support of the proposed center include favorable support from the President of California State University, Northridge, the Chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District, and the Acting Chancellor of the Ventura County Community College District.

Environment and Social Impact

A copy of the final environmental impact report must be included. To expedite the review process, the Commission should be provided with all information related to the environmental report process as it becomes available to responsible agencies and the public.

The district has not yet completed a full environmental impact report. However, the Commission has received related information indicating that the district is engaged in a very sound and deliberate environmental review process. This process has resulted in a (1) careful and thoughtful delineation of rigorous site selection criterion; (2) the hiring of an environmental specialist to assist the district in evaluating potential sites; (3) preliminary report comparing the advantages and disadvantages of alternative sites; and (4) preliminary environmental review of the optimal Canyon Country site. Commission concurrence of the district's proposal is contingent upon its submission of a complete and acceptable Environmental Impact report.