



Review of Proposal by Palomar Community College District to Establish the North Palomar Educational Center

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The Palomar Community College District has proposed to establish a new educational center in the northern region of the District. The proposed site is located near Fallbrook, 20 miles north of the main campus in San Marcos. The proposed center would occupy 85 acres at the intersection of Interstate 15 and State Route 76.

Commission staff recommend approval of the proposed center. The information in the Palomar Community College District Needs Study satisfies all Commission criteria for establishing a state-approved educational center. The case for a new educational center was strengthened by evidence of an impending deficit in enrollment capacity within the district, a well-constructed district-wide plan for addressing growth, and voter passage of a bond measure to cover capital costs for a new facility.

Background

Palomar Community College District is a single-campus district located in north San Diego County, consisting of a main campus in San Marcos and nine off-campus education centers, primarily in partnership with area high schools. Palomar College, established in 1946, enrolls approximately 30,000 students and has more than 200 associate degree and certificate programs.

The area served by the Palomar District has grown rapidly in the last 15 years, with population increasing by 24% between 1990 and 2000. While the coastal areas of San Diego County have had high population density for many years, the northern and eastern parts of the county have, until recently, remained sparsely populated. Increased crowding and the high cost of living in coastal cities have driven families inland. The projected impact of this migration on the district's service area is a 27% increase in the adult population between 2000 and 2020. Palomar expects district-wide enrollments to surpass 47,000 by 2022.

In 2003, the Palomar District established a district-wide planning template, *Master Plan 2022*, to address the population boom facing the region. The resulting product is a comprehensive outline of growth trends and capacity issues that Palomar expects to face over the next 15 years, the breakdown of capital outlay projects by phases, and projected costs of each phase.

The Proposed North Palomar Educational Center



Statutory and Administrative Requirements

The State of California requires that plans for new public institutions of higher education are reviewed by the California Postsecondary Education Commission prior to establishing new educational facilities. The 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 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 legislation, the Commission developed a set of guidelines and procedures that impose a number of requirements on governing boards that seek to establish new public higher education institutions, or that seek official recognition of existing facilities. State recognition of a facility does not necessarily entitle a district to 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 California Community Colleges System Office and the Commission, the district is authorized to develop a detailed Needs Study and an Environmental Impact Report.

The Commission's guidelines indicate that the Needs Study should include the following components:

- General Description and Overview
- Enrollment Projections
- Alternatives
- Academic Planning and Program Justification
- Student Services and Outreach
- Capital Outlay and Support Budget Projections
- Geographic and Physical Accessibility
- Effect on other Institutions
- Environment and Social Impact
- Economic Efficiency

More details on each of these components are on page 4.

General Description and Overview

The proposed center would occupy 85 acres in a 500-acre mixed-use development that will also house residential single- and multi-family complexes, a retail complex, an elementary school, and recreational park space. It is located at the intersection of I-15 and State Route 76. The site is currently accessible from the north. A proposed road will offer additional access from the south. The property is relatively flat, with surrounding hillsides and will require minimal grading prior to construction.

The population of the Palomar District's service area is about 726,000 and approximately 185,000 of those people live in the north Palomar service area. The per capita income of this region is about \$18,500, about \$4,000 lower than the San Diego and California averages. Despite lower income levels, the Palomar district has a higher percentage of high school graduates and a higher percentage of adults with some college education, than the average for San Diego County. The economy in metropolitan San Diego is fueled by a variety of industry, most notably Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (17%), Government (17%), Professional and Business Services (16%), and Leisure and Hospitality (11%). The racial/ethnic breakdown of the region is about 60% White, 31% Latino, 3% Asian and Pacific Islander and less than 2% of each Black and Native American.

Enrollment Projections

Prior to establishment of a new educational center, a district must demonstrate that it will meet the threshold to enroll at least 500 full-time-equivalent students (FTES). The Palomar District estimates that it will significantly exceed this requirement with a first-year FTES figure of 693. The District expects that by the fifth year the new center is in operation, there will be 794 FTES. The Demographic Research Unit of the Department of Finance verified these enrollment estimates. As the graph below shows, enrollments in the district have grown faster than statewide community college enrollments in recent years.

Each higher education institution has a limited number of students it can reasonably serve, based on its long-range development plan, the availability of instructional and support space, and state-adopted space and utilization standards. The community college system expresses physical capacity as the number of weekly student contact hours (WSCH) a campus can accommodate in existing lecture and laboratory space.

The main Palomar campus has a theoretical limit of 162,200 WSCH. It is considered a theoretical limit because the formula takes into account space and utilization standards adopted by the state. Campuses often have to exceed their capacity limits because of enrollment pressures, or because of limited capital resources to build additional facilities.

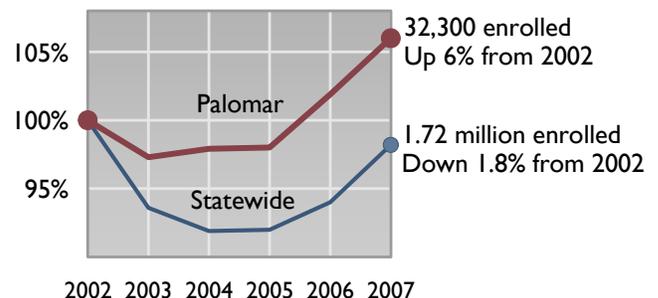
Student load data in the proposal indicates that the district is generating approximately 230,300 WSCH at its main campus, about 140% of its theoretical capacity limit. At full build-out, the North Palomar Educational Center will consist of 46,200 gross square feet of lecture space and 91,800 gross square feet of laboratory space, enabling the district to provide an additional 100,000 WSCH.

Community College Enrollments 2002–07

Full-time-equivalent students

Statewide, enrollments fell as colleges cut course offerings in 2003 and 2004. However, in the Palomar District, enrollments have grown sharply in recent years.

Annual enrollments as a percentage of 2002 enrollments



Commission Guidelines for the Contents of a Needs Study

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 ethnic-racial makeup provided.

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.

Alternatives

Districts must consider 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.

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 description of the proposed academic organizational structure. The description must demonstrate conformity with the Commission's program review guidelines and with state goals such as access, quality, intersegmental cooperation, and diversification of students, faculty, administration, and staff.

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.

Capital Outlay and Support Budget Projections

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

Geographic and Physical Accessibility

The physical and geographic accessibility of the location and surrounding service areas must be included. There must be a plan for students, 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.

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.

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.

Economic Efficiency

The Commission encourages economic efficiency and gives priority to proposals for new institutions where the state is relieved of part of the financial burden. Assuming that all other criteria are satisfied, higher priority will be granted to proposals that include gifts of land, construction costs, or equipment, as opposed to proposed projects that anticipate all costs to be borne by the state.

California Administrative Code 55185 identifies additional criteria for approval of education centers and specifies pathways by which a district qualifies for sufficient enrollment to warrant a new facility. The North Palomar Educational Center qualifies under Code 55185(a)(2):

(2) In service areas of proposed educational centers where locations other than an existing college are constrained by site limitations from providing the full range of instruction proposed for the educational center, as determined by standards set by the Chancellor, the proposed educational center must be able to generate at least 500 FTES in the first full academic year of operation that is used for eligibility to become an educational center based on both of the following:

(A) the total number of FTES currently reported for courses offered at locations other than the main campus of an existing college which reported FTES on the district's most recent final attendance report and are to be replaced by the proposed educational center; and

(B) the number of FTES the proposed educational center is projected to generate, based on a thorough analysis of current attendance practices, as a result of students residing in the proposed service area who currently attend courses offered at locations outside the proposed service area and would be expected to attend courses offered at the proposed educational center.

Projected enrollments for the center are shown in the table below. These projections are based on the assumptions that: (1) participation rates in the district’s north service area will match that of the central service area at 54 students per 1,000 residents; (2) 60% of the student population in the north service area will attend the new center; and (3) average WSCH will closely mirror that of another center in Escondido (5.6 WSCH per student).

Projected Enrollments for the North Palomar Educational Center

Academic year	Headcount enrollment	Weekly student contact hours (WSCH)	Full-time equivalent students (FTES)
2009–10	3,734	20,799	693
2010–11	3,842	21,401	713
2011–12	4,036	22,485	750
2012–13	4,157	23,153	772
2013–14	4,279	23,833	794

Source: Needs Study for the North Palomar Educational Center, Palomar Community College District.

Following the submission of the Palomar proposal, Congress approved the 21st Century GI Bill, which will significantly increase benefits to veterans and their dependents. Palomar College enrolls more veterans than any other college in the state. Commission staff predicts that as the new GI Bill becomes effective, enrollments in the district will increase beyond those stated in the proposal

Alternatives

In August 2003, the district released *Palomar Community College District Master Plan 2022*, a comprehensive analysis of the needs facing the district and a detailed plan for expansion to meet those needs. The plan included an evaluation of multiple alternatives for dealing with the growing enrollment demand of the region. Palomar weighed a few different plans, including expanding capacity at current facilities, establishing a new campus in the south/inland region, and building additional off-campus centers. Three specific options were considered and evaluated based on each option’s ability to serve the region’s students. Ultimately, the District determined that the best course of action would be to renovate the main campus in San Marcos to accommodate 25,000 students, to develop two new educational centers (one in the northern part and one in the southern part of the district), and to close some of the outreach centers currently in operation.

Once the decision was made to proceed with plans for a center in the northern part of the District, the District considered seven possible sites for construction. A feasibility study was conducted to determine how the sites compared in topography, access, site preparation and utilities, environmental issues, and overall fit and compatibility. The District asserts that six of the seven sites had a “fatal flaw” and the proposed site was the most suited for a new educational center.

Academic Planning and Program Justification

Master Plan 2022 outlined the District’s academic planning and coordination goals. The North Palomar Center will offer courses that meet the basic skills, general education, vocational, and transfer needs of the region’s students. Initial course and program offerings include:

- Basic curriculum and services
- General education curriculum, including basic college transfer courses
- Entry-level science labs
- High-demand vocational courses and programs
- Vocational programs that respond to local needs
- Physical education and health programs (except for intercollegiate athletics)
- Bookstore and food services
- Local student services and student activities
- Necessary maintenance and operations

The new center will have a library, a bookstore, a cafeteria, and facilities for student services and activities. There will be five academic divisions:

- Arts, Media, Business, and Computing Systems
- Career and Technical Education
- Languages and Literature
- Mathematics and Natural Health and Sciences
- Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Each division has a 1-to-10-year timeline for the introduction of program offerings. Expansion of offerings will depend on enrollment growth and the social and economic changes occurring in the region.

Student Services and Outreach

The District offers a full description of student and outreach services at the proposed center, and included first, fifth, and ten-year timelines for each service. Many programs will be administered from the main campus but offer a basic level of service at the North Palomar Center.

The center will house counseling services that include academic, career, personal, and matriculation counseling by employing two full-time counselors, an academic advisor, and a counseling support specialist to work on-site with students. Equal opportunity programs for underrepresented students, as well as services for the disabled, will remain housed at the main campus for the immediate future, until enrollment levels warrant growth of these programs at the center.

Capital Outlay and Support Budget Projections

In 2006, voters approved a \$694 million bond measure that will give the District the resources needed to implement *Master Plan 2022*. District-wide planning has been divided into three phases. The first phase details construction timelines and capital outlay projections for the next five years. The cost of land acquisition for the new center, which includes mitigation costs, appraisals, and land grading, amounted to \$52 million. Construction costs are estimated at \$35 million. With additional miscellaneous expenses, the total capital cost for the center is \$91 million.

Each phase of proposed construction is designed to produce 75,000 square feet of space. Capital costs for the Phase I will be financed entirely by local funds. Phases II and III will be built only when enrollment exceeds the capacity provided by Phase I. Phases II and III are estimated to cost \$40 million each, of which the estimated expense to the state will be 50%.

The District projects that the new center will generate 22,500 WSCH in 2011, 77% of the WSCH at the Escondido center. Using the administrative and operational costs for Escondido, the District predicts that annual costs for the center will be approximately \$1,064,000.

Geographic and Physical Accessibility

The proposed site is located at the intersection of Interstate 15 and State Route 76 in north San Diego County. Due to its proximity to freeways, it is easily accessible from all local communities and is within 20 minutes commute from six nearby communities.

Effect on Other Institutions

The Palomar District notified the neighboring community college districts (Mount San Jacinto, Mira Costa, and San Diego), CSU San Marcos, and nearby school districts of plans to develop the new center. The response by these institutions encouraged development of the new center and support letters reiterated the need for more postsecondary institutions in the region. The evident lack of competition among community college districts to maintain enrollments indicates that campuses all over the San Diego region are challenged by the issue of capacity shortage.

Once the new center opens, the District will consider scaling back programs, or even full closure of some of its smaller educational centers. For example, its Fallbrook and Pala centers will be considered for closure. The district will carefully consider the unique services provided by each center before moving forward with any closures. The district recognizes that it must ensure that the North Palomar Center provides a reasonable alternative to students who currently attend the centers slated for closure.

Environment and Social Impact

The Environmental Impact Report was reviewed and commented by local and state agencies, including the California Department of Transportation, the Department of Fish and Game, the Native American Heritage Commission, county and city planning and land use agencies, and local fire districts. Commission staff reviewed all letters submitted to the District regarding environmental concerns with development of the new center, as well as a detailed account of the District's response to such concerns. Initial questions regarding emergency and fire vehicle accessibility have been addressed with the proposed construction of a new access road. Additionally, concerns raised by the Department of Transportation, regarding a difference in calculation of estimated traffic patterns, has also been resolved. The District intends to mitigate environmental impact to local vegetation by purchasing additional wetlands for preservation.

Economic Efficiency

The new center will not require state support in Phase I. All initial construction costs will be covered by local bond funds. It is estimated that Phases II and III will require a state contribution of \$20 million each in capital outlay costs, amounting to a 50% share of costs. Phases II and III will occur only if and when enrollment demand exceeds what can be accommodated by Phase I construction.