



The 50,000-square-foot, two-building Center for the Arts at Evergreen Valley College is located on the south side of campus, at 3095 Yerba Buena Road. Photo courtesy Monica Gomez

Evergreen Valley College to unveil \$38M art center

*Week-long art celebration
scheduled at college Sept. 21-26*

By Sheila Sanchez
Senior Staff Writer

Evergreen Valley College officials are getting ready to unveil a \$38 million arts center that they hope will further arts education and appreciation in the community. The 50,000-square-foot, two-building Center for the Arts is located on the south side of campus, at 3095 Yerba Buena Road.

Rather than doing a normal dedication for the project, EVC President Dr. David Wain Coon said college officials are planning a week-long celebration of the arts around its inauguration the week of Sept. 21-26. The center's official ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for 9-11 a.m., Sept. 24.

The arts festival, titled "ARTiculate," will offer three performances around the dedication ceremony.

Students, faculty, members of the San Jose/Evergreen Community College District board of trustees, SJECCD Chancellor Rosa Perez, San Jose City Councilwoman Rose Herrera, Santa Clara County Supervisor Dave Cortese and different festival vendors and corporate sponsors are expected to attend.

"We expect it to be a wonderful celebration ... and we're glad we're doing it during the day so lots of students can be present," Coon said.

Corporate sponsorships will cover all entertainment costs related to the festival, he added. Perez said SJECCD trustees promised voters they would use Measures G and I general obligation dollars to build a center that would provide a quality arts learning environment for students and a much-needed theater venue for the community.

"We are proud to say that we have honored our commitment and plan to celebrate the rich, complex multicultural heritages that make the San Jose area a wonderful place to live and learn," Perez said.

One side of the center will house a performing arts building, which will feature a 400-seat theater, a dance studio, two 40-seat capacity music classrooms, a piano laboratory, five practice rooms and one general classroom, according to EVC President Dr. David Wain Coon.

The center's other side will showcase a visual arts

building where 2D and 3D art will be housed, jewelry-making projects will be displayed, and computer graphic design classes will be taught in state-of-the-art computer labs and studio space, Coon said.

This building will also feature a gallery and four classrooms with specialized shop space. Its second floor will feature painting and drawing studios and two digital media classrooms. The college offers one of the few jewelry-making programs in the state, Coon added.

Parking adjacent to the center will still be available for visitors as the facility was built on a former parking lot. To replace the lot taken by the center, the college built a new one a year ago off of Yerba Buena Avenue, he said.

The project was built primarily with bond money generated from Measures I and G and about \$8 million in state funds, Coon explained.

When Coon arrived at the college in 2005, after working as vice president for student success at Cascadia Community College in the Washington State Community College System, bids for the center were coming in at \$45 million, but the college had set aside only \$22 million for the project, he said.

"It was too expensive and too elaborate (of an arts center) for a community college," he said. "But what we have now is nice. It's not Radio City Music Hall from New York, but it's a nice arts center for a community college. Overall, folks are pretty happy."

One of the most difficult tasks during the beginning of Coon's administration was recommending to the chancellor and college system trustees against proceeding with the project as he felt it was over budget.

"I had to balance my love for the arts with my responsibility as president of the college, which is to make things work financially," he said.

Under Coon's leadership, college officials had to start the process over. He assembled a project planning team of faculty, administrators and staff who helped him to completely redesign the center and build it in four years. The college has seemed incomplete without the center, he stressed.

Coon's performing arts background has been a bonus throughout the project's construction. Since he was 5 years old, he's been on stage either playing an instrument, singing or acting. His family, he said, was a supporter of the arts. He played band in elementary school and later became involved in choral singing groups. While attending Central Washington University he participated in several theater performances. He continued to be involved in the arts until he moved to San Jose. He last performed as a baritone singer with the Seattle Men's Chorus, a group he belonged to for five years.

"The arts continues to be a big part of my life," he said. "In my spare time, what little I have, I try and take in as many musical and theater performances that I can."

In California, Coon said, college systems are deficient in the arts as they lack resources to fund basic general education programs leaving arts education programs under-funded.

But at EVC, Coon promised, "We're going to be committed to maintaining our love and appreciation for the

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 50,000 sq ft facility
- 400-seat theater with state-of-the-art multimedia capability and 2,400 sq ft stage
- \$38 million project funded through bonds and the State of California
- Steinberg Architects, nationally recognized for their design of EVC's library, also designed the Center
- Outdoor sculpture and jewelry studio for EVC's growing 3D arts program
- Painting Studios (first time for EVC)
- Practice rooms with pianos (first time for EVC)
- Dedicated dance studio (first time for EVC)
- Theater Set Building Workshop