

UC MERCED NOVEMBER 19, 2015

UC Merced clears key hurdle for growth

HIGHLIGHTS

Board of Regents gave the final approval of 2020 Project

Vote was originally scheduled for Friday

Officials say it will have significant financial impact on Merced, region



Students walk along Scholars Lane on the UC Merced campus Nov. 6. Two University of California Board of Regents committees approved plans for the next phase of growth at UC Merced, what officials say clears the way for approval by the board on Friday. **Andrew Kuhn** - akuhn@mercedsunstar.com

BY THADDEUS MILLER
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The University of California Board of Regents approved the plans for the next phase of growth at UC Merced, what officials say will be an economic boon for the city and the region.

UC Merced Chancellor Dorothy Leland said unanimous votes by board committees on Thursday cleared the path for approval. "It's very gratifying to have that affirmation today," she said Thursday.

The plans, dubbed the 2020 Project, include doubling the campus's footprint to add housing, classrooms, laboratories and other facilities to accommodate an enrollment of 10,000 students and about 400 permanent employees. The campus this year holds about 6,600 students.

Leland noted the \$1.14 billion project is expected to have a major financial impact on the region.

\$1.14 billion

The proposed budget for the 2020 Project

Officials have said the project is expected to create 10,800 new construction jobs in the region and 12,600 statewide. They estimate the work will pour \$1.9 billion into the regional economy – \$2.4 billion across the state.

“It’s significant over a five-year period particularly,” Leland said. “That has a really important economic impact on Merced.”

All of that will happen through an effort never before used at a university in the country. The “public-private” partnership, which will use a single long-term contract with one development team, has been used on infrastructure projects like bridges, officials said.

Under the terms of the plan, the selected developer will be responsible for operating and maintaining the newly constructed facilities in good condition for 35 years. The approach aims to use practical design and construction and eliminate additional budgetary provisions for upkeep during the length of the contract.

“I commend Chancellor Leland and the UC Merced team for their leadership in developing a cost-effective solution for expanding the campus’s capacity to serve California,” UC system President Janet Napolitano said in a news release.

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UC Merced Chancellor Dorothy Leland

Three major development teams qualified earlier this year to be invited to bid on the project, which will add 919,000 square feet to campus facilities.

In May 2013, the Board of Regents approved an amendment to university plans that allow the expansion to proceed on a 38 percent smaller footprint than initially planned in an attempt to save infrastructure costs and development time. Campus officials have been working since then to structure the proposal that would use private resources to leverage state funds available for the project.

Construction is set to begin in summer 2016. The first new facilities are expected be usable in 2018; the project could be complete as early as 2020.

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