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UC Merced moves forward with major campus expansion



In a major campus expansion, UC Merced plans to build new classrooms, labs and dorms to accommodate 4,000 more students in the next five years. (UC Merced)

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UC Merced moved forward with a major campus expansion Wednesday, announcing the selection of a developer to build new classrooms, dorms and labs to accommodate 4,000 more students over the next five years.

Plenary Properties Merced (PPM) will oversee the design, construction and maintenance of the \$1.14-billion project, which will nearly double the university's physical capacity. The school, which opened in 2005 and enrolls about 6,600 students, is the youngest and smallest of 10 University of California campuses.

The plan envisions state-of-the-art research facilities arranged around a new tree-lined quad, as well as a dining hall, recreation facilities, a competition pool and 1,700 new beds.

UC Merced Chancellor Dorothy Leland has said the expansion will help boost college-going rates among students in the San Joaquin Valley, one of the state's poorest regions.

PPM, a consortium of design, engineering, construction, maintenance, operations and financial partners, will raise \$386 million from developers. That commitment helped persuade UC regents to award the contract to a single private development team, their first such approval for a project of this scope.

Project financing also will include up to \$600 million in revenue bonds issued by the UC regents, pending their approval in July. UC Merced will contribute \$157 million.

If approved, the project is set for groundbreaking as early as September, with completion expected by 2020.

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