

Sept. 19, 2016

(NSIDE magazine/co-authored by DMC College Relations Office)

## **Impacting the Community with Higher Education**

*Del Mar College proposed South Campus would fill a growing need*

According to the Del Mar College Southside Master Plan, district voters approved \$1.8 million in funding in 2014 to develop the 96 acres of land on the corner of Yorktown Blvd. and Rodd Field Road.

“The growing need to educate members of our community so they can take on new employment opportunities has been thoroughly researched,” explains College Regent Susan Hutchinson. She continues, “What we’ve found is the development of this Del Mar College campus is critical to addressing this need, and any delay in making this investment will mean missed opportunities for individuals and for the community as a whole.”

In 2012, the Southside Campus proposal for Del Mar’s expansion plan for educational opportunities to the Southside was put into motion. Houston-based Gensler design firm has completed the campus plans, which could represent a big addition to Corpus Christi’s suburban side of town.

The board is presently determining how to fund the remainder of this plan in hopes of providing more resources to citizens of the greater Coastal Bend. The South Campus would also expand continuing education courses to residents in the Southside of the city.

Plans indicate South Campus development and construction will take place in three phases. The first phase aims to serve 3,000 to 6,000 students. Phase 1 funding is proposed at \$139 million.

“The vision for the Del Mar South Campus was developed through the input of hundreds of business leaders, educators, students and interested citizens-at large,” notes Dr. D. Scott Elliff, retired Corpus Christi Independent School District Superintendent and life-long educator. “The first phase of construction will establish the site infrastructure and first buildings on the 96-acre site, which is a site at the center of regional population growth.”

Del Mar presently offers some 200 fields of study. Plans for the Southside Campus include the Culinary Arts, Architecture, Biotechnology, Engineering Technology, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) focused courses. The College aims to provide real-world experiences for its students. The community college already makes quite an impact in varying fields. Currently, data indicate enrollment has increased by nearly 70% in Architecture Transfer and Drafting Technology in the past five years.

Job growth in the greater Corpus Christi area is expected to go up nearly 20% in the coming years. Plans supporting the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management programs are to kick it up a notch, providing environments and resources that enhance student learning.

A large part of the strategic location in Corpus Christi's Southside is to also reinforce higher education to those students planning to transfer to neighboring Texas A&M Universities – Corpus Christi and –Kingsville. Research indicates that workforce and continuing education enrollment grew 76.6% in the last five years. The rapidly growing population and housing development in this area indicate this is a good fit.

In addition, 40% of Del Mar students presently live on this side of town. There is also an existing student population that could reach this campus more easily. Given these factors, the selected location appears to be an ideal place to develop the next Del Mar campus to serve existing and new students enrolling in programs.

In addition to the Southside Campus plans, health and wellness have been a strong item on the agenda for the completed campus. The College will incorporate a healthy lifestyle zone, featuring sport courts, pool and a sports recreational area. A community event center also has been proposed in the plans, along with hike and bike trails.

There are no current plans for student housing on this campus. As most Del Mar graduates stay in Corpus Christi after graduation, the new plans are viewed to directly benefit the community—long term.

Research indicates that 9 out of 10 Del Mar students are from Nueces County, and 2013 state data indicates that graduates with a technical or occupational degree earn a median income of about \$58,000 annually. This heightens the opportunity for local workforce and education that reinforces these standards while also investing in students that are likely to be long-term residents.

Meanwhile, capital improvements continue at other Del Mar College locations. The East Campus will continue to serve students pursuing fields in business, fine arts and natural sciences while the West Campus continues serving technical, occupational, public safety and health sciences students. Updates continue to take place at these locations. In the 2014 bond election, voters approved \$157 million for critical repairs and replacement of aging facilities.

However, some needs have remained unmet. In 2014, the total cost for new or renovated facilities to meet all identified College needs was estimated at \$397 million.

Overall, Del Mar's expansion plans will offer Corpus Christi and Coastal Bend residents expanded educational resources that will directly impact our South Texas community for years to come.

Dr. Elliff adds, "With the South Campus, Del Mar will achieve that community vision and continue its 80-plus-year tradition supporting workforce demands and educational needs in South Texas."