



Office of the President

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Dr. Dianne Van Hook, Chancellor
College of the Canyons
26455 Rockwell Canyon Road
Santa Clarita, CA 91355

Dear Dr. Van Hook,

Ventura College was the first institution of higher education in Ventura County, established in 1925. The College moved to its present location in 1955 on 112-acres in the eastern part of Ventura – so close to the ocean that there is a clear view of the Channel Islands from several spots on campus. The current student enrollment of the College has declined since the pandemic from nearly 14,000 to just over 11,000. In addition to offering most programs at our Ventura campus, Ventura College also offers classes and degrees focused on the needs of the residents of the Santa Clara River Valley at our East Campus (VCEC) in Santa Paula.

VC is a Title V Hispanic Serving Institution that serves a diverse population of historically underserved students. Overall, sixty-three percent (63%) of our students are Hispanic/Latino/a/x; however, 85% of our students served by our VCEC identify as Hispanic/Latino/a/x. In addition, nearly 70% of our students receive financial aid, and during the pandemic, over 1/3 indicated experiencing food insecurity and approximately 25% experienced housing insecurity. Because we know educational attainment can be the key factor that transforms the lives of adults and their families, we work tirelessly and thoughtfully to ensure our students have access to classes and resources to successfully reach their intellectual and career goals.

Ventura College (VC) utilizes a systematic planning process that places data and research – quantitative and qualitative – at its core. The College has developed and implemented several programs that have become models for community college excellence across California and the U.S., including those in nursing, ESL, business, manufacturing, agriculture, automotive technology, and engineering to name just a few.

Ventura College will be a beacon of learning — a source of inspiration and guidance — for our students and community.

We believe that success begins with planning and have set ambitious and transformative goals for the future. By 2023, we have planned to be one of the top five colleges in the state on several key student success metrics. While the pandemic has affected our ability to achieve that goal, we are pleased to note that VC has emerged as a top five college in all metrics within our CCCCCO peer group as per the Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges (ARCC) which takes into account community demographics. Further, we aim to close equity gaps related to access, transfer, and completion metrics. These goals are described in detail in our [2017-2023 Educational Master Plan](#) as well as in our [Student Equity Plan 2019-2023](#).

To meet the colleges' success and equity goals, re-engage students we lost in the pandemic, and increase enrollments overall, VC needs to focus on building the educational opportunities in the Santa Clara River Valley area - the one region with growing populations in our immediate service area – and we must support employee satisfaction and retention so we can best serve our community with a diverse and stable workforce. For these reasons, our areas of focus for Peer Review Team (PRT) assistance include: (1) expanding enrollments and our educational footprint in the Santa Clara River Valley to better meet the growing needs of this community, and (2) developing an employee orientation and onboarding process for new staff, faculty, and managers.

[\(1\) Expanding enrollments and our educational \(instruction and services\) footprint at our Ventura College East Campus](#)

[About the Ventura College East Campus \(VCEC\)](#)

In 1974, Ventura College began offering classes in Fillmore to serve the Santa Clara River Valley's predominantly Hispanic population. In 1980, the East Campus (then known as the Santa Paula Vocational Center), opened on Dean Drive in Santa Paula. In 2011, the satellite campus moved to its current location on Faulkner Road. In addition to the East Campus, Ventura College schedules college classes at six local high schools, and other local community centers in Piru and Santa Paula for ESL. Ventura College Off-Campus Programs bridge access to higher education for the underrepresented areas of the Santa Clara River Communities.

Over **75** percent of students enrolled in off-campus classes are from Fillmore, Piru, and Santa Paula – three of the four major, rural cities of the Santa Clara River Valley.

Today we serve over 800 students and counting through our VCEC efforts; our goal is to serve 2,500 – 3,500 students by way of VCEC programs by our centennial birthday in 2025. To get there, in 2016, the East Campus partnered with the Ventura College Foundation to create an Annual Scholarship for Ventura College students who are residents of Fillmore, Piru, and Santa Paula. An annual \$1,000 award is given to a local student. In 2019, Ventura College began offering two Associate Degrees at Ventura College East Campus in Arts and Humanities and/or in Social and Behavioral Sciences. Since that time, we have expanded to offer a certificate and

associates degree in Registered Veterinary Science and a transfer degree in Social Work. Additionally, in 2021 the college received a \$5MIL, Title III HSI-STEM grant, which is supporting the expansion of STEM classes and opportunities at VCEC and in the Santa Clara River Valley – STEM growth is something the community has been requesting for many years. Finally, the college recently underwent the processes of re-envisioning our English as a Second Language (ESL) program by engaging the community in our decision-making process; today, we focus on offering ESL for life to all community members and we are seeing rapid growth in our ESL classes offered in Piru, Santa Paula, and Ventura as a result.

Expanding VCEC

Although the current college and district leaders support the growth of VCEC and the expanded educational and career opportunities, historically we have a spotty record for serving this community. We seek the support and guidance of a PRT to assist the college in:

- Continuing to grow our student numbers (headcount and FTES) from 800-2,500 students or 1,100+ FTES by Fall, 2025 by:
 - Increasing our Dual Enrollment opportunities in the region,
 - Increasing our educational opportunities for incarcerated youth in the region,
 - Expanding our STEM and other high-wage career opportunities by expanding degree and certificate programs offered through the VCEC,
 - Expanding our service to non-traditionally aged students in the area and beyond through online, ZTC PACE programs,
 - Initiating and expanding relevant services to students in the region, which may include expanded transportation, childcare support, free legal services to undocumented students, and mental health services
 - Exponentially growing ESL enrollments by taking classes into the community and assisting students to make their way through ESL education to living-wage jobs and increased satisfaction if quality of life overall.

VCEC becomes a Center

Working toward building enrollments and making the case to establish VCEC as an official Center, recognized by the California Community College Office of the Chancellor. While a general moratorium exists on designating education sites at Centers, the CCCCO when questioned stated they will entertain specific and unique cases in which the designation as a Center is relevant and most supportive of a community. Ventura College would like assistance in making the case that VCEC should be an official Center, after we achieve the goals listed above. This designation would support our involvement and growth in the local community and would validate the importance of this growing and thriving - historically underserved - community that is the Santa Clara River Valley of Ventura County.

(2) Developing an effective orientation and onboarding process for new employees to support diversity and stability among our crew (we are the Pirates afterall)

Simply stated, the colleges in our district struggle with onboarding and orienting new employees. Our Human Resources department at the district is under-staffed, and our colleges do not employ staff who are devoted to this specific human resource need for new and existing employees. Each year, when we hire new employees, we make efforts in various areas to better orient them to the college and the district. We assign people to buddies or mentors, ask colleagues to assist them in understanding systems and processes, and we welcome them with a lot of orange and black swag – T-shirts, masks, water bottles, etc. However, we do not have a systematic way to welcome, orient, and retain new employees, leaving many feeling bewildered, overwhelmed, and frustrated within a few weeks after they start their employ at Ventura College. Employees have many opportunities for professional development provided by multiple groups/committees and a District office. However, these efforts could be improved with coordinated and strategic efforts for onboarding, orientation, and professional development offerings to support retention and employee satisfaction. We look forward to the assistance of a PRT to help us centralize and institutionalize a method and culture around onboarding new employees onto the Ventura College pirate ship.

Ideally, a PRT visit in the fall 2022 semester will best serve our needs as we finalize our upcoming Student Equity Plan, which is very much linked to the efforts at the Ventura College East Campus. And of course, it is never too early to implement a solid onboarding and orientation program for one of our greatest assets at the college – new employees.

Sincerely,



Kim Hoffmans, President

Cc: *Dr. Matthew Lee, Special Projects Consultant for Higher Education*
Dr. Greg Gillespie, Chancellor of Ventura County Community College District