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Education

After CSU trustee approval, plans being laid out for start of Sacramento State Placer Center




Sac State Placer Center has received approval from the California State University Board of Trustees, with Sac State officials now starting planning for a first phase of development.

SASAKI



By **Ben van der Meer** – Senior Reporter, Sacramento Business Journal
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Having cleared a milestone hurdle, California State University Sacramento officials are gearing up to develop the first phase of the university's Placer Center.

Four buildings in that phase, including classroom space, administration and student services, could open as soon as 2028, said Tania Nunez, Sacramento State's campus architect and campus deputy building official.

"It's an exciting time," she said. "We know the community has been anxious for us to get moving, and we know our partners have been anxious for us to get moving."

Last week, California State University's Board of Trustees approved a master plan and environmental impact report for the Placer Center, a **301-acre project** that will combine with a new campus for Sierra College and act as a centerpiece for the **Placer One development** by Taylor Builders LLC, which has broken ground on the project.

Nunez said the trustees' approval kicks off planning for the first phase, which will include a forensic sciences lab involving Placer County and Sierra College; a building housing administration, student services and some classroom space; another building with services and classroom space; and a library.

According to the trustees' agenda, total building square footage in the first phase will be about 390,000 square feet, to serve up to 2,500 students between Sierra College and Sacramento State.

Cost estimates for that phase are still being determined, Nunez said, but should be nailed down by year's end. The respective buildings will still need further approvals for design review and similar steps from CSU trustees, she added.

"Now we can do specific concept designs," Nunez said, adding the university can also move into some required environmental permitting and then bring on design-build teams for the project. By the board's unanimous approval, she said, the state university system is signing off on not only the expansion of education but the planned mitigations for the project's environmental effects.

On a parallel track, the academic planning for the Placer Center is also underway. Vajra Watson, Sac State's interim senior associate vice president for Placer Center, said she's begun working with Sierra College officials on the types of degrees the center will eventually offer.

The center will also have a goal of seamless transition for students from Sierra College, a community college, and the CSU-affiliated Placer Center. Current Sac State deans and professors have answered a call for suggestions on how to do so, she added.

Watson said she's taken to calling the project a "communiversity," designed to smooth out bumps that transfer students in higher education often face in going from a community college to a four-year school.

"The time is now for Sac State to envision the future of higher education and make it a reality," she said.

At build-out, Sac State Placer Center will have about 12,000 full-time equivalent students. Both Nunez and Watson noted that the elementary school-age population in Placer County is one of the fastest-growing in the state, providing a robust local pipeline for future enrollment.