

Cabrillo outlines ambitious plan for building into next century

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By the year 2006, Cabrillo College's enrollment will reach 23,000, forcing the school to embark on a radical expansion program that includes building a satellite campus in Watsonville for more than 2,000 students.

The predictions and recommendations are included in a preliminary facility master plan, parts of which were revealed Monday at the school's governing board meeting. The report was prepared by MGT Consultants of Sacramento. MGT says Cabrillo should plan to build 41,000 square feet of classrooms and administrative offices in Watsonville to accommodate an estimated 2,074 students.

The recommendation is in line with what the college already has in store for its Watsonville center, which consists of several rented rooms in La Manzana shopping center. Cabrillo officials plan to build a permanent campus in Watsonville by the year 2000.

The plan follows recommendations in the master facilities plan developed by the California Community College Chancellor's Office. This master plan includes all of the state's 107 community colleges.

The MGT Consultants' report includes north Santa Cruz County. It suggests that satellite campuses should also be built in the Scotts Valley area, where the student population is expected to grow rapidly. In 15 years, an estimated 1,528 students will need to attend classes in locations other than the main campus and the Watsonville Center. Many of these students will come from the Scotts Valley and San Lorenzo Valley areas.

Currently, 13,500 students attend the main campus, the registrar's office said. Another 782 attend classes in the Watsonville area, where classes are held at various locations. There are close to 450 students at the Watsonville Center and about 25 students attend classes in Scotts Valley. In 1984, the school's enrollment was fewer than 10,000.

Enrollment is expected to increase steadily. By 2006, the main campus itself will need to double in size, the report said. Most of this construction will take place on a 12-acre parcel just north of the campus and on two sites near the Sesnon House, on the lower section of the campus across Soquel Drive.

The proposed new buildings will include a high-tech center, a building for music and theater arts, a child-care center, physical education facilities, and two buildings for classrooms. A bookstore and expanded administrative offices are also recommended by the report.

But a bigger and better Cabrillo College may just be pie in the sky. Back on Earth, it's a different story, one that includes gloomy state budget forecasts for several years. This means increasing funding problems for all schools.

The MGT report did not include a cost estimate for the proposed construction at Cabrillo. But MGT representatives said they were confident state funds could be garnered.

Before Cabrillo begins a massive construction campaign, however, several of its existing buildings need to be repaired. Funding problems over the last few years have prevented regular maintenance of these buildings, many of which are more than 30 years old.

Some of these buildings' roofs leak, others need structural repairs, and some need furnaces replaced and ventilation systems redone.

Cabrillo has already had success in getting several construction and expansion projects approved by the state. In the works are construction of a new learning resource center and library, expansion of the photography lab, and remodeling and expansion of the culinary arts lab. The school has not constructed anything new since the mid-1970s.

MGT Consultants' final report should be ready early next year, said Cabrillo President John Hurd. He said Cabrillo officials would review the final report and make recommendations to the governing board next year.