

Request for Interest (RFI) Submission

**Programming for  
Families and Youth at  
Stephen Leonard Youth Center**

Submitted by:

**Merced Community College District**

**Education. Workforce. Family Support.**



**MERCED**  
**COLLEGE**

**Request for Interest (RFI) Submission**  
**Programming for Families and Youth at Stephen Leonard Youth Center**  
**Submitted by:** Merced Community College District

**EDUCATION. WORKFORCE. FAMILY SUPPORT.**

**Executive Summary:**

Merced Community College District proposes to operate the Stephen Leonard Youth Center as a community-based education, workforce, and family support facility serving South Merced. The proposed use aligns with the City of Merced’s priorities related to youth development, educational support, workforce readiness, and community-serving programs, while activating an existing public facility through a long-term public agency partnership.

The Youth Center is envisioned as a neighborhood access point connecting youth, families, and adult learners to educational programming, workforce preparation, and student support services. Anticipated programming includes youth enrichment and family services, credit and noncredit education, workforce readiness training, adult educational advising, community enrichment activities, access to bachelor’s degree pathways and Promise programs, and on-site support such as financial aid and basic needs referrals. The Center would operate primarily during weekday afternoons and evenings, with select weekend programming.

Merced College has already demonstrated its investment in this project. To ensure that programming in the facility is shaped by the needs and desires of the community, Merced College has committed \$26,500 to conduct a third-party community survey of South Merced residents. Additionally, while the College is prepared to allocate funds to the improvement and ongoing maintenance of the facility to create and maintain a welcoming and learning -centered environment, the College has also proactively applied for \$1.5 million in direct congressional funding to further enhance the facility as this project serves the broader needs of the South Merced Community.

The proposed partnership between the City of Merced and Merced Community College District represents a unique opportunity to activate the Stephen Leonard Youth Center as more than a facility—transforming it into a vibrant, trusted neighborhood hub for learning, opportunity, and connection. By leveraging Merced College’s proven capacity, public accountability, and community-centered approach, this collaboration would deliver meaningful educational, workforce, and family-support services directly where they are most needed.

## Goals and Objectives for Program Participants:

The programming and services offered at the Stephen Leonard Youth Center are intended to support positive educational, workforce, and community outcomes for residents of South Merced. The Center will serve as a consistent and trusted access point that helps participants move forward along education and career pathways.

Key goals and objectives for program participants include:

- Expanding access to education, workforce training, and support services within the South Merced community

- Supporting youth development, academic engagement, early college and career awareness

- Increasing successful enrollment, persistence, and navigation of educational pathways for adult learners

- Strengthening family connections to educational, workforce, and basic needs resources

- Providing a welcoming and supportive environment that encourages continued participation and long-term success

These goals reflect Merced College's mission to transform lives through education and workforce development and align with the City of Merced's priorities for youth development, family support, and community well-being.

## Community-Responsive Core Programming

Merced College proposes to operate the Stephen Leonard Youth Center as a community-centered education and opportunity hub that expands access to learning, workforce pathways, and family support services for residents of South Merced. The Center would serve as a welcoming and consistent neighborhood presence that connects youth, families, and adult learners to education and support services in a setting that is accessible, familiar, and integrated into daily community life.

To be most responsive to the needs of the South Merced community, the College has already entered into an agreement with True North Research to survey residents of South Merced (zip code 95341). The primary purpose of the proposed survey is to gauge community interest in the proposed Center, as well as the types of classes and programs that could be offered, to help align the Center's offerings with community needs. The College will launch the 8-week survey upon learning if we are successful in our bid to lease the facility. Appendix B

While the survey results will guide program development, we envision the use to include, but not be limited to, the following programming:



**Education & Workforce Pathways**

Credit & noncredit classes  
 Career exploration & job readiness  
 Resume, interview & digital skills workshops  
 Connections to workforce training pathways



**Adult Education & Advising**

College application & enrollment assistance  
 Academic and career advising  
 In-person & online learning support  
 Navigation of educational pathways



**Supportive Learning Environment**

Computer & laptop access  
 Study and collaboration spaces  
 Virtual appointment areas  
 On-site support referrals



**Community Enrichment**

Workshops & community learning events  
 Cultural and enrichment activities



**Bachelor's Degree & Promise Access**

Pathways to baccalaureate through ASU Local and UC Merced Promise programs  
 Access to Promise Housing for students



**Added Value Benefits**

Investment in an existing public facility  
 Access to financial aid & basic needs support  
 Access to Student Health services  
 Trusted neighborhood resource

**Core Programming Details:**

**Youth Development and Family Services**

Youth focused programming will include academic enrichment, college and career awareness activities, and structured learning opportunities designed to support school aged children and adolescents. Family focused workshops and activities will support engagement, learning, and connection to educational and community resources. (See [Appendix A](#) for mock-up images of the space under Merced College's care.)

In 2026, the College for Kids program will celebrate its 50th year serving the youth of our community. We hope to kick-off the College for Kids program at the facility at Stephen Leonard in the summer of 2026 with a 50th anniversary celebration welcoming neighborhood

families to the facility. The proximity to the park features (splash pad, playground and Sheehy Elementary School) make College for Kids an ideal fit for the space.

### **Workforce Development**

The Center will provide career and workforce related programming focused on career exploration, job readiness, and skill development. Activities may include workshops on resume preparation, interview skills, digital literacy, and connections to education and training pathways aligned with regional workforce needs.

### **Student Support and Basic Needs**

Merced College will offer access to student support services at the Center, including financial aid assistance, academic advising, online tutoring, and basic needs support. The Center will also serve as a connection point for additional services through scheduled outreach and appointments, ensuring students and families can access the resources necessary to support persistence and success.

### **Technology Access and Study Space**

The Center will provide access to computers and laptops to support coursework, job search activities, and online services. Designated areas will be available for individual study, small group work, and virtual appointments, offering a safe and supportive environment for learning and productivity.

The proposed use directly aligns with the City of Merced's interest in youth development, educational support, family services, workforce development, and other community serving uses that enhance access and promote positive outcomes.

This proposed use reflects Merced College's commitment to expanding access through community-based locations and directly advances the District's Educational Master Plan strategy to establish a brick and mortar presence in South Merced. Through this partnership, the City and Merced College would activate an existing public facility as a visible and trusted access point for education, workforce preparation, and youth and family support.

**Populations to be Served:**

The proposed use of the Stephen Leonard Youth Center is intended to serve residents of South Merced and surrounding neighborhoods, with a focus on youth, families, and adult learners who face barriers to accessing education, workforce training, and support services. The Center will be open and accessible to community members across a wide range of ages and life stages.

Primary populations to be served include school aged youth and adolescents, families seeking educational and enrichment opportunities, and adults pursuing workforce preparation, skill development, or re-entry into education. The Center will also serve individuals who are new to higher education, including first generation college students and community members who may not otherwise engage with traditional campus-based services.

Programming and services will be designed to be inclusive, welcoming, and culturally responsive, reflecting the diversity of the South Merced community. By providing a neighborhood access point within Stephen Leonard Park, the Center will reduce barriers related to transportation, scheduling, and awareness of available resources, while strengthening connections between residents and education, workforce, and support pathways.

**Days and Hours of Operation:**

The Center is anticipated to operate primarily during afternoon and evening hours on weekdays to support school aged youth and working families. Weekend hours will be utilized for select programming, workshops, and community activities as appropriate. Final days and hours of operation will be established in coordination with the City and may be adjusted over time based on community participation, program demand, and operational considerations.

Merced College will ensure that the Center maintains predictable and reliable hours of operation so that community members can plan for and depend on access to services. Scheduling will be designed to balance structured programming with open access periods for study, advising, and community engagement.

## Organizational Overview:

Merced Community College District is a public community college district and local public agency serving the City of Merced and the surrounding region. Established in 1962, the District's mission is grounded in access, equity, workforce preparation, and community engagement. Merced College focuses on student success and is known by the success of its students, transforming lives through education and workforce development.

Throughout its history, Merced College has partnered closely with cities, school districts, employers, and community organizations to deliver education and support services directly into neighborhoods. This community-based approach reflects the College's commitment to equitable access, continuous improvement, and strengthening educational and economic outcomes for the region.

Merced College delivers instruction and services across multiple locations and formats, including in person, online, and hybrid courses in Merced and Los Banos. The College also operates programs in community based and shared use facilities, provides educational services within correctional and juvenile settings in Merced County, and maintains a Business Resource Center in downtown Merced. Through Merced College on the Road, the College participates in more than 100 community events each year to connect residents with education, workforce, and support resources.

In addition to instruction, Merced College offers a broad range of student support and community focused services, including academic advising, tutoring, basic needs assistance, counseling, and workforce and career guidance. The College operates youth and family focused initiatives such as College for Kids and partners with local high schools through College and Career Access Pathways, providing students with opportunities to earn college credit through courses offered on campus, online, and at their school sites.

Merced College has demonstrated experience operating programs in shared public facilities and routinely provides evening and weekend services to meet the needs of working families. Governed by an elected Board of Trustees and led by the Superintendent President and executive leadership team, the College brings the administrative capacity, fiscal oversight, and public accountability necessary to responsibly operate community-based programs and facilities in partnership with the City of Merced. [Appendix B](#)

The College has an established framework for community partnership and shared facility use that demonstrates its ability to collaborate effectively with local organizations. Community groups regularly utilize College facilities including athletic practice fields, theater spaces, classrooms, and meeting rooms. The College maintains a formal facility reservation process that allows community organizations to request

space for educational, cultural, and service-oriented programming. In addition, several community-based partners operate regularly on campus, including CalFresh outreach, Valley Crisis Center, California Mini-Corps, the Veterans Administration, and other public and nonprofit agencies. This existing infrastructure reflects Merced College's commitment to serving as a community hub and positions the College to integrate family and youth-serving organizations into the Stephen Leonard Youth Center through coordinated day-use partnerships and shared programming. [Appendix G](#) contains letters of support from community partners that reflect this ongoing partnership.

**Ready to Launch: Demonstrated Commitment and Readiness:**

Merced College has already taken deliberate and meaningful steps to advance the activation of the Stephen Leonard Youth Center and to demonstrate long term commitment to serving South Merced. The proposed use of the facility builds on planning, investment, and strategic actions already underway rather than a conceptual or exploratory effort.

Merced College has initiated a community needs assessment focused on South Merced residents to better understand local priorities, barriers, and interests related to education, workforce development, and youth and family services. The District has already committed \$26,500 in local funds to engage a third party research firm to design and administer the survey. Results from this effort will inform program design, scheduling, and service delivery at the Youth Center to ensure alignment with community identified needs. [Appendix C](#)

The College has submitted a federal funding request in the amount of \$1.5 million through Senator Alex Padilla's FY27 Congressionally Directed Spending process to support the activation of the South Merced education and workforce development presence at Stephen Leonard Park. This request reflects Merced College's intent to invest in infrastructure, technology, and program readiness to support sustained community-based services at the site. Below is a chart of the proposed use of funds, and the entire request is presented as [Appendix D](#).

Category	Description / Line Items	Amount (\$)
Facility Furnishings & Learning Environment	Modular tables/chairs; study pods; soft seating; ADA furniture; whiteboards; storage; reception; conference furnishings; outdoor furnishings	375000
Instructional & Presentation Technology	Projectors; interactive displays; monitors; audio systems; document cameras; presentation carts; video conferencing equipment	250000
IT Infrastructure & Connectivity	Enterprise Wi-Fi; switches; cabling; servers; cybersecurity; backup power; network monitoring	275000
Laptops, Devices & Technology Access	Laptop carts; student laptops; staff devices; tablets; printers/scanners; peripherals; software licenses	300000
Offices, Advising & Workforce Support Equipment	Office furniture; filing systems; phone/VoIP; intake kiosks; privacy and sound equipment; collaboration tools	125000
Basic Needs & Student Support Infrastructure	Food storage; shelving; technology lockers; hygiene fixtures; digital signage; case management software	125000
Installation, Setup & Initial Activation	Installation; configuration; delivery; assembly; staff training; warranties	50000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1500000</b>

This project directly aligns with Merced College’s Educational Master Plan and identified as a Strategic Implementation Goal. The plan emphasizes investing in new and innovative outreach strategies, targeting new populations, and establishing a brick-and-mortar presence in South Merced to expand access and grow the student population. The Stephen Leonard Youth Center represents a key opportunity to advance this strategy in partnership with the City.

Merced College has also committed staff capacity and administrative oversight to support ongoing operations, coordination, and compliance for the facility. This includes staffing to manage daily operations, deliver programming, and meet City reporting and inspection requirements. Through these combined efforts, the College demonstrates readiness to operate the Stephen Leonard Youth Center as a stable, well managed, and community centered resource. [Appendix E](#)

**Fiscal Viability and Facility Maintenance and Improvement:**

Merced College ended the 2024-2025 fiscal year with positive net income of \$1,987,572 and a fund balance of 18.06% (\$18,674,604). The revenue projection in the 2025-2026 adopted budget is \$116,134,290. Merced College exceeds the liability insurance coverages required as part of this RFI.

Merced College's budget information - including income, balances and expenditures – is available publicly on our website [here](#). All budget documents and presentations are also publicly available in the Board of Trustees [meeting minutes and agendas](#). A copy of the 2025-26 Final Budget Board of Trustees Presentation is included in [Appendix F](#).

**Experience Operating Similar Facilities:**

Merced College has extensive experience operating instructional and support services across multiple sites, including campus-based locations, off site instructional spaces, and shared use community facilities. The College routinely delivers education, workforce training, and student support services in settings designed to serve diverse populations and meet community specific needs.

In addition to its main campus locations in Merced and Los Banos, Merced College operates programs in community-based facilities, maintains a Business Resource Center in downtown Merced, and provides educational services within correctional and juvenile settings throughout Merced County. These operations require coordination across agencies, adherence to safety and compliance requirements, and consistent staffing and oversight.

Merced College's experience managing multiple locations includes scheduling, supervision, facility coordination, reporting, and compliance with public agency standards. This operational experience positions the College to effectively manage the Stephen Leonard Youth Center in partnership with the City of Merced and to ensure the facility is used responsibly, maintained appropriately, and aligned with approved programming.

**Closing Statement:**

Merced College appreciates the opportunity to submit this Request for Interest and to be considered as a partner in the activation of the Stephen Leonard Youth Center. The College views this opportunity as a long-term partnership with the City of Merced to expand access to education, workforce pathways, and family support services within South Merced.

Through intentional programming, responsive community engagement, and sustained investment, the Youth Center can become a visible symbol of the City's commitment to youth development, educational access, and neighborhood vitality in South Merced. This partnership offers an immediate and practical way to enhance existing park assets while creating long-term pathways that support student success, workforce readiness, and family stability.

Approval of this proposal would enable the City and Merced College to move forward with a shared vision—one that activates public space, strengthens community trust, and expands opportunity for generations of South Merced residents.

# Appendix A

## AI-Generated Mockups



  
**MERCED  
COLLEGE**  
at STEPHEN LEONARD YOUTH CENTER

 **MERCED  
COLLEGE**

WELCOME TO THE  
**STEPHEN LEONARD  
YOUTH CENTER**

— HOURS —  
MONDAY - FRIDAY  
1:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
SATURDAY - SUNDAY  
1:00 AM - 3:00 PM

**PROGRAMS OFFERED**

- ENRICHMENT WORKSHOPS
- HOMEWORK HELP
- LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT









## Appendix B:

### Merced College Leadership Organizational Chart



# Office of the Superintendent/President Organizational Chart

## Board of Trustees



**Mario Mendoza**  
Area 1



**Ernie Ochoa**  
Area 2



**Carmen Ramirez**  
Area 3



**Sue Chappell**  
Area 4



**Joe Gutierrez**  
Area 5



**Kory Benson**  
Area 6



**John Pedrozo**  
Area 7



**Dr. Chris Vitelli**  
Superintendent/President



**Krystal Pollinger**  
Executive Assistant



**Samantha Maraspini**  
Administrative Assistant (Confidential)



**Kim Patterson**  
Office Assistant (Reception Desk)



**Joe Allison**  
Assistant Superintendent/  
Vice President of  
Administrative Services



**Dr. Mike McCandless**  
Assistant Superintendent/  
Vice President of  
Student Services



**Dr. Dee Sigismond**  
Acting Assistant Superintendent/  
Vice President of  
Instruction



**Kelly Avila**  
Vice President of  
Human Resources



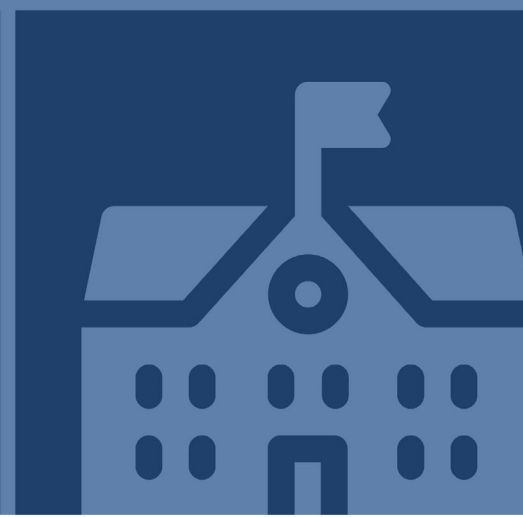
**Arlis Bortner**  
Vice President of  
Information  
Technology Services



**Jill Cunningham**  
Vice President of  
External Relations

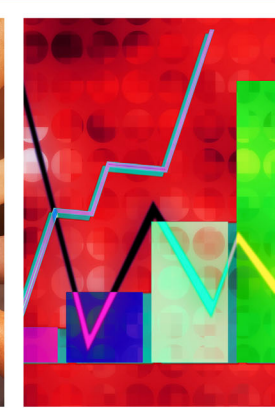
## Appendix C:

### Survey Proposal/True North



**COMMUNITY SURVEY**  
PROPOSAL & LETTER OF AGREEMENT

PREPARED FOR  
**MERCED COLLEGE**



DECEMBER 2025



1592 N COAST HIGHWAY 101  
ENCINITAS CA 92024  
760.632.9900 [WWW.TN-RESEARCH.COM](http://WWW.TN-RESEARCH.COM)



## RESEARCH PROPOSAL

True North Research, Inc. (True North) is pleased to be Merced College's (College) research partner for the upcoming community survey. Our conversations to date, as well as our past experience conducting research for the College, have been quite helpful to our understanding of your objectives and needs with respect to the proposed research. We have crafted this summary description of the proposed work scope and associated costs accordingly. However, if we missed an important detail—or if other issues have arisen that should be factored into the study—please feel free to contact us (760.632.9900) and we'll be happy to revise this estimate.

**BACKGROUND** Since 1962, Merced College has empowered students through education and workforce training. The College's offerings include robust degree and certificate programs, fast-track career and technical education programs, accelerated curriculum, high profile transfer opportunities, and nationally-recognized workforce development and training programs. With campuses in Merced and Los Banos, Merced College serves more than 18,600 students on an annual basis.

As part of its vision to better serve the educational needs of all communities in its jurisdiction, Merced College is considering establishing a new Educational Center in South Merced that would increase residents' access to a variety of courses and programs, including non-credit courses and certificated workforce programs. The primary purpose of the proposed survey is to gauge community interest in the proposed Center, as well as the types of classes and programs that could be offered, to help align the Center's offerings with community needs.

**SCOPE OF WORK** The scope of services that True North will perform for the College includes all tasks associated with designing, conducting and analyzing the survey, as well as presenting the results. Briefly, the scope of services includes:

- Meet with the College to thoroughly discuss the research objectives and methodology for the study, as well as discuss potential challenges, concerns, and issues that may surround the study.
- Develop a stratified random sample of residents in the study area (ZIP Code 95341).
- Develop a draft questionnaire for the College's review and make revisions as needed until all parties approve of the instrument. Estimated length is 12-15 minutes.
- Pre-test the survey instrument to ensure its integrity.
- Professionally translate the survey into Spanish.
- Web program the finalized survey instrument to allow respondents to participate online at a secure, password-protected survey site.
- CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) program the same survey instrument to ensure accurate and reliable data collection for respondents who prefer to participate by telephone.
- Recruit voters to participate in the survey using a combination of email, text, and telephone calls.
- Complete *at least* 250 quality interviews according to the sampling plan and a strict interviewing protocol. If we are able to deliver more than 250 interviews, all additional interviews will be provided to the College at no additional cost.

- Process the data, which includes conducting validity checks, cleaning, recoding, coding open-end responses, and adjusting for strategic oversampling (if used) through a statistical procedure known as 'weighting'.
- Prepare an initial topline report which presents the overall findings of the survey.
- Prepare a thorough report on the findings, including a detailed question-by-question analysis, description of the methodology, an executive summary of the key findings and conclusions/recommendations, as well as graphics showing how the answers varied by subgroups of residents. The report will include extensive full-color graphics displaying the findings, as well as insightful narrative discussion of the results and their implications.
- Prepare an electronic copy of the final report to allow the College to reproduce the report as needed.
- Prepare a Powerpoint summary of the survey findings and present the results to the College via Zoom, MSTeams, or similar remote platform.
- Be available to consult with the College and answer questions after the survey is complete.

**COSTS** True North's fixed-fee cost estimate to design and conduct the survey as described in this proposal is \$26,500. This cost is inclusive—there will be no additional charges associated with the study.

**TIME LINE** True North will work with Merced College to develop a project schedule and time line that meets the College's needs. In general, we recommend allowing eight (8) weeks from project initiation to the delivery of the full report, although we can accelerate this schedule if needed.

**ABOUT TRUE NORTH** True North is a full-service survey research firm that is dedicated to providing public agencies with a clear understanding of the opinions, perceptions, priorities and behaviors of their constituents and residents. Through designing and implementing scientific surveys, focus groups and one-on-one interviews, as well as expert interpretation of the findings, True North helps its clients to move with confidence when making strategic decisions in a variety of areas including performance measurement, planning, budgeting, passing revenue measures, and developing effective public engagement/communications strategies. To date, True North has designed and conducted more than 1,500 statistically reliable surveys for public agencies, including more than 400 surveys for community colleges and K-12 districts in California.

In addition to recent research for Merced College, we have assisted a range of higher education clients with their survey research needs, including College of the Desert, Gavilan College, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, Long Beach City College, MiraCosta College, Monterey Peninsula College, Pasadena City College, Rancho Santiago Community College District, San Bernardino Community College District, Santa Barbara City College, Yosemite Community College District, Soka University, California State University Sacramento, and UCLA.

**PROJECT MANAGER** True North's President (Timothy McLarney, Ph.D.) will serve as the Project Manager for the proposed survey. He will be the College's day-to-day contact for all matters related to the study and will lead all design, analysis, reporting, and presentation tasks. Approximately 75% of the research tasks will be performed directly by Dr. McLarney.

Dr. McLarney has more than 25 years of experience in survey methodology, statistics, public opinion analysis, and providing data-driven strategic advice to public agencies. His work to date has provided California school districts, colleges, universities, cities, counties, special jurisdictions, transportation planning agencies, councils of government, and political campaigns with research to address their often complex marketing, planning, performance measurement, and tax measure needs. During his career, Dr. McLarney has occupied a lead role in over 1,500 research studies.

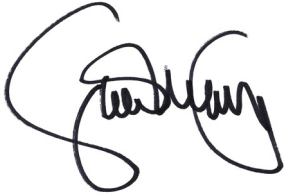
Dr. McLarney is a nationally recognized expert in survey research methodology, sampling theory, weighting, and the use of statistical methods to generalize survey results. His research has been published in peer-reviewed journals and has earned him honors including the Sage Fellowship (Cornell University), Mellon Fellowship (Cornell University), and the title of Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Governmental Studies at UC Berkeley. He has also served as an independent expert witness in survey research methodology for California legal cases. Dr. McLarney earned his Ph.D. and M.A. in Government from Cornell University with an emphasis in survey methodology, sampling theory, data science, and public opinion analysis, as well as a Bachelor's degree in Politics from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

## LETTER OF AGREEMENT

This proposal and the standard business terms (see below) will serve as a letter of agreement between True North Research and Merced College for the services described previously. In fulfillment of this agreement, True North will perform the services described in the *Scope of Work* on page 1. True North will invoice the full amount of the contract upon delivery of the report, with full payment due within 30 days of receiving the invoice.

Sincerely,

Agreed to and accepted by:



Timothy McLarney, Ph.D.  
President  
True North Research  
1592 N Coast Highway 101  
Encinitas CA 92024

Kelly Avila  
Vice President, Human Resources  
Merced Community College District  
3600 M Street  
Merced, California 95348

**BUSINESS TERMS** Contracts and agreements between True North Research and its clients include the following general terms and conditions unless otherwise specified in a contract or agreement.

*Flat Fees* Unless otherwise specified, True North Research charges a flat fee for all or a portion of its services to a client in lieu of hourly charges.

*Notices* Any and all notices, demands, or other communications required or desired to be given hereunder by any party shall be documented in writing.

*Confidentiality* True North Research acknowledges that during the engagement it will have access to and possibly become acquainted with trade secrets, inventions, innovations, processes, information, records, and specifications owned or licensed by the Client in connection with the operation of its business including, business and product processes, methods, customer lists, accounts, and procedures. True North Research agrees that it will not disclose any of the aforesaid, directly or indirectly, or use any of them in any manner, either during the term of this Agreement or at any time thereafter, except as required in the course of this engagement with the client, or without written consent from the client.

*Acting as Agent* In compliance with California sales tax regulation, True North Research is designated as an Agent for the acquisition of tangible personal property and services as they apply to its clients' marketing activities.

<i>Merger</i>	The merger or consolidation of the client into or with any other entity shall not terminate or otherwise modify this Agreement.
<i>Ownership of Materials</i>	In producing finished products, it is expressly understood that ownership of all materials purchased by True North Research to complete the materials to be produced passes to its clients at the time of purchase and prior to any use by True North Research.
<i>Independent Contractor</i>	This Agreement shall not render True North Research an employee, partner, agent of, or joint venturer for the client for federal, state or local tax purposes, or for any other purpose.
<i>Amendment Provision</i>	This contract contains the entire agreement between the parties, and is subject to and will be construed under the laws of the State of California, and may be amended only in writing signed by both parties.
<i>Successors</i>	Any agreement between the agency and a client shall be binding upon, the heirs, successors and assignors of the parties.
<i>Termination</i>	The contract may be terminated by mutual consent of both parties, or by 10 days notice by either party. If the agreement is terminated, True North Research will bill the client for all work completed to date (including subcontractors' work).
<i>Attorneys' Fees</i>	Should any action be brought by one party against the other party to enforce any agreement, the prevailing party shall be entitled to recover from the other party its reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and expenses.
<i>Governing Law</i>	Any agreement between True North and a client shall be governed by California law and any action arising out of it shall be instituted and prosecuted in the Municipal or Superior Court of the County of San Diego.

## Appendix D:

Senator Alex Padilla FY27 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development  
Congressionally Directed Spending Request



# Senator Padilla FY27 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development

## Congressionally Directed Spending Form (South Merced)

Name & Contact Info	Mailing Address	Permanent Address
Xavier Warren Mobile: 4342281077 <a href="mailto:xwarren@congressionalpartners.com">xwarren@congressionalpartners.com</a>	200 Massachusetts Avenue NW Floor 7 Washington DC 20001	200 Massachusetts Avenue NW Floor 7 Washington DC 20001

### Section 1. Requestor Information

#### 1. Requesting Entity

Merced Community College District

#### 2. Requesting Individual(s)

Alfredo Mendoza, Director of Grants Development

#### 3. Priority Number: #X of Y

Multiple requests from the same entity must be ranked in priority order across all appropriations bills.

1

#### 4. Project Name

South Merced Education and Workforce Development Center

#### 5. Grantee Legal Name

Merced Community College District

#### 6. Requesting Entity Address

3600 M Street

Merced, CA 95348

#### 7. Employer Identification Number (EIN)

77-0362218

#### 8. Grantee Point of Contact - Name

Alfredo Mendoza, Director of Grants Development

#### 9. Grantee Point of Contact - Phone

209-381-6578

#### 10. Grantee Point of Contact - Email

alfredo.mendoza@mccd.edu

#### 11. Which Sen. Padilla State Field Office does this project request fall under?

Fresno Office

#### 12. Which county is this project located in?

Merced

### Section 2. Project Information

**1. Within which account in the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development bill are you applying for funding?**

Community Development Fund for Economic Development Initiatives (EDI)

**2. Amount Requested**

\$1,500,000

**3. Total Project Cost**

\$

**4. What percentage of the project will this funding cover?**

100% of facilities activation costs

**5. Brief Summary of Project**

Located at Stephen Leonard Park in South Merced, this project will create a community-centered education and workforce development hub that brings college access, job training, support services and community enrichment initiatives directly into a high-need neighborhood. The investment will strengthen workforce readiness, reduce access barriers, and support long-term economic mobility for residents of South Merced and the surrounding region.

**6. Description of Project**

The South Merced Education and Workforce Development Center is a proposed project that would establish a permanent, community-embedded education and workforce access site at the currently vacant building at Stephen Leonard Park, located in one of Merced's most economically distressed and historically underserved neighborhoods. In partnership with the City of Merced, the project would repurpose an existing public facility within the park into a functional, technology-enabled space designed to bring college access, workforce training, and student support services directly into the community.

The purpose of the project is to reduce long-standing barriers to higher education and workforce participation for South Merced residents by providing a welcoming, accessible environment equipped for learning, advising, and career development. Residents in this area face challenges related to transportation, income instability, limited access to postsecondary education, and workforce displacement. Locating educational infrastructure within the neighborhood would expand access and create a consistent point of connection to college and workforce pathways.

If funded, the Center would include flexible instructional and community-use spaces furnished with tables, study pods, and projection equipment to support workshops, short-term training, group instruction, and community meetings. Dedicated office space would allow for on-site academic advising, enrollment assistance, career counseling, and coordination with workforce and community partners. The facility would be equipped with laptop carts, laptops, wireless internet, and instructional technology to ensure residents have access to the digital tools required for education, training, and job search activities.

In addition to education and workforce programming, the Center would integrate basic needs support and resource navigation, recognizing that economic stability is foundational to student success. The space would allow for connection to food assistance, technology access, referrals to housing or social services, and other wraparound supports that reduce barriers to persistence and participation.

The proposed project would serve residents of South Merced and surrounding neighborhoods, with a focus on low- and moderate-income individuals, first-generation college students, adult learners, and individuals seeking workforce re-entry or skill development. Once operational, the Center's capacity will serve hundreds of students and their families annually through a combination of scheduled programming, open-access study and technology use, and community-based outreach activities, including College for Kids – an enrichment program for youth ideally suited for the facility's setting in Stephen Leonard Park adjacent to Margaret Sheehy Elementary School.

Project success would be measured through participation and utilization data; engagement in community, education and workforce programming; transitions into college or training pathways; and continued use of advising, technology, and support services. Longer-term indicators may include credential attainment, employment outcomes, and persistence in education or training, depending on the services and programs implemented.

Federal funding in the amount of \$1.5 million would support the planning, adaptive reuse, and activation of the existing facility. Eligible uses include interior improvements, furnishings, instructional and office equipment, technology infrastructure, laptops and related devices, and initial program startup costs. Leveraging an existing public facility allows federal investment to be used efficiently while laying the foundation for sustained community impact.

**1. Detailed budget breakdown of how the requested federal funding will be spent (i.e., \$ -x- for salaries; \$ -x- for programming; \$ -x- for equipment; etc.). Please be specific when describing the activities and expenditures. The most**

common issue in determining if a project is eligible for funding is a lack of specific information on what the funding will be used for.

Category	Description / Line Items	Amount (\$)
Facility Furnishings & Learning Environment	Modular tables/chairs; study pods; soft seating; ADA furniture; whiteboards; storage; reception; conference furnishings; outdoor furnishings	375000
Instructional & Presentation Technology	Projectors; interactive displays; monitors; audio systems; document cameras; presentation carts; video conferencing equipment	250000
IT Infrastructure & Connectivity	Enterprise Wi-Fi; switches; cabling; servers; cybersecurity; backup power; network monitoring	275000
Laptops, Devices & Technology Access	Laptop carts; student laptops; staff devices; tablets; printers/scanners; peripherals; software licenses	300000
Offices, Advising & Workforce Support Equipment	Office furniture; filing systems; phone/VoIP; intake kiosks; privacy and sound equipment; collaboration tools	125000
Basic Needs & Student Support Infrastructure	Food storage; shelving; technology lockers; hygiene fixtures; digital signage; case management software	125000
Installation, Setup & Initial Activation	Installation; configuration; delivery; assembly; staff training; warranties	50000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1500000</b>

All requested funds are one-time, allowable costs directly tied to project implementation and activation. The budget prioritizes efficiency through adaptive reuse of an existing public facility while ensuring the Center is fully equipped to deliver education, workforce, and student support services to South Merced residents.

2. The status of planning and environmental review work.

Preliminary space assessments and planning concepts have been developed to inform scope and feasibility. The College has also launched a needs assessment survey of community members in South Merced gauge the specific, programmatic-level interests of the community. That survey will be conducted in January 2026. As this is an existing City of Merced facility that has recently undergone renovation to support new programs, we do not anticipate the need for environmental review.

**7. Has the organization or any potential sub-grantees been subject to sanction or litigation by State, Local, or Federal governments in the past five years? If so, please provide details.**

No

**7.1 Provide details on litigation/sanctions**

N/A

**8. Project Website**

## **Section 3. Support and Funding History**

---

**1. Is this project being submitted to any other Offices?**

**2. Is this project being submitted to your member(s) in the House of Representatives?**

No

**2.1 If yes, which member(s)?**

N/A

**3. Letters or Resolutions Submitted in Support of Project**

At the end of the application you will be asked to submit PDF versions of at least two (and up to five) letters or resolutions of support from a local and regional elected official or government entity representing the area where the project is located. Please write out the names of each individual or entity here. This should only be the names of the individuals and entities whose letters are directly uploaded through this portal.

For letters, please provide the title and name of the individual who authored and signed the letter.

For resolutions, please provide the governing body or organization which passed the resolution.

**Please format as:** State Senator Jane Doe, Cityville Mayor John Doe, Los Angeles County Supervisor Jane Doe, City of Cityville Council Resolution, etc.

**4. List Any Other Elected Officials, Government Entities, or (Non-Government) Organizations Partnering in or supporting the project. This should only include individuals or entities that are NOT captured in the previous question about letters and resolutions of support. Please format as: State Senator Jane Doe, City of Cityville, Community Organization, etc.**

**5. Has this project previously been submitted by Senator Padilla or another member of congress to the Appropriations Committee?**

No

**5.1 Please specify which member(s) submitted the project and in which fiscal years**

Ex. Padilla - FY 23. Padilla, Feinstein - FY 22.

**6. Has this project previously been awarded funds through Congressionally Directed Spending?**

No

**6.1 Describe previous funding and why project is requesting Congressionally Directed Spending again?** Please include the amount of funding, fiscal year funding was awarded, and which member(s) of congress submitted the project.

N/A

## **Section 4. Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Specific Questions**

This section has specific questions that you must answer based on the account within in the THUD Bill you are applying for (this is the account you selected in Question 1 of the Project Information Section). **For questions about other accounts please put N/A or select No.**

### **1. Economic Development Initiatives (EDIs) - National Objectives**

For EDI requests you **MUST** include relevant data on how activities or projects address at least one of the three National Objectives of the broader [CDBG program](#)<sup>2</sup>. HUD defines the national objectives of CDBG as:

- Benefiting low- and moderate-income persons or communities;
- Preventing or eliminating slums or blight; or
- Addressing community development needs having a particular urgency because existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community for which other funding is not available. **Please use data from HUD as much as possible to justify your project's eligibility.** If you are justifying the project's benefits to low- and moderate-income (LMI) persons or communities, please review this HUD resource: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg/cdbg-low-moderate-income-data/><sup>2</sup>

Use the “Map Application” tool to provide the necessary data points demonstrating the LMI benefit:

<https://hud.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=ffd0597e8af24f88b501b7e7f326bedd><sup>2</sup>

Merced College and Merced County have the following designations:

- Hispanic-Serving Institution
- Economically distressed by the Economic Development Administration,
- Medically Underserved Area by the Health Resources and Services Administration,
- Rural by the Health Resources and Services Administration
- Rural by the Department of Agriculture.

Therefore, the individuals to benefit from this project are medically underserved and live in a rural area with significant economic challenges.

### **2. Highways (HIP) or Transit (TIG) - STIP or TIP ID Number**

Provide the STIP or TIP ID number for the project (if the project is already on a STIP or TIP).

If your project is not on the STIP or TIP, you may alternatively provide a letter from Caltrans confirming that: (1) the project is eligible for Federal-aid highway funding under title 23, United States Code; (2) Caltrans is willing to carry out the project if funding is enacted; and (3) Caltrans will include the project on the STIP or TIP once funding for the project is enacted.

N/A

**3. Highways (HIP) or Transit (TIG) - STIP or TIP - Website URL** Provide the URL directly to the STIP or TIP that includes this project.

N/A

**4. Transit (TIG) - Provide the name of the transit agency recipient or subrecipient**

N/A

**5. Airports (AIP) and FAA Facilities and Equipment (F&E) - NPIAS code for the airport**

N/A

**6. Airports (AIP) and FAA Facilities and Equipment (F&E) - Does project meet federal cost share requirements?** For large and medium primary hub airports, funding can cover 75 percent of eligible costs (or 80 percent for noise program implementation).

For small primary, reliever, and general aviation airports, funding can cover a range of 90-95 percent of eligible costs, based on statutory requirements.

No

## Section 5. Contact Information

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**1. Best Point of Contact Name**

The individual in California or Washington representative and/or firm, if applicable, that Senator Padilla's staff can contact with questions about this project application.

Alfredo Mendoza

**2. Best Point of Contact Affiliation**

Director of Grants Development

**3. Best Point of Contact Office Phone Number**

209-381-6578

**4. Best Point of Contact Out of Office/Mobile Phone**

209-658-8997

**5. Best Point of Contact Email**

alfredo.mendoza@mccd.edu

## Appendix E:

### Staffing Framework for Merced College South Merced Center

## Staffing Framework and Annual Investment Summary

### I. Proposed Staffing Model (High-Level Overview)

Merced College envisions a structured staffing model designed to ensure effective site management, high-quality student support, community engagement, and operational accountability. The draft framework (below) emphasizes leadership oversight, direct service delivery, enrollment growth, financial aid access, safety, and consistent daily operations. This framework is currently conceptual in nature and, in application, will support the findings of the community interest survey.

#### Proposed Staffing Framework

Manager of Outreach (1.0 FTE – Management)  
 Student Support Coordinator (1.0 FTE)  
 Enrollment and Retention Specialist (1.0 FTE – Classified)  
 Financial Aid Classified Professional (1.0 FTE – Classified)

Part-Time Counselor (0.5 FTE)  
 Student Services Assistant (1.0 FTE – Classified)  
 Security Guard (1.0 FTE)  
 Student Workers (2 Part-Time)

### II. Estimated Annual Staffing Investment

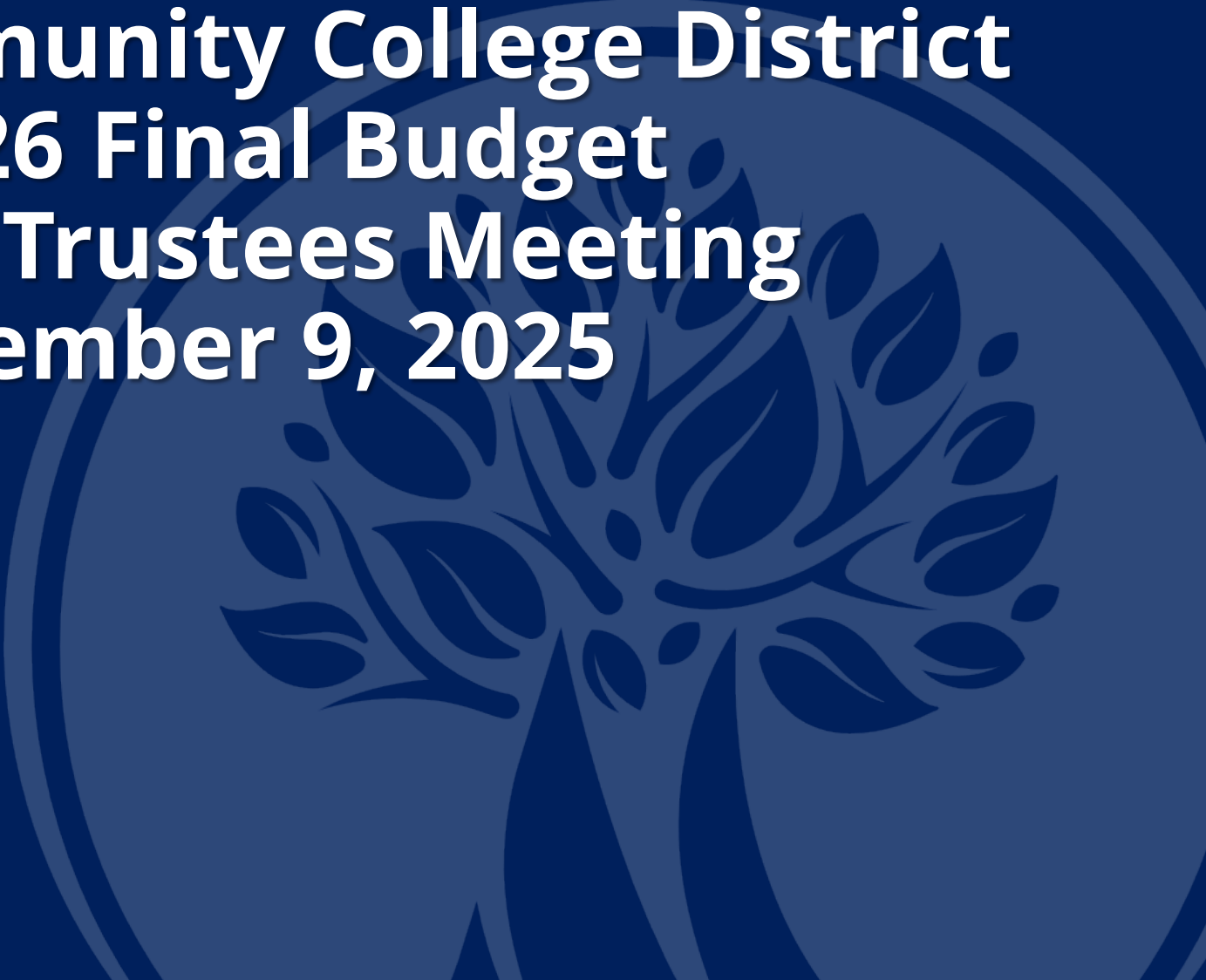
Position	Est. Salary	Est. Benefits	Total Annual Cost
Manager of Outreach	\$130,000	\$55,000	\$185,000
Student Support Coordinator	\$85,000	\$40,000	\$125,000
Enrollment & Retention Specialist	\$80,000	\$38,000	\$118,000
Financial Aid Professional	\$75,000	\$36,000	\$111,000
Part-Time Counselor (0.5 FTE)	\$65,000	\$25,000	\$90,000
Student Services Assistant	\$60,000	\$32,000	\$92,000
Security Guard	\$55,000	\$25,000	\$80,000
Student Workers (2 PT)	\$30,000	—	\$30,000

### **III. Total Estimated Annual Investment**

The total estimated annual institutional investment for operation of the Stephen Leonard Youth Center is approximately \$950,000 per year. This investment reflects Merced College's commitment to establishing a stable, professionally managed, and community-centered education and workforce presence in South Merced, aligned with the College's Educational Master Plan and the City of Merced's priorities.

## Appendix F

2025-26 Merced College Final Budget Board of Trustees Presentation

A large, stylized tree logo is positioned in the background on the right side of the slide. The tree has a thick trunk and many branches with small, rounded leaves. The entire logo is rendered in a dark blue color that matches the background.

# **Merced Community College District 2025-26 Final Budget Board of Trustees Meeting September 9, 2025**

Presented by:

Joe Allison, Vice President of Administrative Services

Andre Urquidez, Director of Business & Fiscal Services

# CONTENT



**2024-25 Year-End Closing**



**2025-26 Final Budget**

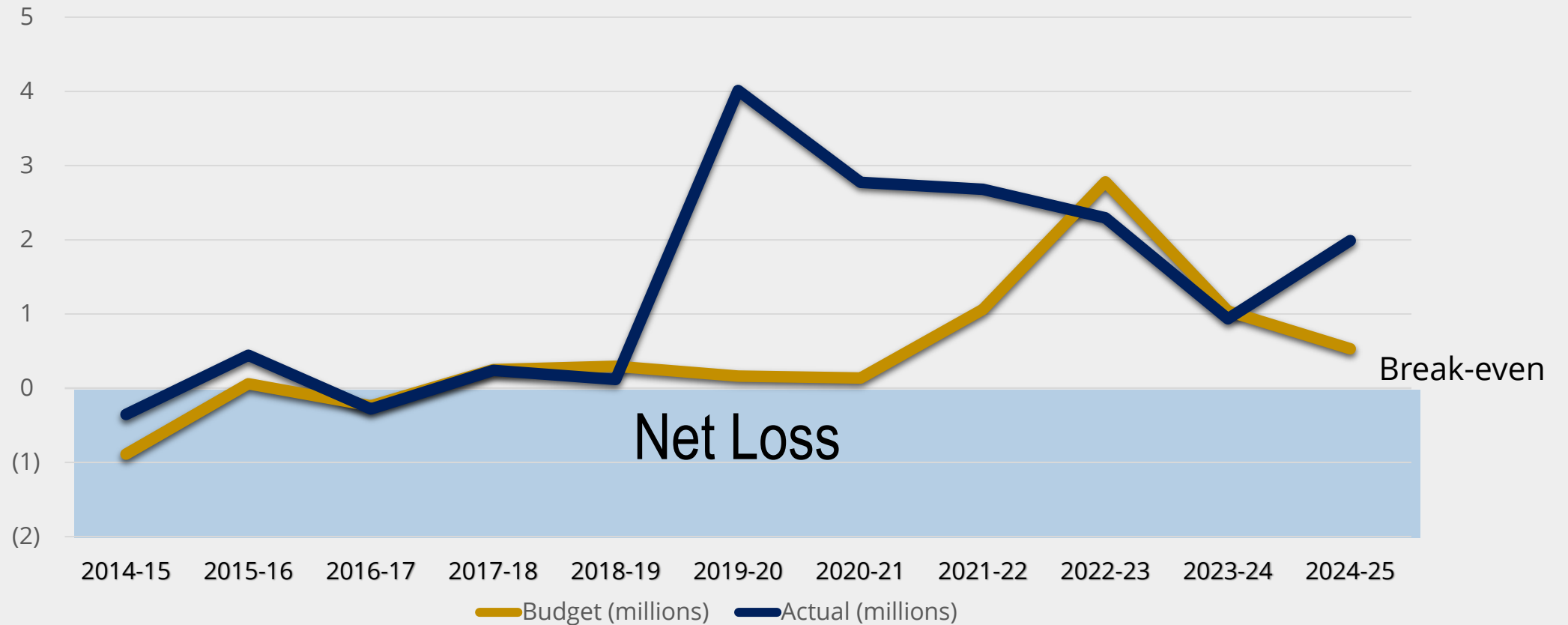


**Questions?**

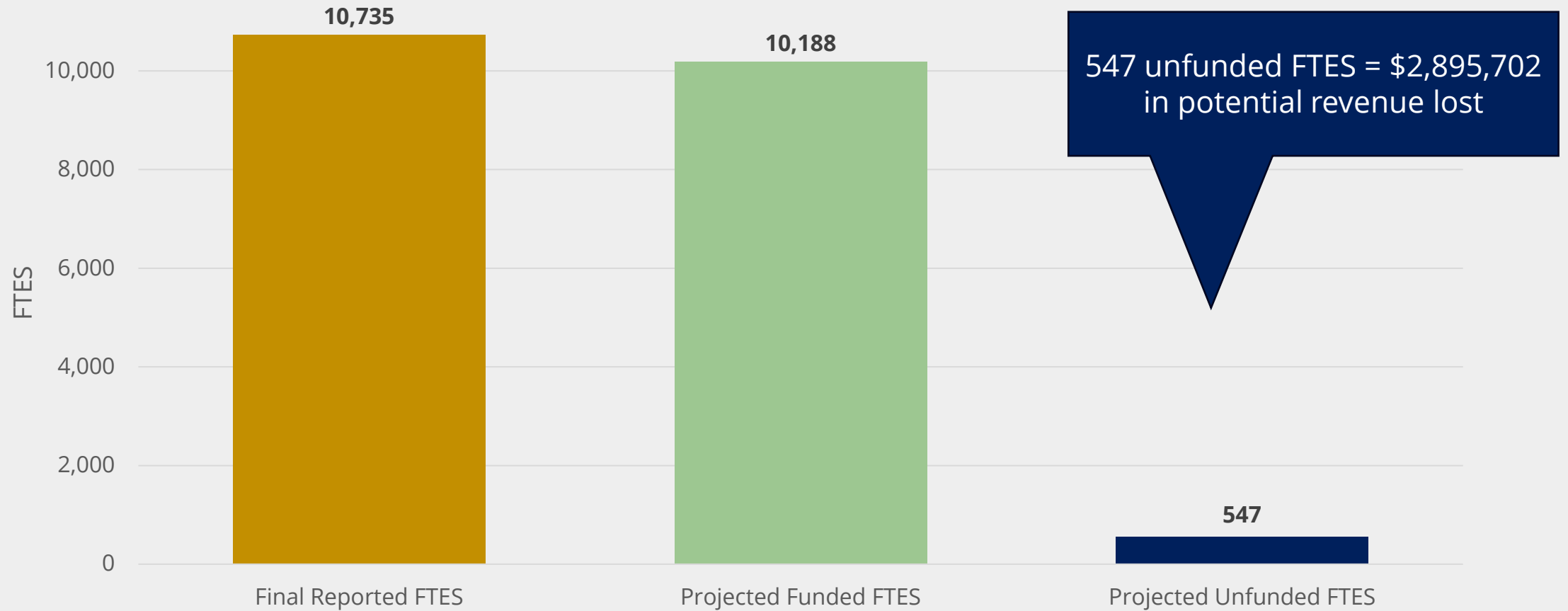
# 2024-25 Actuals

- ❑ Another year of positive net income:
  - Adopted Budget Estimate: \$532,680
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Projections: \$1,564,067
  - Actual Year-End Close: \$1,987,572
- ❑ Fund Balance \$18,674,604 or 18.06% of expenditures
- ❑ **Projected Total Computational Revenue (TCR) of \$97M becomes our new Student-Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) Hold Harmless funding level**

# Net Income Budget to Actual



# 2024-25 FTES Year-End Summary



# 2025-26 Final Budget Presentation



# Final Budget Revenue Assumptions



Under the Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF), the State's Total Computational Revenue (TCR) for the District is projected at \$103 million.



A deficit factor of 1.5% or \$1.5M is included.



Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) of 2.3% is included.



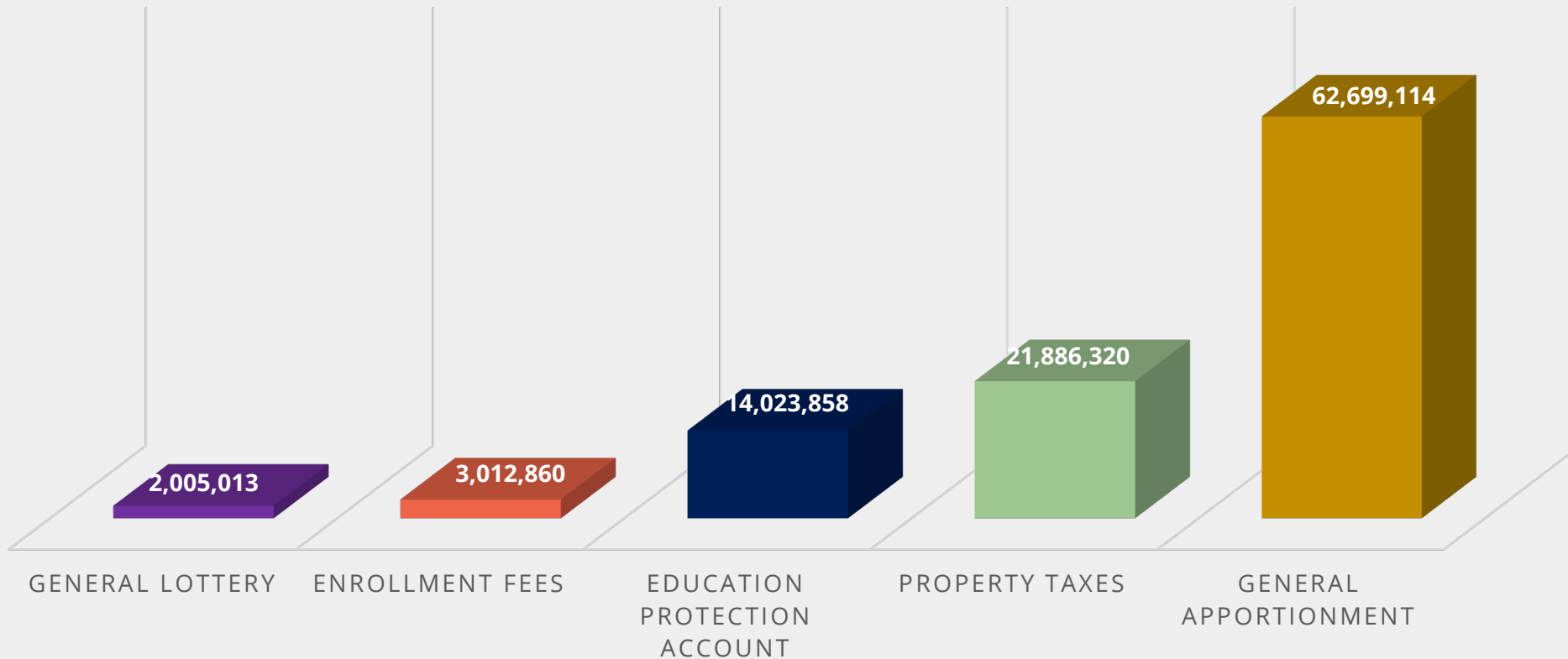
Education Protection Account (EPA) funding is projected at \$14M.



Nonresident fee increased from \$305 to \$320 per unit.

# Major Funding Categories

■ General Lottery   ■ Enrollment Fees   ■ Education Protection Account   ■ Property Taxes   ■ General Apportionment





# Employee Retention Credit (ERC)

Merced College received a Federal Employee Retention Credit (ERC) as part of the CARES Act (2020) for retaining employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our District Auditors filed for the credit on our behalf.

ERC Tax Credit      \$6.7M

Filing Fee              (\$740K)

Total Net ERC        \$6M

These funds are included as part of the \$15.4M set-aside contribution towards the Music-Art-Theater Complex

# Final Budget Revenue Projections

	<b>2023-24 Actual</b>	<b>2024-25 Actual</b>	<b>2025-26 Final</b>
Federal	\$ 28,275	\$ 34,615	\$ 6,075,567
State	\$ 72,887,861	\$ 78,595,575	\$ 80,928,155
Local	\$ 25,300,194	\$ 25,979,819	\$ 28,047,785
Other/Transfers In	\$ 555,141	\$ 752,195	\$ 1,082,782
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b><u>\$ 98,771,471</u></b>	<b><u>\$105,362,204</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 116,134,290</u></b>

# Final Budget Expenditure Assumptions

- The District expects to be in compliance with Fall 2025 Full-Time Faculty Obligation Number (FON) of 182.7 FTEF.
- Adjustments for step/column and longevity increases: \$1.1M
- Vacation payouts to classified and management employees who separate from the District are included at \$195k
- Medical - Benefit rates for active employees increased by 11% or \$1.4M; SISC medical benefit rates for retirees increased by \$261k
- Retirement- STRS contribution rate remained the same as 2024-25 at 19.10%; PERS contribution rate decreased from 27.05% to 26.81%
- Projects salary & benefit of savings of \$3.75M

# Final Budget Expenditure Assumptions cont.

- Lifecycle Technology funding of \$300k – replacement of District technology equipment
- Provides \$200k in contingency funding for unanticipated costs that arise during the fiscal year
- Includes funding for budget and staffing augmentations, and one-time resource allocation items
- Other Outgo/Transfers Out for 2024-25 and 2025-26 includes General Fund contributions to the Music-Arts-Theater capital project:
  - 2024-25 - \$8.3M
  - 2025-26 - \$7.1M (includes \$6M from ERC)

# Final Budget Expenditure Assumptions Cont.

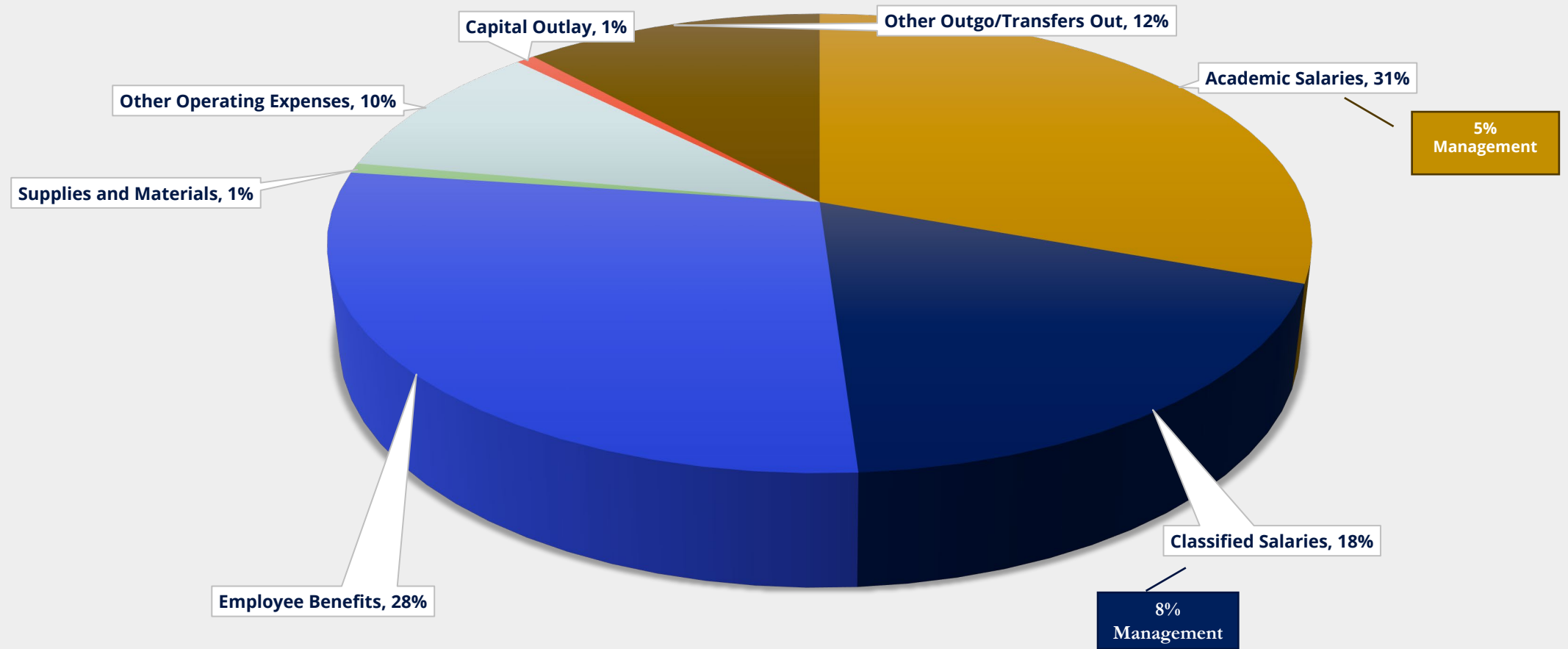
## Additional Staffing Positions

Accounting Technician II – <u>Student Fees</u>	Human Resource Technician – <u>Human Resources</u>
Administrative Assistant II – <u>Enterprise &amp; Academic Partnerships</u>	Laboratory Technician (Part-time) – <u>Rising Scholars</u>
Administrative Assistant II (Part-time to Full-time) – <u>Facilities</u>	Laboratory Technician (Part-time) – <u>Science</u>
Event and Program Specialist – <u>Events &amp; Operations</u>	Student Support Coordinator – <u>Student Services</u>
Experiential Vehicle & Welcome Center Manager – <u>Student Services</u>	Trade Specialist - <u>Maintenance</u>
Grounds Coordinator – <u>Grounds Operations</u>	Warehouse Delivery Technician (Part-time to Full-time) – <u>Purchasing</u>

# Final Budget Expenditure Projections

	<b>2023-24</b> <b>Actual</b>	<b>2024-25</b> <b>Actual</b>	<b>2025-26</b> <b>Final</b>
Academic Salaries	\$ 30,983,057	\$ 32,716,248	\$ 34,877,678
Classified Salaries	16,925,729	18,753,621	20,904,544
Employee Benefits	28,000,702	29,267,480	32,148,009
Supplies and Materials	721,559	827,539	796,597
Other Operating Expenses	8,238,197	8,107,205	11,083,298
Capital Outlay	987,113	788,852	819,705
Other Outgo/Transfers Out	11,978,988	12,913,686	13,316,786
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b><u>\$97,835,344</u></b>	<b><u>\$103,374,631</u></b>	<b><u>\$113,946,617</u></b>

# 2025-26 Expenditure Budget



# Net Income / Fund Balance

	<b>2023-24 Actual</b>	<b>2024-25 Actual</b>	<b>2025-26 Final</b>
Net Income (Loss)	\$ 936,127	\$ 1,987,572	\$ 2,187,673
Beginning Balance	\$ 15,750,905	\$ 16,687,032	\$ 18,674,604
Prior Year Adjustments	-	-	-
Adjusted Beginning Balance	\$ 15,750,905	\$ 16,687,032	\$ 18,674,604
Ending Balance	<u>\$ 16,687,032</u>	<u>\$ 18,674,604</u>	<u>\$ 20,862,277</u>
Percentage Of Expenditures	17.06%	18.06%	18.31%

# Final Budget Reserve Assumptions

- Provides a Board Reserve of 16.67% of anticipated expenditures \$18,994,901
- 2024-25 ending balance: \$18,674,604 or 18.06%
- Projected 2025-26 net income of \$2,187,673 resulting in an ending balance of \$20,862,277 or 18.31%
- Also included in the Fund Balance Reserves are carryover amounts for encumbrances and instructional material fees.

# Major Components of Projected 2025-26 Ending Balance

Reserve for Contingency @ 16.67%	\$ 18,994,901
Set Aside for Additional Reserve/Carryover	<u>1,867,376</u>
Projected 2025-26 Ending Balance	\$ 20,862,277

# Planning for Capital Projects

## Music-Arts-Theater Complex

• Total Project Cost	\$48M
• Total District Portion	\$24M
• Less: <b>District set aside in Capital Projects</b>	<b>(\$16M)</b>
• <b>Total funding needed</b>	<b>\$8M</b>

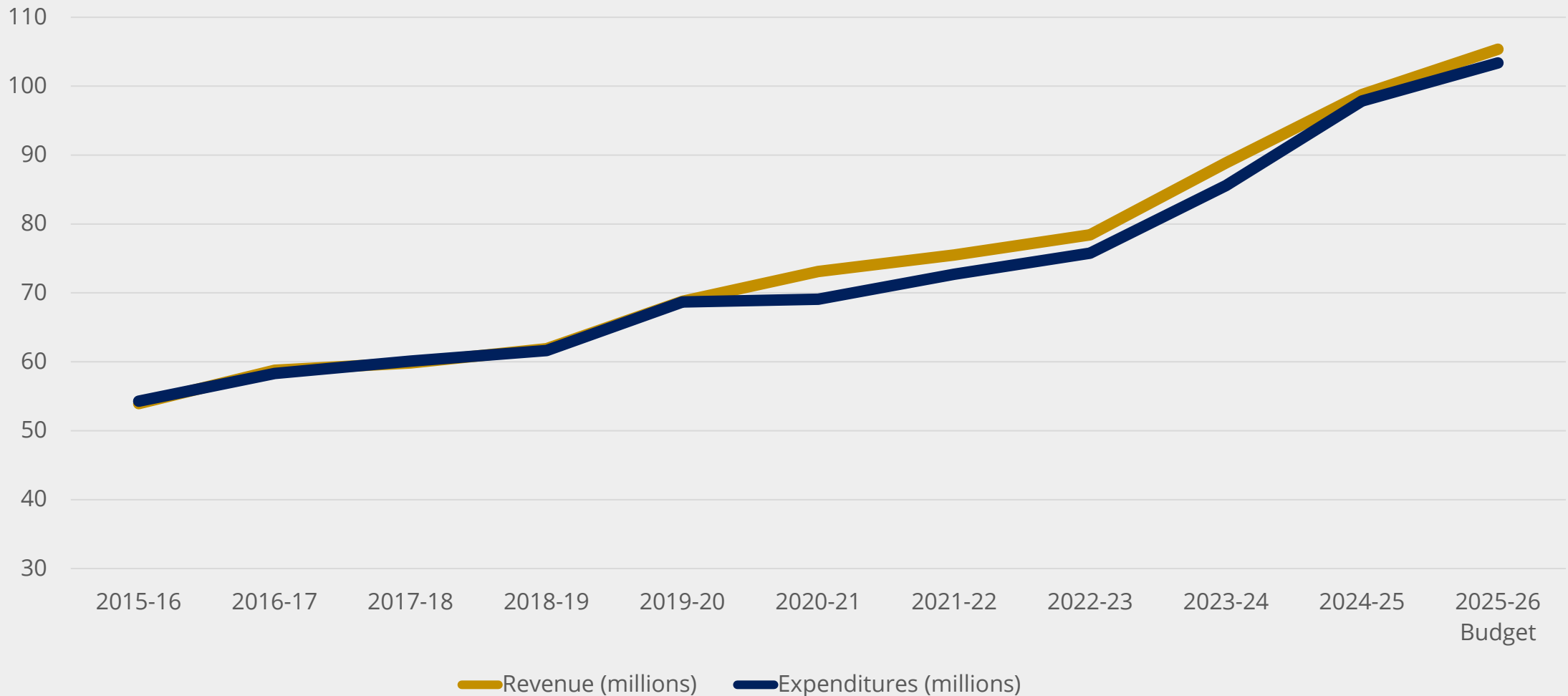
## Gym-Pool Complex\*

• Total Project Cost	\$51M
• Total District Portion	\$15M
• Less: District set aside in Capital Projects	\$0
• <b>Total funding needed</b>	<b>\$15M</b>

**Total District Funding Needed** **\$23M**

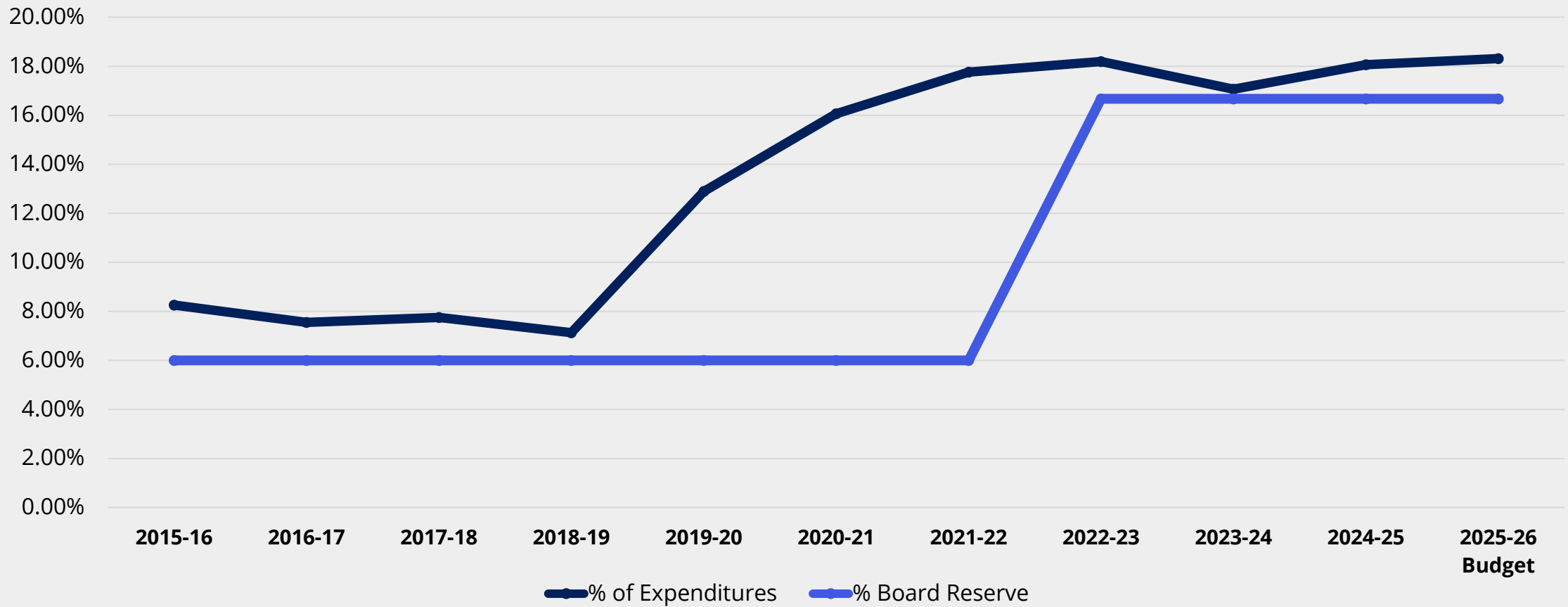
\*Contingent on approval of state funding

# Multi-Year Revenue/Expenditures



# Fund Balance Comparison

Fund balance by year





## Appendix G

### Community Partner Letters of Support



Central Valley  
**Opportunity Fund**  
A Central Valley Community Foundation Fund

February 19, 2026  
Central Valley Opportunity Fund  
725 W 18<sup>th</sup> Street  
Merced, CA 95340

**Re: Support for Merced College – Stephen Leonard Youth Center RFI Submission**

Dear City of Merced Review Committee and Council Members,

On behalf of the Central Valley Opportunity Fund, I am pleased to express our strong support for Merced College's proposal to activate and operate programming at the Stephen Leonard Youth Center in South Merced. The Central Valley Opportunity Fund prioritizes investments in youth development, with a focus on expanding educational access, strengthening career readiness, and creating clear pathways to long-term economic mobility for young people in our community.

Merced College's proposed South Merced Education and Workforce Center represents a thoughtful and forward-looking investment in youth and families. By providing on-site enrollment assistance, academic counseling, financial aid guidance, workforce training, and instructional programming, the College is positioning young people to successfully transition from education into meaningful career opportunities.

Establishing a sustained Merced College presence at Stephen Leonard Park will meaningfully expand access to higher education and workforce pathways for youth and young adults while reducing the practical and informational barriers that often limit opportunity. It will strengthen alignment between youth development, academic achievement, and workforce preparation, creating a seamless pathway from aspiration to attainment. Just as importantly, it will serve as a trusted and welcoming community hub where young people and families can access critical resources close to home.

This initiative strongly aligns with the Central Valley Opportunity Fund's commitment to supporting programs that equip youth with the guidance, skills, and structured support needed to thrive academically and economically. Merced College has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to equity, student success, and authentic community engagement. We are confident in the College's capacity to steward this space in partnership with the City and local stakeholders in a manner that is both responsive and impactful.

We respectfully encourage the City of Merced to support Merced College's proposal and to recognize the meaningful, long-term impact this investment will have on the youth and families of South Merced.

If selected, the Central Valley Opportunity Fund looks forward to continued collaboration to ensure this space serves as a dynamic, youth-centered resource that advances opportunity for the next generation.

Sincerely,  
Kim Garner  
Director of Philanthropic Initiatives  
Central Valley Opportunity Fund



February 19, 2026  
NAACP Merced County Branch  
PO BOX 1107, Merced, CA 95341

Re: Support for Merced College – Stephen Leonard Youth Center RFI Submission

Dear City of Merced Review Committee and Council Members,

On behalf of NAACP Merced County Branch, I am writing to express our strong support for Merced College's proposal to activate and operate programming at the Stephen Leonard Youth Center in South Merced. Our organization is deeply committed to strengthening opportunity, access, and community advancement within South Merced. We recognize the importance of increasing access to higher education, workforce training, and student support services in neighborhoods where barriers to educational attainment and economic mobility persist.

Merced College's proposed South Merced Education and Workforce Center represents a thoughtful and strategic investment in the community. The plan to provide on-site enrollment assistance, academic counseling, financial aid support, workforce training, and instructional programming aligns with the needs of families, youth, adult learners, and working residents in the area.

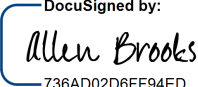
We believe that establishing a sustained Merced College presence at Stephen Leonard Park will:

- Expand access to higher education and career pathways.
- Reduce logistical and informational barriers for local residents.
- Strengthen connections between education, workforce development, and community services.
- Create a trusted and welcoming hub for families in South Merced.

Merced College has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to equity, community engagement, and student success. We are confident that the College has the experience, infrastructure, and institutional capacity to successfully operate the Youth Center in partnership with the City and community stakeholders.

We respectfully encourage the City of Merced to support Merced College's proposal and to consider the significant long-term impact this initiative will have on South Merced residents.

If selected, NAACP Merced County Branch looks forward to continued collaboration to ensure this space serves as a dynamic, community-centered resource.

Sincerely,    
736AD02D6FF94ED...

President Allen Brooks / NAACP Merced County Branch  
209-883-6226  
Mercednaacp1047@gmail.com