

UC Merced Connect: Research studies Valley problems

By UC Merced

Merced Sun-Star and Sacramento Bee, Wednesday, May 4, 2011

Undergraduate and graduate students will give presentations today about research they've conducted into some of the San Joaquin Valley's most challenging problems, including the biological effects of ultrafine particles in the air, ways to combat obesity, understanding health indicators and the challenges presented by telemedicine.

The students' research was conducted over the past year as part of the Center of Excellence on Health Disparities in Rural and Ethnic Underserved Populations. The presentations will begin at 3 p.m. in UC Merced's California Room.

Ten undergraduate students and four graduate students were selected to be part of the center, which is designed to address the critical need to train and educate people who are knowledgeable about health disparities and well-equipped to find effective solutions.

The center has four main components: There's a program for graduate students to share their knowledge with community groups; a program for undergraduates to conduct hands-on research with professors; a speaker series to engage community members about health issues; and a minor on public health and health disparities.

The center was established with a grant to UC Merced in September 2009 by the National Institutes of Health's National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities.

For more information, go to coehealth.ucmerced.edu/seminars.

Chancellor's Associates help build the future

Don and Nancy Bergman understand the important role the university plays. The Merced couple enthusiastically support education and believe that everyone has a responsibility to improve the lives of the city's youth.

The Bergmans have found a way to connect with UC Merced and stand behind its mission of education, research and public service by joining the Chancellor's Associates.

"Serving as Chancellor's Associates provides an important opportunity for us to remain involved in the university community," Nancy Bergman said. "We particularly enjoy meeting new friends and connecting with other community members who have similar interests in contributing to Merced County."

Chancellor's Associates contribute \$1,000 to UC Merced each year, and they play an integral role in shaping the campus community by providing student assistance, supporting research, recruiting top-notch faculty and strengthening community partnerships.

On April 28, associates gathered for the annual spring reception, which was the farewell Chancellor's Associates event for Chancellor Steve Kang and his wife, Mia.

"From the moment Mia and I stepped foot on campus, we were truly welcomed by all," Kang said. "We were especially fortunate to be embraced by the Chancellor's Associates, who eagerly support the university's mission and understand their support is essential to UC Merced's continued growth and success."

General Plan Update Q & A: Blueprint for Visalia's future

Visalia Times Delta Tues., May 4, 2011

The city of Visalia is gearing up for the second phase of its General Plan Update, a three-year process designed to create a blueprint for development in the community over the long term. The chairmen of the General Plan Update Review Committee, Visalia Mayor Bob Link and Visalia Planning Commission Chairman Larry Segrue, provide answers to questions on the General Plan Update's purpose and process. They will participate in a Visalia Times-Delta online chat today.

What is the general plan's purpose?

A general plan is the City's constitution—a set of policies and programs that form a blueprint for long-term development of the community. The written text and diagrams express how a community should develop, and is a key tool for influencing the quality of life. The plan is a basis for decision-making on land use, city services, and public works used by policymakers such as the Planning Commission and the City Council. All cities and counties in California are required by law to have general plans.

What is the difference between the general plan and the 2020 plan? Or are they the same thing?

This General Plan Update is the next step beyond the 2020 Plan, and extends the horizon to 2030. It is a comprehensive update of all eight General Plan Elements — the 2020 Plan was a Land Use Element update. This GP Update also accounts for new Community growth projections of over 200,000 — the 2020 Plan accounted for a build out population of 165,000 — as well as new environmental considerations such as long term water availability, air quality standards, and transportation mandates since the 2020 Plan was adopted.

What policies of the current general plan have not been implemented? Why not?

Many policies in the current plan have been implemented but it makes sense to re-affirm those that still make sense, eliminate out-of-date policies and programs that have been implemented as well as those that will be too costly for the City to undertake or are no longer meaningful.

Will there be specific policies that deal with the north side? Other parts of town?

The General Plan will consider existing policies and likely include new policies to guide improvements and new growth in specific parts of town. But, it's important to note that the General Plan is primarily a Community-wide Plan from which more detailed area or specific plans will follow. All areas of the City and surrounding lands will be evaluated during the General Plan Update; we also will be looking at the north side and other areas with infill development potential or specific needs.

How is a general plan enforced?

The General Plan is implemented through zoning and subdivision regulations and the City's capital improvement programs.

There has been a lot of talk about "smart growth." What exactly is it, and is it going to be a big part of the plan?

It's a new name for the longstanding practice of placing priority for physical development on its function for people at a human scale, and for its long-term sustainable economic and environmental characteristics.

Is Visalia working with the city of Tulare on plans? Especially along Mooney Boulevard?

The primary focus is on land within and adjacent to the City. This General Plan update will not involve any land within the City of Tulare or likely to be annexed to Tulare.

Is Visalia working with the county on unincorporated land around the city and along 99?

The city will be coordinating with the county on the General Plan update, which will include urban and use proposals for land need for long term growth that could be annexed to the City over the planning period and receive city services.