

Norco Campus COMMUNITY REPORT

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Fall 2009

Game Simulation Program Ramps Up to Meet Demand

The Norco Campus of Riverside Community College District is primed to become the number one gaming program in the region thanks to a \$2.9 million, five-year federal grant designed to serve Hispanic and low-income students.

Norco is one of the only community colleges in the area offering classes in computer game simulation.

"Our students will be able to get every certificate available in one location at an affordable price," said Anabelle Nery, Title V coordinator.

Nery said the grant was one of 29 Title V grants awarded this year in the nation, and that more than 100 community colleges and four-year colleges and universities applied.

Funds from the grant will be used to upgrade the Campus's gaming lab with the latest equipment and software and to add a game design and game programming track to the existing degree and certificate program in game art.

The goal is to expand the program from about 200 students now to 500 at the end of five years.

Nery said game design/programming is one of the fields that is still in demand and growing despite the economic downturn. Gaming attracts players across generations and demand for new, faster, and more interactive experiences is expected to fuel continued expansion and job opportunities in the industry.



Judy Perry, associate professor, Computer Information Systems, said a second component of the grant will be to integrate games, simulations, and electronic portfolios into other transfer and career tech programs such as Manufacturing, Business Administration, Accounting, and Computer Information Systems to increase student success and retention.

"These tools can be used in the classroom to teach concepts and engage students," Perry said.



New Griffin Construction Technology Classroom Dedicated

As part of the official opening of the new Industrial Technology Building, the Norco Campus dedicated a construction technology classroom in recognition of Dale and Theresa Griffin.

Theresa Griffin, an RCC alumnae, and husband, Dale Griffin, a well-known local developer, gave a major gift to the Campus through the RCCD Foundation to support development of a construction technology and management program. The new lab will allow the Campus to expand the program to include green construction programs such as solar technology installation.

In brief remarks, Theresa Griffin, who served as president of the Foundation's Board of Directors from 2006/07, spoke of the Griffin's desire to establish more training for the current construction labor force and prepare those individuals for future changes in construction technology.



New Industrial Technology Building Opens

Emerging technologies were the focus during the official opening ceremony for the new \$30.6 million, state-of-the-art Industrial Technology Building at the Norco Campus. Congressman Ken Calvert was on hand for the ceremonies as a crowd of more than 200 students, community members, faculty, and staff gathered to celebrate the opening and tour the new facilities.

Norco Campus President Brenda Davis presided over the event. She thanked the communities of Norco and Corona for their support, and noted the incredible resource the new classrooms and laboratories would be for students. In their remarks, Congressman Calvert and RCCD Chancellor Gregory W. Gray talked about the strong links between the academic programs housed in the building and the business community. The technology focus, they said, will prepare students for fast-changing industry demands and new jobs in emerging fields.

The 44,862 sq.ft. Industrial Technology Building, which was designed to be a focal point on the Campus, includes:

- A computer gaming lab for the Campus's popular certificate and degree programs in computer gaming
- An environmental sciences lab with an adjacent greenhouse to support the Campus's green technology initiative
- A computer-assisted design lab that will allow the Campus to expand its engineering and computer-assisted design programs
- Larger, "smart" classrooms to provide for greater student access
- A logistics lab, which includes computers with industry standard software used to move goods through the Southern California region.



Rep. Calvert, Dr. Davis, and Dr. Gray

The Industrial Technology Building was built with a combination of state money and funds from Measure C, a local bond measure passed by voters in 2004 for new construction and renovation projects on RCCD's campuses.

Students Help Students and Make a Difference

The beginning of the semester is crunch time on the Norco Campus of Riverside Community College District. So this year, the Campus took a novel approach and hired students to help guide other students through the process.

Monica L. Green, dean of Student Services, said the Campus used federal stimulus dollars to employ about a dozen students in the federal work-study and the summer youth employment programs to help students who were waiting in line for Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, and Counseling. The peer mentors directed students to the appropriate places or helped them get their questions answered.

"It was a great opportunity for students to be employed and enhance their professional development by helping other students," Green said.

The reviews were overwhelmingly positive.

More than 95 percent of the students surveyed said they got the information they needed to get to the next step, Green said. In some cases, more than an hour's wait to see a counselor was reduced to half an hour.

Student workers spoke before the RCCD Board of Trustees and recounted that in several instances they were able to help individuals get the classes needed to be a full-time student in the fall semester. Students, they said, were very appreciative of the peer-to-peer assistance.

Green said she plans to repeat the program two weeks before and two weeks after the spring semester begins.

15th Annual Harvest Festival for Kids and Families

Young ghosts and goblins from the surrounding community are invited to the 15th annual Harvest Festival on the Norco Campus of the Riverside Community College District on Friday, Oct. 30. The Associated Students of Norco Campus is sponsoring the event for children in kindergarten through third grade in the campus amphitheater from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Free candy, games and prizes are provided through donations from faculty, staff and the community. The Campus sent out more than 1,400 flyers in English and Spanish through the Corona-Norco Unified School District.



Camp Introduces Students to Solar, Wind Power

Every summer, junior high and high school students converge on the the Norco Campus for the Summer Innovations Institute at the Center for Applied Competitive Technologies (CACT). The sessions are made possible through a National Science Foundation grant.

This year, 20 students were grouped into beginners and advanced participants. Working with associate faculty Glen Graham and CACT staffer Jim Sutton, the students engaged in learning and hands-on activities in the areas of solar panels, windmills, and robotics. During the weeklong sessions, they used kits and other materials to achieve project goals and engaged in "friendly" competition.

Sutton spent time assisting Graham and students and was impressed by the students' intensity and enthusiasm.

"They were very excited to be there and loved all of the hands-on work," he said. "We had some very bright and motivated young people."

Norco Campus Attracts \$2.1 Million in New Grants

Riverside Community College District is on its way to a record-breaking year with public and private grants in 2009-10. Last year, the District brought in just under \$12.8 million in government and private foundation grants into its programs, the highest total in the institution's history.

Of this total, more than \$2.1 million in grants were awarded for programs at the Norco Campus. Chief among these is a \$1.3 million award from the U.S. Department of Education to provide counseling, academic, and auxiliary services to low-income, first generation high school students. The purpose of the grant is to increase the rate at which these students graduate from college.

Along with that grant, the Campus is using approximately \$800,000 in National Science Foundation funds to link regional high schools and encourage students to pursue careers in the logistics field through the Norco Campus program. The remaining grant is also from the NSF and will be used to enhance science, technology, engineering, and mathematics integration in logistics training.

Combined with previously awarded grants, this brings the total state and federal grant dollars operating at the Norco Campus to just over \$10.5 million, which includes the recent major Title V award of \$3.4 million (see Game Simulation story).

"RCCD received one of the highest number of federal grants among community colleges in our state," said Grants Director Richard Keeler, "and the Norco Campus is winning some very competitive awards."

Securing grant funds is an effective way to counter reductions in state funding stemming from California's continuing economic concerns. Keeler said. State and federal grants make it possible for faculty to continue developing new programs and expanding existing ones. In this way, the Norco Campus and its sister campuses in Riverside and Moreno Valley will be positioned to meet the demands of the future—both for students and the community.

Student Success Rates

Two of the Campus's primary focuses are increasing student success and retention rates. In fall 2008 the Norco Campus recorded an average student success rate (a passing grade in a class) of 66.5%, up from 64.9% in 2007/08. Retention rates (those students who completed a class) averaged 86.2%.