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## **High-tech Cuyamaca College Business & Technology Building greets students for new semester**

**EL CAJON** – Students back at Cuyamaca College for the start of spring semester are welcoming the campus' fourth new building in less than three years, this time a \$28 million business and technology facility housing some of the college's most popular programs.

The structure designed by San Diego architect LPA, Inc., distinctive for its wedge-shaped overhang and elevated terrace providing sweeping views of rolling hills and towering eucalyptus, will house eight programs: computer and information science (CIS), and its related computer science program; business; economics; paralegal studies; graphic design; business office technology (BOT), and real estate. With fall '09 enrollment in these programs up by nearly 20 percent from the prior year, they are among the highest in demand at the college in the East San Diego County community of Rancho San Diego.

The 44,761-square-foot business and technology building has opened none too soon, with Cuyamaca College -- like its cross-town sister campus, Grossmont College -- setting another enrollment record. Current enrollment at Cuyamaca is 9,915; at Grossmont, 20,918.

"Despite massive state budget cuts in higher education, there are 1,300 more students this spring semester than a year ago," said Dr. Cindy L Miles, chancellor of the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District to the morning crowd of about 200 at the Jan. 20 grand opening.

Ron Manzoni, Cuyamaca's interim president, likened the building's ribbon-cutting to an initial public offering of shares on the stock market.

"Welcome to the Cuyamaca exchange – we are open for business," he said. "We are excited today to be opening the newly listed business and technology building with an IPO of shares in the building's index on the Cuyamaca campus. And we are even more pleased to announce, since opening this morning, we are experiencing heavy buying at a time when other markets are volatile.

"With this opening, we are serving a total of 3,509 students in this building, taking a total of 9,740 units for spring 2010. This is a 15.7 percent increase – students certainly know a good buy when they see it!"

Bill Garrett, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District Governing Board president, hailed the placement of business and technology programs in the same facility as a "wonderful synergy," noting that the new site enables faculty and staff to take a cross-discipline approach to curriculum.

"This is the kind of thing that makes East County and the Grossmont-Cuyamaca district so very special," he said. "The students — they're going to love this building."

Lesley Wideman, president of the Cuyamaca College Association of Paralegal Students, couldn't agree more.

“This beautiful building provides the professional environment that we need and is so really important to students,” she said.

Mary Sessom, business and professional studies department coordinator, said prior to the opening event that the new building provides an environment more conducive to learning because it consolidates classroom space with computer labs. Having a more professional setting opens up the possibility of hosting legal workshops and seminars, said Sessom, an attorney and well known in East County as the mayor of Lemon Grove.

San Diego-based Carrier Johnson, Architects, completed the facility’s interior design.

“This helps students develop networks with attorneys and practicing paralegals,” Sessom said

### **A considerate storm**

Grand opening attendees packed a corridor inside the east wing of the facility, where two long rows of chairs had been set up as a last-minute precaution, in case a blustery winter storm predicted for that afternoon arrived a little earlier. But like the proverbial party guest assiduously avoiding being the first to arrive, the storm politely steered clear of the festivities, only to pelt the campus with rain and hail hours later.

Karen Lanning, chair of the Prop. R Citizens Bond Oversight Committee applauded the district and Gafcon, a construction consulting firm and the district’s manager of Prop. R construction, for continuing a “strong program run effectively and efficiently,” transforming the two campuses with 11 major facilities opening in just six years.

“Cuyamaca College has taken the opportunity here to put the greatest and latest technology to the greatest use,” she said about the business and technology building.

Funded by state and local bonds, the business and technology building is the fourth and final new facility at Cuyamaca made possible by the passage of Proposition R, the \$207 million bond measure approved by East County voters in 2002. Prop. R funds were also used to build the student center, science and technology center, and communication arts center at Cuyamaca, in addition to expanding the college’s automotive technology complex. A library expansion is targeted for completion this summer.

Greg Differding, CIS and graphic design coordinator, said the new business and technology facility provides CIS with additional labs, as well as more network servers and other computer networking equipment, expanding opportunities for students to reach more advanced certification levels. A capstone course is expected to be added to the program in which students will be provided the equipment and tools to build an entire computer network system – everything from the computers to the servers and routers.

Connie Elder, dean of learning and technology resources, said the addition of a video editing room and two group study rooms in the large computer lab expands mobile learning opportunities for students, who will now have the equipment and resources to create instructional multimedia projects, such as audio and video podcasts for posting on Apple’s iTunes University, accessed via the iTunes Web site.

Accounting instructor Chris O’Byrne said that in addition to getting away from skunks nesting underneath the portable trailers that used to house the program, students will benefit from department and faculty offices being located in one area.

Dr. Madelaine Wolfe, a division dean, said the new structure lends a sense of community for business students, who at long last have a home base.

“Students in the same major will gain relationships and friendships that will develop from having a common location,” she said. “Faculty will be able to meet informally to brainstorm and generally benefit from each other’s knowledge and experience. These are key factors that increase student success.”

Pat Newman, lead instructor of the fast-growing business office technology, or BOT, program, said the new facility provides students a dedicated area with 65 computer stations. The larger space and its confinement to one area is an improvement from the past, when the BOT lab had fewer computer stations and was located in two separate classrooms. The increased capacity for BOT is needed, Newman said, because of the influx of foreign-language students attracted to the self-paced, independent learning format of courses in data entry, Internet basics and Microsoft Office applications.

In keeping with Cuyamaca’s embracing of “green” technology, the new facility contains energy-saving features such as low-heat emission glass; reflective roofing to mitigate heat; high-efficiency heating, cooling and ventilation (HVAC) equipment; automatic lighting controls; computerized energy systems to regulate lighting and HVAC, and a computerized water-usage irrigation system.

The facility, located in Cuyamaca’s northeast sector, sits atop the highest elevation point on campus. Its location bridging the lower and upper portions of the campus is a big plus to those with mobility problems, who now have the building’s elevator and wheelchair-accessible ramps to help them get to the upper campus.

#### **Ending on a high note**

Threatening storm clouds failed to dampen celebratory spirits. A customary howl greeted the Cuyamaca Coyote, the campus mascot, as he entered the building to join in the festivities, which ended with a county proclamation declaring Jan. 20 Cuyamaca College Business and Technology Day, an unveiling of a bronze commemorative plaque, and the cutting of the ribbon – actually some faux paper currency strung together to reflect the event’s theme of the New York Stock Exchange.

Cuyamaca College is located at 900 Rancho San Diego Parkway in Rancho San Diego. For campus maps and directions, go to [www.cuyamaca.edu](http://www.cuyamaca.edu). For more information about the district, go to [www.gcccd.edu](http://www.gcccd.edu)