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Construction begins on Mesa College business, tech building



Mesa College's new Business and Technology Building is scheduled to open in January 2019. (Courtesy San Diego Community College District and Gensler)

By **Gary Warth**

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The latest building coming to Mesa College may feel more like a business complex than a classroom structure, but that's the idea.

"We did that intentionally so students will feel like they'll learn in an environment they'll work in," Mesa College President Pam Luster said about the school's new Center for Business and Technology, expected to open in January 2019.

Luster said the architectural firm Gensler, which designed the building, usually does technology spaces. This was their first educational building.

Construction on the project began months ago, but a ceremonial groundbreaking was held Wednesday at Mesa College.

The building is the final of several construction projects at the campus that were funded with bond measures Proposition S and Proposition N, which brought the San Diego Community College District \$1.5 billion.

The 57,800-square-foot Center for Business and Technology is a \$32.2 million project funded by Prop. N.

By bringing together business, computer and fashion-design classes that are now scattered around the campus, Luster said the center will create collaborative opportunities for students to work together on business ideas and product designs.

“It’s a building unlike other buildings we have on our campus,” she said. “It’s really going to mirror what happens when people go out and do start-up businesses.”

The center also will include maker spaces, a movement in education that provides students a room with 3D printers and other tools to create prototypes of products.

Hospitality courses also will be taught in the center, which conveniently will be next to the Mesa Commons building where culinary classes are taught.

“Culinary management students also need a lot of hospitality and business courses, so there’s some very nice synergy going on,” Luster said.

In anticipation of the new center, Mesa is introducing a new business entrepreneurship degree and a fashion design and merchandising program.

“We really like the idea of putting students in this creative space that’s also a business space,” Luster said. “A lot of students start their own businesses as designers or retail merchandisers, so this will be a new collaboration.”

Similar to the design of Mesa’s School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences building, the center will have an open area with glass walls where students and faculty members can meet and collaborate, Luster said.

Besides the academic benefits of the new center, Luster said its design will add to the warm, inviting feel of the campus.

“It’s got lots of curves and color and places where people feel really excited to learn,” she said.

San Diego Community College District Chancellor Constance Carroll and board President Maria Nieto Senour were among the speakers at Wednesday's ceremony, and both noted how the the campus has been transformed over the past few years because of the bond measures.

While the center is the last major construction project at Mesa, other changes still are planned on campus.

The interior of the I-300 building, once slated for demolition, is being redone and will be the new home of the school's fine arts program and art gallery.

The district also has plans to demolish the I and J buildings in the center of campus to open up the campus quad.

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