

# COLLEGE HISTORY AND VISION

## History of the College

Upon its founding nearly forty years ago, the name Cuyamaca College was selected to honor the institution's historical roots and reflect its commitment to *community* and serving students in its unique East San Diego location. Decades later, that commitment to *community* is stronger than ever. Cuyamaca College is proud to actively promote equity and social justice by employing educational strategies that build upon the strengths of its diverse socio-cultural student population. From the beginning, the college has remained committed to establishing a pathway to social and economic mobility, offering a comprehensive range of degrees and certificates that provide diverse students in East San Diego with transfer, career, and lifelong learning opportunities.

Cuyamaca College, alongside its sister campus, Grossmont College, make up the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District: A prestigious pair that have been collectively serving the community for over six decades.

Cuyamaca is not just part of the college name, it reflects the region's history and heritage. "Cuyamaca" is a word originating from the Kumeyaay language, meaning "Are you standing behind the rain clouds?" It is perhaps a reference to the location of the college at the base of Mt. Miguel, one of the highest points in San Diego County. San Diego is home to eighteen reservations, more than any other county in the country, and twelve reservations are of the Kumeyaay people. The name "Cuyamaca" is a tribute to the land upon which the campus is built, acknowledging and honoring the people who have lived in the area for thousands of years.

The Cuyamaca College campus is located in the East San Diego County community of Rancho San Diego, nestled in a suburb just outside the city of El Cajon on a verdant 165-acre site that was at one time a part of the Old Monte Vista Ranch.

The campus site was acquired by the Board of Trustees in September 1972 and the college officially opened in the fall of 1978, with 1,947 students and nine associate-degree programs. Its first president was Dr. Wallace F. Cohen.

Today, Cuyamaca serves over 12,000 students each year, and provides nearly 200 degrees and certificates that prepare students for both academic and career pathways.

## The College Over Time

Thirty-eight students made up Cuyamaca College's first graduating class in May 1979. In the early '80s, the college's second president was named, Dr. Samuel Ciccati, and the construction of facilities housing two flagship programs began – Automotive Technology and Ornamental Horticulture. During Dr. Ciccati's tenure, the college also established what is today known as "The Grand Lawn." The lawn was the first green area established on campus, completed in partnership with the California Conservation Corps. True to its community roots, faculty and staff brought tools and worked between classes and on breaks to clear the area in preparation for the Corps crew to dig trenches for irrigation so the expansive lawn could be planted and enjoyed for generations.

In the years that followed, the community of Rancho San Diego grew significantly, and by fall 1988, Cuyamaca's enrollment had reached 3,600

students. This kick started nearly twenty years of campus expansion, that included the opening of the Learning Resource Center, a 30,000- square-foot, glass-covered building with distinctive architecture that houses the college library and other educational resources.

Soon thereafter, in the 1990s, the privately-funded Heritage of the Americas Museum opened, along with a new 20.3-acre physical education facility that included a fitness center, gym, tennis and volleyball courts, soccer and ball fields, and an Olympic track. In 1994, Rancho San Diego Parkway opened, paving the way for a new main entrance with better access to the campus.

That same year, Dr. Sherrill Amador also began her tenure as the third college president and helped to facilitate the Joint Powers Agreement between the college and area water districts to open the Water Conservation Garden on the campus – a must-visit for all home gardening and landscaping enthusiasts. The opening of a one-stop Student Services Center soon followed along with the unveiling of the Child Development Center. This whimsical facility serves as both a childcare facility for the campus and community, and a learning laboratory for students in Cuyamaca's Child Development Studies program.

Dr. Geraldine M. Perri took over the reins as the fourth college president in 2002, the same year that East County residents approved Prop. R, a \$207 million bond to finance upgrades and new building construction at the District's two colleges. During this period of rapid growth, Prop. R transformed the campus into a high-tech learning magnet, bringing older facilities into the digital age and adding several new buildings: the Science and Technology Center (now the Science and Mathematics Building), the Student Center, the Business and Technology buildings, and a \$45 million Communication Arts Center. Here, a well-appointed performing arts theater built to professional acoustical standards has become a major community asset as a high-demand site for community performances, assemblies, and business forums.

In 2006, the neighboring Kumeyaay Community College partnered with Cuyamaca College to provide Kumeyaay Studies language courses, eventually growing into an accredited Kumeyaay Studies degree program in 2016. The program was the first in the state offering a degree focused on the language, culture, and history of a specific Native American group.

In 2011, Dr. Mark J. Zacovic was appointed as the fifth college president, and major construction funded by Prop R drew to a close with completion of Cuyamaca's Learning Resource Center expansion.

In November 2012, East County voters once again showed their support for the college district with the passage of Prop. V, a \$398 million bond measure, and Cuyamaca College was one of three community colleges in the state to receive the inaugural Energy and Sustainability Award from the California Community College Board of Governors.

In 2013, the college was ranked among the nation's "best of the best" veteran-friendly schools by U.S. Veterans Magazine. The college was the only community college in San Diego County to earn the distinction, and it secured its spot again in 2014 as a repeat winner of the coveted award.

Dr. Julianna Barnes, who previously served Cuyamaca College as vice president of student services, returned in October 2015 to take the helm as the sixth president. Under her leadership, the college transformed its approach to placement and teaching math, English, and ESL, and to this day placement in these critical courses is based on high school transcripts and GPA, rather than a placement exam. Cuyamaca College was the first community college in California to embrace this approach,

earning the college the prestigious Dr. John W. Rice Diversity & Equity Award, and a few years later, national recognition as the only California community college selected as a finalist for the 2019 *Examples of Excelexica* by Excelexica in Education.

That same year, the college opened one-of-a-kind water and wastewater training facilities in California, launching an innovative program in collaboration with industry designed to train the next generation of water professionals.

From its inception, the college has proudly charted a transformative and innovative course to educating students. In 2020, that approach saw the college through a global pandemic, that galvanized the college's efforts to offer its instruction and operations online for the first time in its history. To this day, using innovation and technology, the college continues to support students with counseling services, basic rights support including food and housing, and quality instruction both in person, and online.

A seasoned student services leader, Dr. Jessica Robinson was named interim president of Cuyamaca College in 2022, and a year later, the college's seventh president and the first alumna to lead the college.

In 2022, Cuyamaca College was named "Best for Vets" by The Military Times and was recognized again for its efforts to support student success in English courses. As a Champion for Excelling in Equitable Course Placement in Campus-wide English Enrollment, Cuyamaca College provides every Latinx and Black student with access to and support in transfer-level English. Cuyamaca College went on to receive this award again in 2023.

The new heart of campus, the Student Services Building, officially opened its doors in February 2023. Funded by Prop V, the 36,374 square foot student-centered building serves as the front door to campus with a welcome center, drop off circle, courtyard and houses all student services.

True to its roots, Cuyamaca College continues today to serve diverse communities with personalized attention and a commitment to equity, excellence, and social justice, and remains unwavering in its mission to meet the comprehensive educational and workforce training needs of East County.

## College Vision, Mission and Values

### Cuyamaca College Vision Statement

Equity, Excellence, and Social Justice Through Education

### Cuyamaca College Mission Statement

Cuyamaca College advances equity and social justice through student-centered and innovative approaches to education. We strive to create unique and meaningful learning experiences that build upon the strengths and socio-cultural experiences of our diverse student population and the communities we serve by providing programs that lead to certificates, degrees, transfer, career opportunities, and ultimately social and economic mobility.

### Cuyamaca College Values

- **Student-centered:** Our students are our guides. We put students first and ensure the student experience is the foundation of our work by seeking student input and being responsive to student needs. We value and honor student involvement in institutional decision-making. We are committed to supporting student completion of educational

goals and opportunities for lifelong learning while providing equitable and accessible distribution of resources.

- **Equity:** We work intentionally to honor and validate our students' and employees' lived experiences and cultural capital. Building upon the concepts of mutual trust, respect, and accountability, we work collaboratively to identify racial equity gaps in the context of intersectionality, and implement approaches and practices that create and sustain a welcoming, supportive, and race-conscious culture and environment.
- **Student Success:** We meet students where they are and work collaboratively to transform students' lives through their experiences inside and outside of the classroom. Our purpose is to foster students' continuous growth and promote economic and social mobility. We take responsibility for creating and maintaining safe, supportive, and equitable spaces where students can thrive.
- **Innovation:** We aim to break away from traditional structures and approaches in order to open up more inclusive pathways to serving and supporting our students, employees, and community. We value and promote risk-taking, interdisciplinary collaboration, and creativity among students and employees in order to continuously learn, grow, and improve our practices.
- **Excellence:** We validate and support students' and employees' strengths, socio-cultural experiences, and perpetual thirst for learning and continuous growth. We value and honor the talents of each member of our community.
- **Social Justice:** We acknowledge social injustices that impact historically marginalized communities and work together to make systemic changes to actively dismantle the racism and inequalities ingrained in the fabric of traditional institutions in order to safeguard human rights, increase access, promote participation, and further equity.
- **Community:** We proudly stand as a member of a larger collective and recognize that together we thrive. Cuyamaca College values relationships with the many diverse local communities that we serve, including indigenous, border, and international communities. We acknowledge our role within larger historical and economic contexts, including recognizing the responsibilities we have as an educational institution occupying unceded Kumeyaay land.
- **Mutual Respect:** We honor and value students' and employees' diverse talents and cultural capital by centering kindness, empathy, and compassion in every interaction. Recognizing that our words and actions impact our community, we seek continuous growth by holding each other accountable and practice equity-minded communication. We aim to create safe, supportive, and equitable spaces to ensure all voices and perspectives, especially those from historically marginalized or excluded groups, can participate in governance and authentically share their insights, experiences, and feedback without intimidation.

## Educational Objectives

In order to maximize the opportunity for the development of individuals' personal, social and intellectual qualities, the college provides:

An *instructional* program:

- **Transfer** courses equivalent to the lower division curriculum of universities and colleges for students who plan to continue their education at a baccalaureate institution.
- **Career and technical education** courses to provide technical skills and knowledge for beginning employment, retraining and advancement,

respond to local business and industry workforce development and workforce training directions.

- **General education** courses to broaden knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, to develop analytical ability and critical thinking, and to foster interest in lifelong learning in the educational, scientific and cultural fields essential for effective participation in a diverse and complex society.
- **Developmental** courses to assist inadequately prepared students to succeed in college course work.

A **student services** program:

- **Academic, vocational and personal support** services to provide students with sufficient opportunity to achieve educational success.
- **Co-curricular activities** to provide opportunities for personal development and social responsibility.

**Learning program and services:**

- Information literacy program designed to help students to find answers to questions, whether posed in the classroom or based on personal interests.
- Library collections where students have equitable access to current research information.
- Research guidance to support guided pathways initiatives.

A **workforce development** program:

- **Education and training** that contributes to continuous workforce improvement of regional business and industry and is in many cases grant funded.

## Educational Philosophy

The Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District Governing Board believes that a community college should provide experiences that will greatly broaden students' educational opportunities and strengthen society's democratic institutions. Cuyamaca College is committed to provide an education through which students may create rewarding lives, productive for themselves and for society, based on an understanding of the relationship between the past, and the challenges of the present and the future.

Cuyamaca College accepts and is committed to the following premises:

- The democratic way of life allows each individual the personal freedom and initiative consistent with his/her responsibilities to other persons.
- The college recognizes the value of our diverse and individual needs, interests, and experiences, vary greatly.
- The maximum development of the personal, social, and intellectual qualities of each individual must be encouraged.
- The development and fulfillment of the individual and the development of the community are increasingly interdependent.

An educational environment dedicated to these philosophic premises will produce individuals prepared for life and citizenship in a complex, diverse society and global economy.

All segments of the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District contribute to and participate in the development and success of our students.

## Institutional Learning Outcomes

The Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are a promise to the communities that Cuyamaca College graduates and those transferring to a four-year college or university, will be able to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities contained within all of the ILOs, based on general education and discipline-specific courses. Cuyamaca College students who earn a certificate, or have taken courses for personal educational development, will be expected to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities specified within one or more of the ILOs.

Upon reviewing results of prior years' graduating student surveys, the Student Learning Outcome and Assessment Committee (SLOAC) recommended revisions to the College's ILOs in Spring 2019. The revisions were approved by the Academic Senate in April 2019 and Cuyamaca College Council in May 2019.

1. **Communication Competency:** Students will communicate information, arguments, and opinions effectively to different audiences through various modalities, including listening, speaking, and writing.
2. **Critical Thinking Competency:** Students will analyze and evaluate qualitative and quantitative information, and synthesize findings to make decisions within various contexts.
3. **Cultural Competency:** Students will interact effectively with others, taking into account their diverse backgrounds, and work well in cross-cultural situations.
4. **Professional Responsibility:** Students will practice ethical and civil conduct in professional environments, as well as resolve conflict and build alliances.

## Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District Vision, Mission, and Value Statements

### Vision

Transforming lives through high-quality educational programs and services that meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve.

### Mission

The Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District provides high-quality, equitable learning opportunities to eastern San Diego County and beyond. We prepare students to meet changing community and workforce needs, while advancing social justice and economic mobility.

### Values

- **Diversity** – Value and invite multiple perspectives in discussions and decision making; create space for historically excluded and marginalized voices to be amplified.
- **Equity** – Ensure students who have historically been marginalized and excluded have the opportunity to succeed in higher education by calling attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes and actively working to eliminate equity gaps in student access and success. Commit to ensuring employees who have historically been marginalized and excluded have the opportunity to succeed in their profession.

- **Student-Centeredness** – Ensure the student experience is at the forefront of our decision-making in programs, services, processes, and policies, creating opportunities and clear pathways for students to reach their educational goals.
  - **Creativity and Innovation** – Value the capacity for ingenuity and originality on our campuses and within our communities.
  - **Pursuit of Excellence and Continuous Improvement** – Pursuit of Excellence and Continuous Improvement – Strive to continuously reflect, learn, and improve to ensure excellence in our programs, services, and operations.
  - **Integrity** – Commit to acting and speaking truthfully and responsibly and holding ourselves and others accountable to this standard.
  - **Mutual Respect** – Strive to build a community of inclusiveness, compassion, empathy, and learning marked by mutual respect and consideration of our differences.
4. Instructors are entitled to full freedom in academic research and publication, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties, but research and publication for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding consistent with the collectively bargained agreement between the District and the exclusive bargaining representatives.

## Academic Freedom

### Board Policy 4030

The Grossmont-Cuyamaca College District Governing Board shall promote public understanding and support of academic freedom for the implementation of the educational philosophy of Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District. Academic freedom is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the instructor in teaching, and of the student to freedom in learning. It carries with it duties correlative with rights.

1. Instructors are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching material that has no relation to their subject. The intent is not to discourage what is “controversial.” Controversy is at the heart of the free academic inquiry that this entire policy is designed to foster. Instructors should avoid persistently intruding material that has no relation to their subject.
2. Instructors are citizens, members of a learned profession, and may be viewed by those outside of the District as representatives of the District. When they speak or write as citizens outside of their roles with the District, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and instructors, they should remember that the public might judge their profession and Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the District.
3. As colleagues, faculty members have obligations that derive from the code of ethics (adopted by both the Grossmont College Academic Senate [11/16/92] and the Cuyamaca College Academic Senate [4/6/95]). Faculty members should engage in inclusive conduct and should not discriminate against or harass colleagues and students. They respect and defend the free inquiry of associates. In the exchange of criticism and ideas, faculty members show due respect for the opinions of others. Such exchanges shall focus upon the substance and content rather than personal characteristics of individuals. Uncivil, intemperate, or abusive language and behavior (such as bullying, threatening, or disparaging remarks) is contrary to a productive and safe working and educational environment. This does not contravene academic freedom and free exchange of ideas and opinions, but requires accuracy, appropriate restraint, and respect for the professional expression of others, and an awareness of the potential impact on students.