

# OPINION

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."  
FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

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## VALLEY VOICE



**Chauncey Veatch**

## Support for education a benefit for region

During my remarks in the White House Rose Garden National Teacher of the Year ceremony I spoke about the importance of education. A fundamental undertaking by our nation is the education of our children. This is particularly important in a democracy. Without an educated and literate populace, our national defense is at risk and our ability to compete in the global economy will be severely limited.

Two important tenets were part of No Child Left Behind — accountability and standards. Test scores in English reading and mathematics rose. Educators, students and parents in the Coachella Valley accomplished this through extraordinary dedication. However, at the outset the assessment of special education and English-learner students was problematic. A national trend developed that diminished the focus on science, social studies, the arts, physical education and foreign languages. A quality education includes a robust investment in these subjects as well.

We enjoy some advantages in the Coachella Valley for which thanks are in order. During these challenging times we are grateful for the support of patrons, foundations, business community, city governments, chambers of commerce, civic organizations and individual volunteers. Leaders have also emerged from CVAG and CVEP.

To illustrate we need only to look at one of the desert's gems — College of the Desert. The arts played a key role in my work with students who thus far had not enjoyed much success in school. At the opening ceremony of the COD East Valley Campus the focus was on the arts. Art scholarships were awarded to high school and middle school winners from Indio to the Salton Sea. The new West Valley COD campus in Palm Springs will provide a special focus on the arts through its curriculum and programs. John Kennedy's words chiseled on the granite walls of the Kennedy Center attest to the importance of the arts to the survival of civilization.

Since 2003 my educational service has also been with our pre-kindergarten children. Research is consistent regarding the value of pre-kindergarten programs. The McCarthy Family Child Development and Training Center is one of only 8 percent of the programs accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The program is a marvel to behold and a model for the educational practices needed in early childhood development.

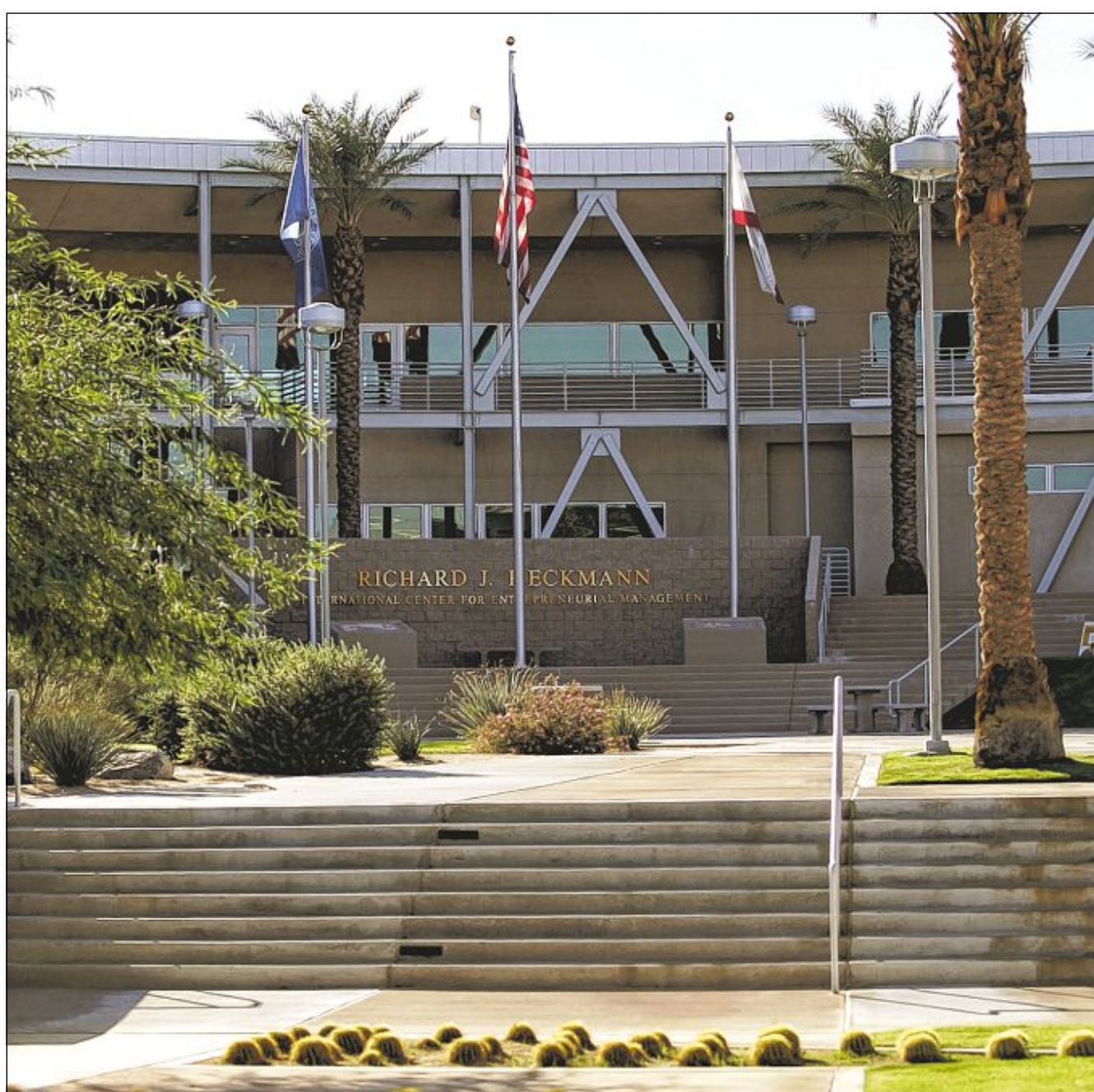
It has been an honor for me to serve our nation in the uniform of the United States Army and more recently as a classroom teacher. Shortly before his death, part time resident, former president and Five Star General Dwight Eisenhower received a visit from General Vernon Walters. He told his friend that as he reflected on his life growing up on the Kansas plains that the dreams of his childhood had been fulfilled.

Well, I will never be a president or a general. As I reflect, I realize that the dreams of my childhood have not only been realized ... they have been exceeded. You see, I got to be a teacher ... and not just anywhere, but here in the Coachella Valley.

Chauncey Veatch was the 2000-03 National Teacher of the Year

*"We've done the analysis and, as hard as it is to come to this conclusion, it's a conclusion and that is there's an insufficient number of students in the Coachella Valley to justify us creating undergraduate degree programs."*

**Timothy White**, chancellor of the University of California, Riverside



The Richard J. Heckmann International Center for Entrepreneurial Management at the UCR Palm Desert Graduate Center campus. CRYSTAL CHATHAM/DESERT SUN FILE PHOTO

## UCR decision not good news for area economy

The University of California, Riverside's decision to forgo undergraduate studies at its Palm Desert campus is a devastating blow to the valley's push to diversify its economy.

We need to give Coachella Valley students more opportunities to complete their undergraduate studies closer to home. And, we need to expand our educational partnerships with existing business — resorts, hotels and restaurants — and emerging industry — solar and geothermal energy.

We can't accomplish either goal without expanded access to university studies.

UCR has accomplished one goal: Increasing graduate level degrees in the Coachella Valley.

The Desert Sun strongly supported establishing the Palm Desert campus. A year ago, the Riverside-based university's chancellor, Timothy White, visited The Desert Sun's editorial board and explained that it was time to press the "reset button" at the campus.

It made perfect sense to us. The campus had become a glorified meeting space. Most students attend class online.

Instead of reset, this sounds like a retreat.

While continuing to push for a medical school, still not a guarantee, UCR will phase out its Executive MBA program. It lost about \$750,000 over the program's three years, though it was designed to support itself financially.

The Master's of Fine Arts program will continue because it does support itself. However, only a handful of the program's 65 students are from the desert and rarely visit the campus.

While The Desert Sun strongly supports the quest to add a medical school, we wish that UCR and Eisenhower Medical Center in Rancho Mirage would work on a unified plan rather than create medical school silos. At this point, UCR's medical school will work with Desert Region-

al Medical Center in Palm Springs while Eisenhower's residency program will work with Loma Linda University and USC.

But the use of UCR's Palm Desert campus as an actual campus of higher education is arguably more important at this moment. A lot of money and hard work was put into conceiving and constructing that campus and the university should not turn its back on local high school seniors.

The Coachella Valley sends less than 60 percent of its seniors to college within two years of high school graduation.

We need to do better.

We believe that having a strong UCR undergraduate program will lead more seniors toward a college

degree, better jobs and richer lives.

### Focus on bachelor's programs

Without UCR, our students will rely even more on Cal State San Bernardino's Palm Desert campus and its partnership with College of the Desert, a two-year school.

In the same economic climate and working with the same pool of students, CSUSB offers a range of degrees, including nursing, communications, criminal justice and business administration.

UCR, meanwhile, says it can't find success at the undergraduate level.

"We've done the analysis and, as hard as it is to come to this conclusion, it's a conclusion and that is there's an insufficient number of students in the Coachella Valley to justify us creating undergraduate degree programs," White said.

That hurts our students, and our businesses.

Leaders at the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership say they have difficulty attracting corporations and other specialized industries to the desert because of the current talent pool.

Only 22 percent of the valley's population age 25 and up has a bachelor's degree or higher. While higher than in Riverside County as a whole (19.7 percent), it's lower than in nearby Los Angeles (28.7 percent), Orange (34.8 percent) and San Diego (34.6 percent) counties.

We urge UC Riverside — particularly as the economy improves in the coming years — to work with the Coachella Valley's three school districts, College of the Desert and Cal State San Bernardino and to consider launching the appropriate bachelor's programs at the Palm Desert campus.

Our high school seniors need more, not fewer, opportunities.

## INSIDE OPINION



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