

Opinion

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CRYSTAL CHATHAM THE DESERT SUN

Students can earn an MBA at the Richard J. Heckmann International Center for Entrepreneurial Management at the UCR Palm Desert Graduate Center.

OUR VOICE

Hit the reset button at UCR Palm Desert

UC Riverside's Palm Desert Graduate Center should be a vital part of the Coachella Valley's educational community. It must be a catalyst for the development and diversification of our economy.

However, it now is primarily a great place for meetings and a base for graduate degrees in business administration and fine arts taught on the Internet. Of the roughly 75 students in the programs, fewer than 10 live in the Coachella Valley.



When Executive Director Carolyn Stark and six staff members were laid off last month, it raised concerns about the future of the \$16 million Palm Desert campus. UCR Chancellor Timothy White assured the community last week there are no plans to shut it down. Rather, he plans to "press the reset button." He called on the valley community to work with the university on a new needs assessment. The Desert Sun joins that call. "We want to be a good partner here," White told The Desert Sun editorial board on Wednesday. "But I don't want to make promises I can't keep."

Birth of a satellite center

In 1995, then-Chancellor Ray Orbach began discussions of a satellite campus and hired Terry Green as director of external relations and campus operation.

Green found the footprints of the University of California throughout the valley and its surrounding mountains — "from agriculture to energy technologies, to Native American studies and the restoration of the Salton Sea," he wrote in a 2007 report. Early considerations included a center for engineering research in Palm Springs or a university extension center in Cathedral City.

Then he met Dick Heckmann, who had recently sold Palm Desert-based US Filter to the French Conglomerate Vivendi for \$8 billion. Heckmann became a fellow with UCR's Graduate School of Management.

Eventually, Heckmann donated \$6 million toward the graduate center, creating the Richard J. Heckmann International Center for Entrepreneurial Management. Heckmann lobbied his friend, then-Gov. Gray Davis, for the \$10 million to complete the center.

Palm Desert provided the land for the UCR Graduate Center and for the satellite campus for California State University, San Bernardino. They are the only adjacent UC and CSU campuses in the state. The UCR center opened in 2005.

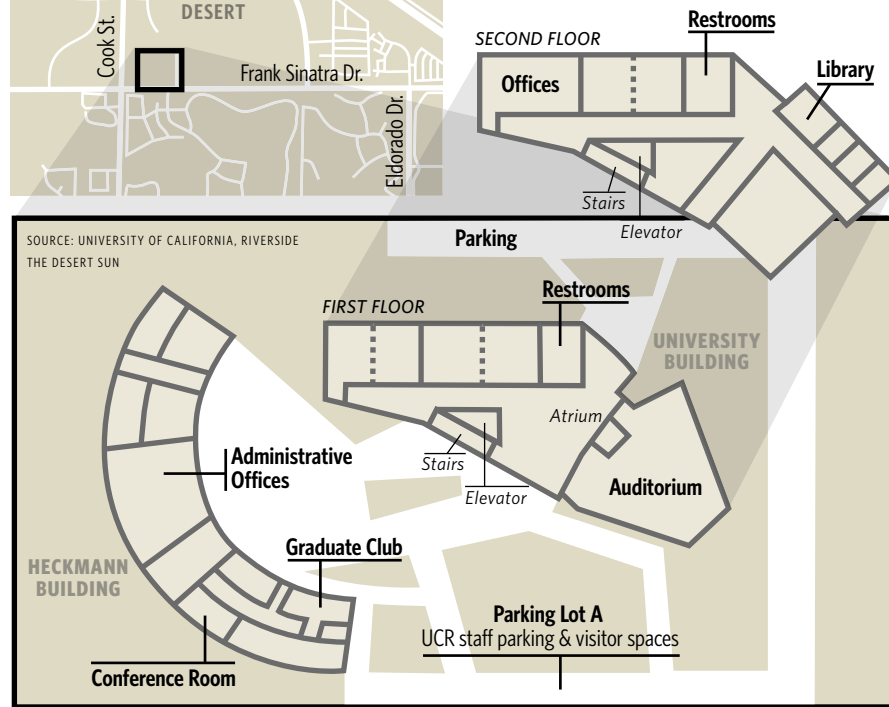
The campuses are natural extensions of College of the Desert. COD President Jerry Patton refers to the three schools together as the University of the Coachella Valley.

The 'handshake'

White became chancellor in 2008. According to White and others, when the two campuses were approved, there was a



UCR Palm Desert Graduate Center



"handshake agreement" that the Cal State campus would offer undergraduate programs and UCR would focus on advanced degrees.

That may be part of the problem, White said. Undergraduate programs are more profitable than research-oriented graduate programs. It is not clear whether that handshake is still binding. In fact, Cal State San Bernardino Palm Desert campus offers some master's degrees today.

About 1,000 students attend Cal State San Bernardino Palm Desert. We don't think offering undergraduate programs at the UCR center would hurt the Cal State campus. The educational levels and expenses are different. About 12.5 percent of high school graduates qualify for UC admission, while 35 percent can get into CSU schools. UC tuition and fees add up to \$11,100 a year while CSU costs are about \$4,000.

Offer unique programs

White believes that if the Palm Desert center can offer programs that are rarely found elsewhere, it could thrive. The graduate center is poised to do so.

For instance, the S. Roy Wilson Center for Sustainable Energy and Environmental Systems should be a strong leader in the valley's green energy revolution. The center also has an office for the California Center for Native Nations. And for nearly a century, the University of California has conducted research in agriculture and insect control in arid lands, now based at the Coachella Valley Agricultural Research Station in Coachella.

The 'Coachella Hello'

White told The Desert Sun that if it weren't for the University of California, the Coachella Valley would be an inhospitable

place to live.

In the 1920s, eye gnats were a such a problem that residents constantly waved a hand in front of their faces, which became known as the "Coachella Hello." Besides the annoyance, it was a huge health problem, causing conjunctivitis (pink eye). In 1927, the state declared an emergency at the Coachella school when 227 out of 228 students had pink eye and several lost sight in one eye.

UCR entomologist Mir Mulla led the eradication of eye gnats and mosquitos that spread encephalitis. The Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District headquarters is named in his honor.

Working with CVEP

UCR is uniquely qualified to help the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership implement the Economic Blueprint in its four targeted industry sectors: health care, energy, the creative arts and supply chain management.

With an estimated 500,000 valley residents — and the allure of the desert for those out of the region — it's hard to believe that the UCR center and Cal State Palm Desert aren't bursting at the seams.

Wesley Ahlgren, CVEP chief operating officer, says he has already started working with UCR on an academic master plan.

The Desert Sun calls on other community leaders to step forward and help Chancellor White "press the reset button" and determine how UCR can thrive in the Coachella Valley.

Inside

Alfred Slor, president of Learning in Retirement, a program for valley residents 50 and older, expresses his concerns. **B12.**

UC Riverside programs and projects in Coachella Valley and the region

UCR PALM DESERT GRADUATE CENTER ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

■ **Executive MBA Program:** Designed for experienced students who are making the transition from functional specialists in business or the professions to general management. Students earn the MBA degree in 21 months by attending classes every other weekend and through participation in intensive residential class sessions.

■ **Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts:** Unique two-year program provides writers a path toward publication and production in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, screenwriting or playwriting. Students explore multiple genres, allowing for a cross-disciplinary approach that is ideal for writers seeking the artistic latitude to move fluidly within the field. Course work includes workshops, critical studies and theory.

S. ROY WILSON CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS

Multidisciplinary effort includes UCR faculty, staff and students from UCR research centers, including the Environmental Research Institute, the Center for Environmental Research and Technology, Conservation Biology, Air Pollution Research Center, Water Resources and Management, Center for Sustainable Suburban Development, and the UCR Public Policy Initiative.

OTHER PROGRAMS INCLUDE

- UCR Center for Conservation Biology
- California Center for Native Nations
- Coachella Valley Literacy Network
- UCR Desert Lyceum
- Writers in the Schools

EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMS

- **BTSA Project:** Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment
- **EAOP:** Early Academic Outreach Program
- **GEMS:** Girls Excelling in Mathematics with Success
- **CHAMP:** Climbing Higher with the Academy for Mathematics Performance
- **MATE:** Mathematics Academy for Teaching Excellence
- **MESA:** Mathematics, Engineering and Science Achievement

PHILIP L. BOYD DEEP CANYON RESEARCH CENTER

Encompasses a major drainage system descending from the high peaks of the Santa Rosa Mountains down to Colorado Desert. Deep Canyon's tributaries begin in montane forests, flow across a rolling plateau covered with piñon-juniper woodland and chaparral, join at the head of a precipitous gorge, and plunge 1,180 feet into the canyon.

JAMES SAN JACINTO MOUNTAINS RESERVE

At Lake Fulmor near Idyllwild, this alluvial bench is at the lower end of Hall Canyon, a steep, western flank of Black Mountain. The reserve hosts a wide variety of plant communities: Sierra mixed conifer riparian forest, oak woodlands, montane chaparral, alder-willow-cedar riparian forest and dry meadows.

COACHELLA VALLEY MOSQUITO AND VECTOR CONTROL DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS IN INDIO

Named for UCR professor of entomology Mir Mulla, who developed the use of natural enemies to control pests such as the eye gnat and mosquitos that carried encephalitis.

COACHELLA VALLEY AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH STATION

More than 50 different crops are grown on 540 acres in Coachella annually for research; among the commodities under study are citrus, turfgrass, grapes, avocados, asparagus, date palms, corn, small grain, ornamental trees and shrubs, and cover crops.

THE SALTON SEA

UCR researchers have been studying the Salton Sea since the 1950s.

WEST COAST TURF

UCR Cooperative Extension horticulture specialist Victor Gibeault has worked extensively with Palm Desert-based West Coast Turf to develop grasses used in many of more than 100 valley golf courses and in baseball stadiums and the Super Bowl.

Read "A Century of Science and Service: The University of California in Coachella Valley, California" at mydesert.com/opinion

INSIDE OPINION



Rick Green

New year will bring more hard-hitting coverage. **B12**



Looking forward

Assemblyman says new laws will help local business in 2011. **B12**



Indio gang sweep

Police chief says Operation Eastern Encore sends a clear message to local thugs. **B12**