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UNIVERSITY NOW INITIATIVE

White Paper

UNIVERSITY NOW
INITIATIVE

Prepared by:
The University Now Initiative Committee

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1993, the City of Chula Vista has pursued a strategic, long-term vision to develop a University Innovation District on City-owned land to serve Chula Vista and South San Diego County and has taken actionable steps to turn this vision into a reality. The City has engaged in a number of studies related to land planning efforts and establishing a vision for the University Innovation District (UID).

City of Chula Vista's University Vision
A Binational Campus that leverages the border as a laboratory to attract students from both the U.S. and Mexico offers degrees and skills training specific for the binational region, and serves as a catalyst for growth and economic development

To continue the City's university planning efforts, in October 2022, the City of Chula Vista and Southwestern College Joint Task Force for University Center (the "Joint Task Force") considered and approved a joint partnership proposal seeking state funding for academic program planning, aligned with workforce and industry needs, with recommendations to aid in university(ies) recruitment. Most recently, the City hired Carrier Johnson + CULTURE, a world-renowned planning architecture, interiors, and landscaping design firm to conduct a feasibility study for the initial phase of UID development. The feasibility study will include conceptual renderings, a phase-development approach, and infrastructure cost estimating for an initial 20 to 30 acres.

In accordance with the action and direction of the Joint Task Force, the City of Chula Vista and Southwestern Community College District entered into an agreement for the college district to conduct an academic program planning study, emphasizing workforce and academic program mapping. The White Paper identifies academic and instructional programs that provide Southwestern College (SWC) with new or enhanced academic opportunities to support the region's current and future workforce. The White Paper also outlines findings to inform specific legislative and funding actions for the City to consider in its pursuit of a university.

The goal of the University Now Initiative (UNI) is to create a sustainable, binational higher education ecosystem that aligns academic programs with the workforce needs of this region, harnessing the unique and vibrant opportunities for joint academic opportunities with institutions in Baja California. Finally, the White Paper outlines potential next steps for the City to consider as it moves forward with university recruitment and program development.

An academic program and workforce needs assessment was conducted by the San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center (SDPIC) in collaboration with SWC and the City of Chula Vista. The assessment utilized a mixed-methods approach involving surveys, focus groups, and labor market data analysis. The findings, which became the research foundation for the broader

study, highlighted a strong demand for bachelor's degree programs in South San Diego County, particularly in fields such as business, healthcare, technology, and the arts. Employers in the region emphasized the importance of both technical skills and soft skills in the workforce, such as problem-solving, communication, and adaptability, with a growing focus on preparing for emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and automation. Additionally, the research identified 147 priority occupations that align with regional economic needs, informing the academic program planning process.

This White Paper recommends the expansion of academic programs that align with the region's workforce demands, emphasizing partnerships between SWC, the University of California, and the California State University systems. This presents an opportunity for SWC to expand its educational programs. The report also underscores the importance of establishing clear transfer pathways and addressing gaps in existing educational offerings. Furthermore, it highlights the role of community involvement, ensuring that the initiative remains accessible and responsive to the needs of local residents, while leveraging binational collaboration to foster a dynamic and inclusive higher education ecosystem. The next steps involve considering governance structures, pursuing funding strategies, and solidifying partnerships to achieve the long-term vision of a thriving university district in Chula Vista. For purposes of this report, "university district" means the academic focus, potential multi-institutional campus and its infrastructure in the City of Chula Vista University Innovation District.

Workforce-Aligned Degrees for Recruitment/Expansion Consideration
Priority workforce-aligned degrees were identified through a comprehensive process that included a workforce and academic needs assessment, input from various interest holders, consultation with university partners, and faculty research. The priority programs address binational, regional, and academic demands, with a focus on developing bilingual and bicultural competencies to meet the needs of our diverse region.

- Education
- Engineering
- Computer Science & Artificial Intelligence
- Public Administration
- Public Policy
- Conservation & Resource Studies
- Marketing Analytics
- Film & Media Arts

Recommended Priority Degree Programs for Recruitment/Expansion
While the study identified several academic programs for potential expansion, the following were prioritized based on feasibility, faculty recommendations, potential binational partnerships, and institutional capacity.

- Nursing
- Public Health
- Conservation and Resource Studies
- Film and Media Art

Recommended Potential Baccalaureate Programs at Southwestern College
In collaboration with SWC faculty, potential baccalaureate programs to address regional workforce demands, with a focus on bicultural and bilingual education, were identified.

- Transborder Building Design, Technology, and Urbanism (TBDT&U) (Bachelor of Science, Architecture)
- Music, with a concentration in Mariachi
- English, with a concentration in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
- Allied Health Administration
- Interaction Design

Academic Planning and Legislative Recommendations
These recommendations were informed by the opportunities identified in the University Now Initiative research, consideration of California Community Colleges Chancellor's Vision 2030, and the findings and recommendations of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee.

1. **Anchoring Academic Programs in Partnerships**: Prioritize, but do not limit to, the recruitment of non-competitive academic programs that are anchored in partnership between SWC and the University Partner. Anchoring new programs in partnership prevents duplication of resources and fosters collaborative growth, maximizing the region's educational impact without creating internal competition.

2. **Prioritizing Local and Binational Partnerships**: Ensure academic program expansion prioritizes, but does not exclude, partnerships and collaborations between SWC, regional public institutions of higher education, and Baja California university partners. Prioritizing partnerships with local and binational institutions enriches the learning environment through diverse perspectives and strengthens cross-border educational opportunities without limiting flexibility.

3. **Legislation Incentivizing Dual-Admission Programs**: Legislation that incentivizes dual-admission with community colleges and K-12 schools systems, and 2+2 university programs with key regional universities and K-12 school systems, particularly in high-demand fields such as healthcare. Dual-admission programs streamline the student pipeline, making higher education more accessible and responsive to regional workforce demands, particularly in critical fields like healthcare.

4. **Legislation Supporting System Collaboration for Transfer Pathways**: Legislation that supports and funds system collaboration between community colleges and the CSU and UC systems that strengthen transfer pathways for in-demand degree programs that meet regional workforce needs. Funding collaborative efforts strengthens transfer pathways, making them more efficient and aligned with workforce demands, ultimately benefiting students and regional economies.

5. **Piloting a Regional Faculty Task Force**: Consider piloting a regional faculty task force with members from SWC, UC San Diego, and San Diego State University to assess academic program readiness, faculty interest, and curriculum articulation supporting expansion of priority degree programs in South San Diego County. This ensures program development is guided by faculty expertise and regional educational needs.

6. **Legislation for Expanding Academic Programs into Underserved Areas**: Legislation that incentivizes the expansion of CSU and UC academic programming into community college service areas lacking a public university presence through co-location or satellite campuses. Expanding university presence in underserved areas through co-location or satellite campuses increases access to higher education for communities that otherwise lack such opportunities.

7. **Expedited Approval of Community College Baccalaureate Degree Programs (BDP)**: Legislation that would prioritize and expedite approval of BDP applications from community colleges that are in a service area lacking a public university presence ***or*** for a program that previously received approval through the BDP process. Fast-tracking approval of BDP applications in underserved areas ensures timely access to high-demand programs, helping address workforce gaps and providing educational equity.

Looking Ahead to the Development of the University and Innovation District
To expand the higher education ecosystem in South San Diego County, UNI has focused part of its efforts to help inform the long-term initiative of establishing a multi-institutional campus on 383 acres of land designated for this purpose in eastern Chula Vista. By examining model multi-institution campuses, the team gained insight into potential opportunities and challenges for the City to consider.

Key Considerations:

- Look into governance structures such as, but not limited to; Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs) and Special Purpose District (SPDs).
- Explore funding approaches such as formation of community financing districts, pursuing bonds, grants and private public partnerships.
- Engage with the community and binational and academic interest holders to ensure that the urban development plans meet the needs and expectations.

Moving ahead successfully requires an examination of various governance frameworks with a focus on adaptability, defining roles and responsibilities, and accountability. Moreover, it is essential to delve into funding models to establish a diversified financial foundation for the university district ensuring stability while maximizing flexibility. Involving the community in discussions and interactive sessions will aid in refining project objectives and garnering backing, ensuring alignment with the aspirations of both the educational institutions and the City of Chula Vista.

With a clear roadmap and strategic leadership, the City and partners can significantly accelerate efforts to enhance educational opportunities within the dynamic higher education ecosystem.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Chula Vista has pursued a vision to develop a University Innovation District (university district) on City-owned land since 1993. It took decades for the City to secure the land for the university district with the goals of bringing a university and creating employment opportunities for South San Diego County. Several studies and planning efforts have been conducted over the years to determine the most suitable types of higher education institutions for the site, focusing on land use and economic development. Key milestones include:

- **1993:** Adoption of the Otay Ranch General Development Plan with a university vision.
- **2001-2014:** Acquisition of 383 acres of land designated for the UID.
- **2006 Report:** University Park and Research Center Chula Vista Study: Creating a Binational Collaborative for Higher Education, Research, and Technology
- **2016:** A study by U3 Advisors outlined a multi-phase process to attract a higher education partner and potential funding sources with a continued emphasis on binational collaboration.
- **2018:** The UID Sectional Planning Area Plan and Environmental Impact Report were completed, setting the stage for partnerships with universities.
- **2023:** University Now Initiative was established through a partnership with SWC, the City of Chula Vista, and with support from the California State Legislature to build a thriving ecosystem of higher education in Chula Vista by identifying priority academic programming opportunities.
- **2024:** The City of Chula Vista engages Carrier Johnson + CULTURE to conduct a feasibility study focused on a 20 to 30 acre section in the UID. The study will include conceptual planning and infrastructure cost estimating for an initial phase of development.

The university district is entitled to accommodate four million square feet of academic space, two million square feet of UID non-residential uses, 1.6 million square feet of onsite student and faculty living, two million square feet of market-rate and affordable residential housing units, and 160 acres of beautiful open space surrounding the district. These entitlements are anticipated to support 20,000 students, 6,000 faculty/staff, and 8,000 innovation district jobs.

Chula Vista remains the only city in California with a population of more than 200,000 that does not have a public university within its boundaries, nor is there a public university anywhere else in South San Diego County.

SWC is the only public institution of higher education in South San Diego County. SWC is a two-year community college providing associate degrees for transfer, associate and career education certificates for workforce advancement, and non-credit courses for life-long learning. SWC serves as a transfer pathway to four-year universities and provides dual enrollment opportunities for high school students.

The UNI effort and this White Paper provide important information to further advance the development of a university district in Chula Vista by supporting ongoing efforts to create a sustainable, binational higher education ecosystem in South San Diego County that aligns academic programs with the workforce needs of the region.

Vision for Aligning Workforce Needs with Academic Program Planning

The vision behind the University Now Initiative (UNI) is to create a thriving, binational higher education ecosystem that supports the binational region's economic development by producing a skilled workforce aligned with industry demands. This initiative is a partnership between the City of Chula Vista and the Southwestern Community College District, with support from California State Senator Steve Padilla and California State Assemblymember David Alvarez.

The UNI Steering Committee, consisting of 50 regional leaders from higher education, business, economic development organizations, and other sectors, provided guidance for this study.



The UNI represents a significant step toward creating a sustainable higher education ecosystem that will fuel economic growth and provide long-term benefits for the residents of South San Diego County.

Focus of the Study: Academic Program Planning

The UNI is centered on academic program planning, a crucial aspect of the broader goal of establishing a thriving higher education ecosystem in the region. This focus is essential because academic program planning aligns the educational offerings of potential university partners with the current and future workforce needs of the region. The initiative aims to equip local students with the skills necessary to thrive in the regional job market by identifying and prioritizing degree programs that meet these needs.

The academic program planning study involved:

1. **Workforce and academic needs assessment:** This includes conducting a workforce needs assessment, mapping high-paying occupations to their required four-year degree programs, and assessing program accessibility through Baja California universities and through the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems.
2. **Academic program priorities:** This includes identifying new academic programs that do not currently exist, existing academic programs that can be expanded to meet workforce needs, and academic programs supported by strong transfer pathways or with the potential to be offered by SWC.
3. **University recruitment efforts:** The findings of this study will inform university recruitment strategies by identifying programs that could fill existing gaps in higher education and assess governance and finance structures needed to support university recruitment efforts.
4. **Final White Paper:** A comprehensive overview of the study's findings, including a final list of priority academic programs, legislative recommendations to support university program expansion, and a planning path forward for activating the University Innovation District site.

Workforce and Academic Needs Assessment

This research, a critical component of the academic program planning process, was conducted by the San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center (SDRPIC) in collaboration with Southwestern College and the City of Chula Vista. The research aimed to assess workforce and educational needs, identify priority academic programs, and align these efforts with the region's future growth.

SDRPIC is a notable research partner with strong connections to regional government, educational institutions, and economic development organizations. SDRPIC is committed to fostering innovation, economic development, and policy research, which positions it well to undertake studies that impact the regional workforce and education landscape. The center's collaborative approach, involving multiple stakeholders such as local businesses, educational institutions, and public sector entities, further strengthens its credibility. Moreover, its use of

comprehensive data sources, including surveys, focus groups, and labor market data, indicates a rigorous research methodology, enhancing the reliability and relevance of its findings for initiatives like the University Now Initiative (UNI).

Methodology

The methodology used by the SDRPIC in their assessment of higher education needs in South San Diego County, as detailed in the report "Planning a Thriving Ecosystem of Higher Education in South County," is comprehensive and multi-faceted. The methodology can be broadly categorized into three primary research components: surveys, focus groups, and labor market data analysis. The workforce and education needs assessment was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data. The research drew from:

1. **Focus groups with regional business leaders** to understand current and future workforce needs. SDPIC conducted three virtual focus groups with South San Diego County business leaders. These focus groups provided qualitative data on employers' hiring needs, industry trends, and suggestions for developing new academic programs. Additionally, to gather insights from the business community, SDPIC conducted a web survey of business professionals from September 2023 to October 2023, receiving responses from businesses in San Diego County, Orange County, and Baja California, Mexico. The survey was distributed through partnerships with local business organizations and a panel survey company, resulting in 212 responses.

2. **Surveys of employers** across San Diego County, Orange County, and Baja California, Mexico, were used to gather insights on hiring challenges and required skills.

3. **A representative survey of 1,000 San Diego County residents** to understand their educational aspirations and barriers. SDRPIC conducted a representative sample survey of 1,000 San Diego County residents from August 2023 to September 2023. This survey was also available online in both English and Spanish and targeted adults aged 18 and older. The respondents were selected to match the target population on age, sex, and zip code of residence to ensure that the survey results were representative of the broader population. The survey aimed to uncover educational challenges, opportunities, and interests among the residents, focusing on their satisfaction with their ability to earn a bachelor's degree, the barriers they faced, and their preferences for course modalities.

4. **Labor market data** from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other sources to assess job availability, wages, and educational requirements. SDRPIC utilized labor market information from the U.S. Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics to identify workforce needs. They analyzed data on the number of jobs, entry-level requirements, wages, and industry trends to determine the most valuable academic programs to recruit to the region. This analysis also included identifying priority occupations that pay self-sufficient entry-level wages and do not require graduate degrees or more than four years of work experience.

5. **Analysis of existing programs** at regional colleges and universities to identify gaps in the education offerings that align with workforce needs. SDRPIC employed a systematic methodology to analyze existing educational programs in the region as part of their assessment. This multi-step methodology provided a comprehensive view of the existing educational landscape and informed the recommendations for developing new programs that align with regional economic needs. Their approach can be outlined as follows:

    1. **Identification of Priority Occupations**: SDRPIC first identified 147 priority occupations critical to the regional economy. These were occupations that paid self-sufficient entry-level wages, did not require graduate degrees or more than four years of work experience, and were projected to hire at least 50 new workers annually. These occupations were used as a benchmark to assess the alignment between the regional educational offerings and the labor market needs.

    2. **Mapping Academic Programs to Occupations**: SDRPIC utilized the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) to Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) crosswalk—a tool developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)—to match academic programs with occupations based on the required skills and knowledge. This mapping was instrumental in determining which programs effectively prepare students for the identified priority occupations.

    3. **Regional Program Availability Analysis**: The center conducted an in-depth analysis of the existing academic programs offered by public universities in the region, including California State University San Marcos (Cal State San Marcos), San Diego State University (SDSU), and the University of California San Diego (UC San Diego). They assessed 242 bachelor's degree programs to determine their alignment with priority occupations. They identified gaps where no bachelor's programs existed for specific occupations and highlighted areas where new programs could be developed to meet regional needs.

    4. **Assessment of Mismatch in Education Levels**: An essential aspect of the analysis was identifying the mismatch between the level of education provided by institutions like SWC and the typical entry-level education required by many of the priority occupations. This analysis helped to identify gaps in the current educational offerings and highlighted the need for bachelor's degree programs in South San Diego County to better align with workforce requirements.

Overall Findings

The report revealed a significant demand for higher education in South San Diego County, particularly bachelor's degree programs. Key findings include:

- **40 percent of South San Diego County residents** expressed interest in enrolling in a bachelor's degree program within the next two years, compared to 27 percent in the rest of the county.

- Popular fields of interest among residents include **business, technology, healthcare, and the arts**.

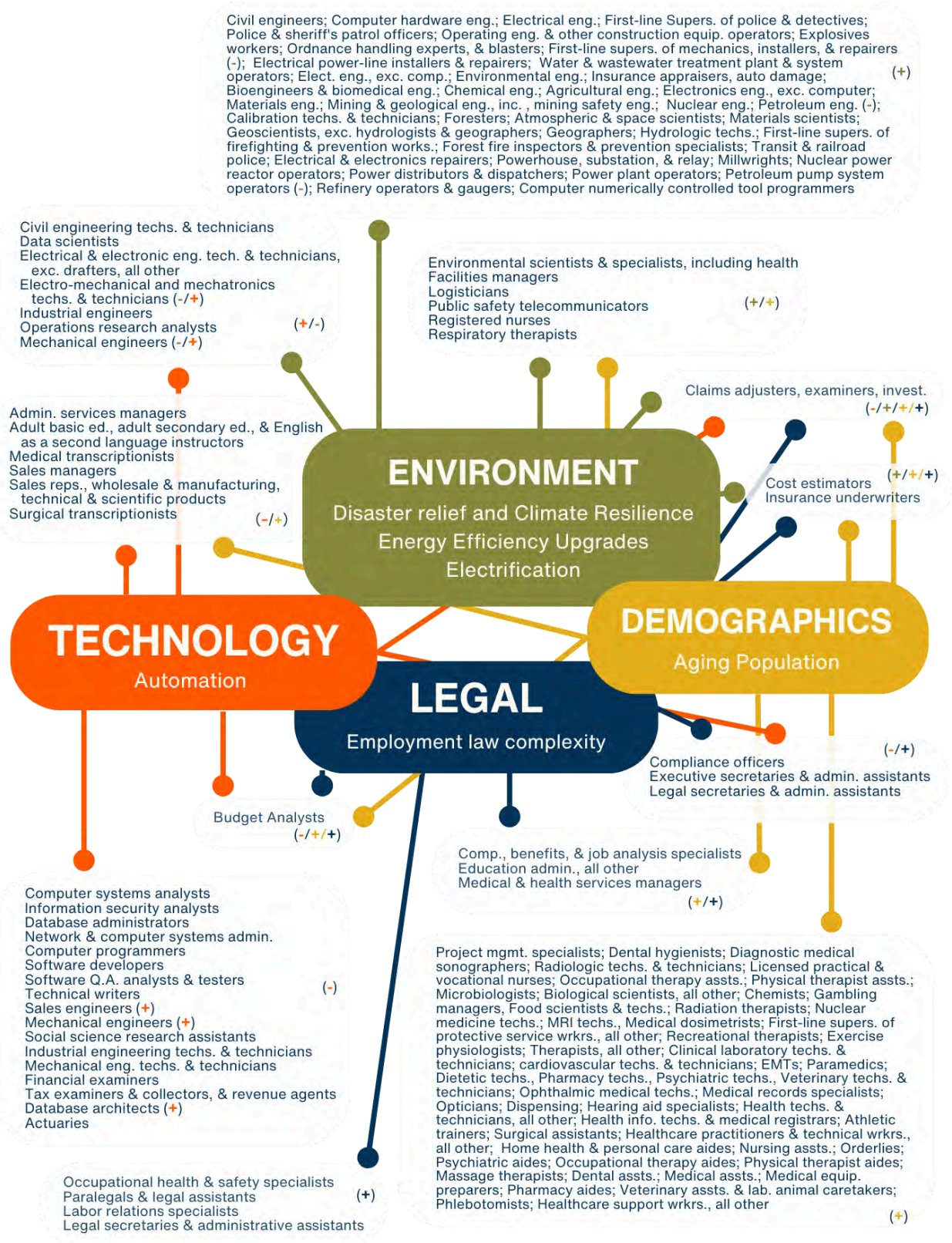
- Employers highlighted a demand for both **technical skills** and **soft skills**, such as communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. They also expressed concern about preparing the workforce for emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics.

The study identified **147 priority occupations** that align with the region's workforce needs. These occupations were selected based on criteria such as wage sustainability, accessibility to recent graduates, and sufficient job openings. Adjustments were made to reflect future trends, such as automation, climate change, and nearshoring, resulting in a future-adjusted list of priority occupations.

Priority Occupations
The priority occupations identified in the workforce needs assessment include jobs that pay self-sustaining wages, require a bachelor's degree at entry, and have substantial job openings. These occupations are critical for supporting regional economic growth and include positions in fields such as healthcare, technology, and business.

Priority Degree Programs
Based on the workforce needs, the priority academic programs recommended for development are focused on preparing students for these high-demand occupations. These programs emphasize practical skills and knowledge in areas such as computer science, nursing, business administration, and cybersecurity.

The figure on the next page demonstrates the impact of current trends on future occupations. SDRPIC used business concerns from the focus groups and a literature review to identify trends expected to impact the local job market over the next 10 years.


Civil engineers; Computer hardware eng.; Electrical eng.; First-line Supers. of police & detectives; Police & sheriff's patrol officers; Operating eng. & other construction equip. operators; Explosives workers; Ordnance handling experts, & blasters; First-line supers. of mechanics, installers, & repairers (-); Electrical power-line installers & repairers; Water & wastewater treatment plant & system operators; Elect. eng., exc. comp.; Environmental eng.; Insurance appraisers, auto damage; Bioengineers & biomedical eng.; Chemical eng.; Agricultural eng.; Electronics eng., exc. computer; Materials eng.; Mining & geological eng., inc. , mining safety eng.; Nuclear eng.; Petroleum eng. (-); Calibration techs. & technicians; Foresters; Atmospheric & space scientists; Materials scientists; Geoscientists, exc. hydrologists & geographers; Geographers; Hydrologic techs.; First-line supers. of firefighting & prevention works.; Forest fire inspectors & prevention specialists; Transit & railroad police; Electrical & electronics repairers; Powerhouse, substation, & relay; Millwrights; Nuclear power reactor operators; Power distributors & dispatchers; Power plant operators; Petroleum pump system operators (-); Refinery operators & gaugers; Computer numerically controlled tool programmers
(+)
Civil engineering techs. & technicians
Data scientists
Electrical & electronic eng. tech. & technicians, exc. drafters, all other
Electro-mechanical and mechatronics techs. & technicians (-/+)
Industrial engineers
Operations research analysts
Mechanical engineers (-/+)
(+/-)
Environmental scientists & specialists, including health
Facilities managers
Logisticians
Public safety telecommunicators
Registered nurses
Respiratory therapists
(+/+)
Claims adjusters, examiners, invest.
(-/+/+/+)
Admin. services managers
Adult basic ed., adult secondary ed., & English as a second language instructors
Medical transcriptionists
Sales managers
Sales reps., wholesale & manufacturing, technical & scientific products
Surgical transcriptionists
(-/+)
ENVIRONMENT
Disaster relief and Climate Resilience
Energy Efficiency Upgrades
Electrification
Cost estimators
Insurance underwriters
(+/+/+)
TECHNOLOGY
Automation
DEMOGRAPHICS
Aging Population
LEGAL
Employment law complexity
Compliance officers
Executive secretaries & admin. assistants
Legal secretaries & admin. assistants
(-/+)
Budget Analysts
(-/+/+)
Comp., benefits, & job analysis specialists
Education admin., all other
Medical & health services managers
(+/+)
Computer systems analysts
Information security analysts
Database administrators
Network & computer systems admin.
Computer programmers
Software developers
Software Q.A. analysts & testers
Technical writers
Sales engineers (+)
Mechanical engineers (+)
Social science research assistants
Industrial engineering techs. & technicians
Mechanical eng. techs. & technicians
Financial examiners
Tax examiners & collectors, & revenue agents
Database architects (+)
Actuaries
(-)
Project mgmt. specialists; Dental hygienists; Diagnostic medical sonographers; Radiologic techs. & technicians; Licensed practical & vocational nurses; Occupational therapy assts.; Physical therapist assts.; Microbiologists; Biological scientists, all other; Chemists; Gambling managers, Food scientists & techs.; Radiation therapists; Nuclear medicine techs.; MRI techs., Medical dosimetrists; First-line supers. of protective service wrkrs., all other; Recreational therapists; Exercise physiologists; Therapists, all other; Clinical laboratory techs. & technicians; cardiovascular techs. & technicians; EMTs; Paramedics; Dietetic techs., Pharmacy techs., Psychiatric techs., Veterinary techs. & technicians; Ophthalmic medical techs.; Medical records specialists; Opticians; Dispensing; Hearing aid specialists; Health techs. & technicians, all other; Health info. techs. & medical registrars; Athletic trainers; Surgical assistants; Healthcare practitioners & technical wrkrs., all other; Home health & personal care aides; Nursing assts.; Orderlies; Psychiatric aides; Occupational therapy aides; Physical therapist aides; Massage therapists; Dental assts.; Medical assts.; Medical equip. preparers; Pharmacy aides; Veterinary assts. & lab. animal caretakers; Phlebotomists; Healthcare support wrkrs., all other
(+)
Occupational health & safety specialists
Paralegals & legal assistants
Labor relations specialists
Legal secretaries & administrative assistants
(+)

REFINING OF RESEARCH RESULTS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

University Partner Consultation
In addressing the issue of degree programs identified as unavailable in SDRPIC's report, it's important to note that some of these discrepancies were due to differences in how academic programs are classified using the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes versus the specific names of the degree programs at the universities. The CIP code system is a standardized method used by educational institutions to categorize academic programs based on their content, but the actual naming of these programs by universities may not always directly reflect the CIP classification.

For example, a university might offer a program that covers the necessary skills and knowledge for a particular occupation, but the program's title might not directly match the CIP code associated with that occupation. This can lead to instances where a program appears to be unavailable according to the CIP code analysis, even though the university does, in fact, offer relevant coursework or degrees. SDRPIC's analysis took this into account by cross-referencing CIP codes with the titles and descriptions of degree programs at local universities, ensuring that recommendations were based on a thorough understanding of what is truly available to students.

By acknowledging these nuances in program classification and naming, we were able to refine their recommendations, ensuring that they accurately reflected the educational landscape. This careful consideration helped to avoid unnecessary duplication of programs and instead focused on areas where genuine gaps existed, thereby optimizing the alignment between local educational offerings and the region's workforce needs.

By engaging in regular consultations with key academic partners, including Cal State San Marcos, SDSU, and UC San Diego, we were able to gain deep insights into existing academic offerings and identify opportunities for program enhancement. Through these strategic partnerships, a set of recommendations were created that are both academically rigorous and practically viable, laying the groundwork for a thriving ecosystem of higher education in South San Diego County.

Listening Sessions
The listening sessions for the Workforce and Academic Programs Needs Assessment report, held with various community groups, highlighted a mix of common themes and unique concerns relevant to each group. The sessions with youth, bilingual residents, community members, health care and education industries, business leaders, and a joint session with the Chula Vista City Council and SWC Governing Board provided insight into the community's priorities, concerns, and hopes for the future of education and workforce development in the region. Here

is a summary of the themes that emerged across all listening sessions, followed by a highlight of themes unique to each group.

Common Themes Across All Listening Sessions

1. **Opportunities for Growth and Development**: Participants across all sessions expressed excitement about the potential growth and development that new educational programs and workforce initiatives would bring to the region. There was widespread enthusiasm about increased job opportunities, accessible education, and the overall economic development that a new university or expanded academic programs could foster.

2. **Accessibility and Affordability**: Every group echoed concerns about making education accessible and affordable. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that local residents, especially those from marginalized or underrepresented communities, have access to new opportunities. The affordability of tuition and housing was a recurring theme, with many fearing that without careful planning, these initiatives might exclude the populations they are meant to serve.

3. **Need for Community Involvement and Buy-In**: Many participants emphasized the importance of community involvement in the planning and implementation of these initiatives. Ensuring that the voices of local residents, businesses, and other stakeholders were heard and incorporated into decision-making was seen as vital to the success of the programs.

4. **Concerns About Infrastructure and Support Systems**: Across all sessions, participants raised concerns about the supporting infrastructure required to make these initiatives successful. This included concerns about transportation, housing, clinical placements for healthcare students, and the availability of necessary support services for students.

Unique Themes from Specific Groups

1. **Youth**: Youth participants were excited about the prospect of local opportunities for higher education, which would reduce the need to travel long distances for college. They also focused on the importance of programs that aligned with their career interests, including STEM, arts, and sports. Concerns about the environment, including potential damage to ecosystems, also stood out.

2. **Bilingual Residents**: Bilingual residents highlighted the need for multilingual education and communication to ensure that all community members are aware of the new opportunities. They stressed the importance of outreach to underrepresented groups, such as veterans and those in smaller communities, to ensure that no one is left out of the process.

3. **Healthcare Industry**: Healthcare industry participants were particularly focused on the need to expand healthcare education and training opportunities in the region. Concerns about clinical placements, faculty buy-in, and ensuring that healthcare programs are aligned with workforce needs were prominent. They also emphasized the importance of developing local talent to meet the growing demands of the healthcare sector.

4. **Education Industry**: Education industry participants stressed the importance of aligning educational programs with workforce needs and ensuring that programs are designed to serve the community effectively. They raised concerns about the complexity of articulating courses and programs across different institutions and the need for a clear and consistent strategy moving forward.

5. **Business Leaders**: Business leaders emphasized the need for strategic partnerships and ensuring that educational programs are aligned with the needs of local industries. They were particularly concerned with ensuring that new programs are designed with future workforce demands in mind, especially in fields such as green technology, aviation, and agriculture.

6. **Joint Session with Chula Vista City Council and Southwestern College Governing Board**: This session focused on the broader strategic implications of the initiatives, including the need for binational involvement and opportunities for cross-border collaboration with Baja California. Participants also emphasized the importance of transfer agreements and ensuring that students have clear pathways to higher education.

FACULTY RESEARCH

As part of the UNI's Academic Program Planning Study, SWC and UC San Diego faculty produced separate reports that identified academic degree programs for expansion and opportunities for transfer partnerships. Faculty input is essential for understanding both the **current demands** of students and the **regional workforce**, as well as the **institutional capabilities** to deliver high-quality academic programs. The following section highlights the program priorities, opportunities, and challenges that were identified in both the SWC Faculty Research Report and the ***draft*** UC San Diego Faculty Research Report.[1]

Prioritized Academic Degree Programs for Partnership

1. **Public Health**: Both faculty papers strongly support **public health** as a high-priority area for partnership. SWC's **Public Health Associate Degree** aligns well with UC San Diego's **Public Health Bachelor's Program**, making this a seamless transfer opportunity. This field addresses growing workforce needs in healthcare and community health.

2. **Health Sciences**: Expanding partnerships in **health sciences** is a key focus. SWC offers an Associate in Arts – Transfer Degree in Preparation for Allied Health Programs, which could align with UC San Diego's expertise in **health sciences** and any development of a general Health Sciences degree. Both institutions are interested in exploring stackable health-related certificates to further enhance healthcare education.

3. **STEM Fields (Engineering and Computer Science)**: **STEM degree programs**, particularly in **engineering** and **computer science**, are identified as priorities due to their high demand in the job market. SWC's associate degrees in **engineering** and **computer information systems** provide solid foundations for transfer to UC San Diego's programs in **structural engineering**, **bioengineering**, and **data science**.

4. **Education**: Both papers highlight the need for partnerships in **education**, particularly in **teacher preparation** programs. SWC faculty emphasized the demand for degrees in **early childhood education** and K-12 **teacher credential programs** to address the regional teacher shortage. UC San Diego offers pathways that could be leveraged for transfer and certification in teaching.

Opportunities Identified

1. **Streamlined Transfer Pathways**: Both institutions emphasize the need to establish clear **2+2 transfer pathways**, particularly in public health, health sciences, and STEM.

[1] Although UC San Diego and SWC faculty conducted specific studies, San Diego State University and others actively participated in the UNI Committee and provided consultation throughout.

This would allow students to complete their associate degrees at SWC and seamlessly transfer to UC San Diego to complete their bachelor's degrees.

2. **Workforce Alignment**: Faculty from both institutions prioritize degrees that align with regional job market needs, particularly in healthcare, STEM, and education. Expanding these programs would help address critical labor shortages in the region, especially in **bilingual education** and **STEM-based industries**.

3. **Shared Use of Facilities**: Both institutions see the potential for **joint use of facilities**, particularly in healthcare and STEM fields. SWC's health and STEM labs could be leveraged by UC San Diego faculty and students, reducing the need for duplicative infrastructure.

Challenges to Address

1. **Faculty and Resource Constraints**: Both institutions face challenges related to **faculty recruitment** and **resource allocation** for expanding programs. Recruiting qualified faculty, particularly in healthcare and engineering, will be essential to supporting the scalability of these programs.

2. **Scalability of Programs**: There are concerns about the feasibility of scaling up certain resource-intensive programs like bioengineering and healthcare. Both institutions recognize the need for careful planning to ensure sustainability, especially for programs requiring specialized facilities and faculty expertise.

3. **Transportation and Accessibility**: Both institutional faculty recognized the physical distance between a student's community and a university not only creates logistical challenges but also becomes a significant barrier to educational access, particularly for students who lack reliable transportation or have work and family commitments. This is especially true in regions like South San Diego County, where students are more likely to benefit from having educational programs located within their community. By bringing programs closer to students, universities can increase accessibility and help support student success.

In conclusion, both studies demonstrate a clear alignment in **prioritizing public health**, **STEM**, and **education** degree programs, with an emphasis on **transfer pathways** and **workforce alignment**. Addressing challenges like resource constraints and transportation will be key to the success of these partnerships, with faculty input serving as a guiding force in decision-making.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines academic programs identified through a comprehensive process informed by a workforce and academic needs assessment, broad input from various interest holders, consultation with university partners, and faculty research findings. The priority programs reflect both binational, regional and academic demands, emphasizing developing bilingual and bicultural competencies to meet the needs of our diverse cross-border region. The programs listed include the academic area, specific degree names from partnering universities and whether similar programs are available regionally. By aligning academic offerings with both community needs and institutional capabilities, these considerations aim to strengthen educational and professional opportunities for students while supporting regional workforce development.[2]

Health Sciences
Nursing (SDSU)
Nursing (UABC)
Healthcare Administration (no local program)

Public Health
Public Health (UC San Diego & SDSU)

Education
Liberal Studies, Emphasis on Education (SDSU)
Education Science (UC San Diego)
Education (UABC)

Engineering
Mechanical, Aerospace, Nano, Structural (UC San Diego)
Aerospace, Civil Construction Environmental, Mechanical (SDSU)
Mechanical, Industrial, Renewable Energy (CETYS)
Bioengineer, Civil, Electrical, Nanotechnology (UABC)
Agricultural Bioresource Engineering (no local program)

Computer Science & Artificial Intelligence
Applied Arts and Sciences (SDSU)
Computer Science, Specialization in Artificial Technology (UC San Diego)
Cognitive Science with Specialization in Machine Learning Neural Computation (UC San Diego)
Digital Graphic Design (CETYS)

[2] Programs were not listed for consideration if they did not have a viable transfer pathway option from SWC.

Public Administration & Public Policy
Public Administration (SDSU)
Political Science (SDSU)
Political Science (UC San Diego)
Public Administration and Political Science (UABC)

Conservation and Resource Studies
Fire Sciences (no local program)
Environmental Design (SDSU)
Environmental Sciences (UABC)
Plant Sciences/Plant Biology (no local program)

Marketing Analytics
Marketing (SDSU)
Marketing (UABC)

Film & Media Arts
Television Film and New Media (SDSU)
Cinematic Arts (UC San Diego)

Potential Baccalaureate Programs at Southwestern College
Transborder Building Design, Technology, and Urbanism (TBDT&U) (Bachelor of Science, Architecture)
Music, with a concentration in Mariachi
English, with a concentration in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
Allied Health Administration
Interaction Design

Academic Program Priority Recommendations

This section focuses on selecting academic programs for prioritized expansion and outreach. The identified programs were chosen based on feasibility, informed by ongoing discussions, faculty recommendations, potential cross-border partnerships, and institutional capacity.

Nursing
California's healthcare sector faces a critical shortage of nurses, particularly in underserved areas such as South San Diego County. The partnership between SWC and SDSU, which allows students to transition from an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) at SWC to a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) at SDSU, is a model that addresses both local educational access and workforce shortages. Expanding this partnership into South San Diego County would directly meet the growing demand for highly trained nurses in the region's healthcare systems.

The California Legislature has recognized the need to grow the nursing workforce through key legislative bills (footnote to info on bills) introduced in the 2024-2025 legislative session. The

legislature has taken action to invest in these efforts with the inclusion of $60 million in the 2024-2025 state budget dedicated to expanding nursing programs and partnerships between community colleges and universities. These funds can be allocated to develop additional resources, expand facilities, and increase faculty capacity to accommodate a larger cohort of nursing students.

SWC has a robust nursing program with the infrastructure needed to support this expansion, including clinical partnerships with local hospitals and healthcare providers. Coupled with SDSU's experience in delivering a rigorous BSN curriculum, this collaboration has already proven successful in creating a seamless educational pathway for nursing students.

Expanding the SDSU nursing program into South San Diego County, in collaboration with SWC, is a strategic investment that addresses critical workforce shortages, aligns with SB 895, and takes advantage of state funding. This expansion will ensure that South San Diego County residents have greater access to nursing education and career advancement while also meeting the region's growing healthcare needs.

Another opportunity for academic program expansion exists with the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC), a current partner of SWC. UABC offers a Bachelor's in Nursing, and this partnership presents a unique chance to foster binational education. Through cross-border collaboration, students can benefit from diverse learning experiences, gaining insights into healthcare practices in both the U.S. and Mexico, enhancing their cultural competency and preparing them for careers in an increasingly globalized field.

Public Health

Due to its proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border and diverse population, South San Diego County has unique public health challenges and research opportunities. Expanding UC San Diego's Public Health degree program would address a significant regional need for locally trained public health professionals. By making the program available locally, UC San Diego would significantly reduce barriers to education for South San Diego County students.

Many students in this region face challenges in accessing higher education due to geographic, financial, and time constraints. Requiring students to travel to UC San Diego's La Jolla campus—a journey that can take over an hour each way by car or public transportation—can be a substantial barrier for non-traditional students, working adults, and those with family commitments. By offering upper-division courses locally, UC San Diego would ensure that students from South San Diego County can complete their Public Health degree without needing to commute long distances, thus fostering greater educational equity.

The collaboration between UC San Diego and SWC can be built upon existing institutional strengths. SWC offers a range of foundational courses, particularly in Biology, Chemistry, and Social and Behavioral Sciences, that align with the lower-division requirements for UC San Diego's Public Health program.

Expanding UC San Diego's Public Health program through co-location on SWC's University Center or at the City of Chula Vista's University location creates a pipeline of qualified public health professionals who are well-versed in the specific health challenges of the cross-border region. These professionals would be prepared to work in local public health agencies, hospitals, and community organizations, contributing directly to improving healthcare outcomes in the region.

Conservation and Resource Studies
The expansion of degree programs in **Fire Science and Environmental Design** into South San Diego County—through partnerships between SWC and local universities such as SDSU and Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC) —is essential to meeting both regional workforce needs and the educational aspirations of students in the area.

South San Diego County faces significant risks related to wildfires, particularly given its proximity to large swaths of undeveloped land and high-density populations. The demand for trained fire safety and management professionals is increasing, particularly in regions prone to wildfires. SWC offers an **Associate of Science (AS) in Fire Science Technology**, which provides foundational knowledge in fire prevention, emergency response, hazardous materials management, and firefighting techniques.

However, there is no local baccalaureate program in Fire Sciences. Expanding this degree into a four-year program or creating a clear pathway to an advanced degree at a partner university would ensure that local students can continue their education without the need to relocate. SWC already provides a comprehensive Fire Science program, including certification for **State Fire Training Firefighter** . The program is robust, with specialized coursework such as **Fire Service Hydraulics**, **Building Construction for Fire Protection**, and **Hazardous Materials**. Co-locating a four-year degree would allow local students to continue their education seamlessly, fulfilling regional firefighting workforce needs.

The growing emphasis on sustainable urban development and the need for resilient infrastructure in the face of climate change makes **Environmental Design and Sciences** a crucial field, especially in urban regions like San Diego. The development of green spaces, sustainable buildings, and eco-friendly city planning is becoming increasingly important.

SWC offers an **Associate of Science in Landscape Architecture** and an **Associate of Science in Environmental Science**, which serves as an excellent transfer pathway for students interested in Environmental Design or Environmental Sciences. These degrees align with SDSU's **Environmental Design** program and UABC's Environmental Science program. With existing coursework in **Landscape Architecture** and resources such as the **South Bay Botanic Garden**, SWC has the infrastructure to support an expanded degree in Environmental Design and Sciences. Partnering with SDSU and UABC to offer these programs in South San Diego County would enable students to complete their education locally and fill growing cross-border regional demand for professionals skilled in environmental and urban planning.

Film and Media Art

Expanding either SDSU's Television, Film, and New Media program or UC San Diego's Cinematic Arts program into South San Diego County via a partnership with SWC presents a unique opportunity to address the growing demand for media production professionals. Both programs offer pathways to prestigious degrees in film and media and co-locating one of these programs in South San Diego County would provide local students with easier access to advanced education without the burden of commuting long distances.

A Film and Media Arts degree option is uniquely suited to the California-Mexico border region, leveraging the area's dynamic cultural landscape and proximity to a vibrant binational community. The region is home to an expanding film industry, with productions taking place on both sides of the border, offering local internships, hands-on learning, and collaboration with professionals. The border region, marked by its confluence of diverse narratives, offers rich opportunities for students to explore themes of identity, migration, and cross-cultural exchange—topics that resonate deeply in contemporary media and film production. This geographical context provides a living laboratory for storytelling, where students can engage with bilingual and bicultural experiences, creating content that reflects the diverse voices of the borderlands.

Similarly, UC San Diego's Cinematic Arts program blends theory, history, and creative practice, offering students a multidisciplinary approach to film. Given the rich cultural narratives and cross-border dynamics in San Diego, extending UC San Diego's Cinematic Arts program would enable students to explore diverse storytelling opportunities, reflecting the region's unique cultural environment.

SWC's AS degree in Film, Television, and Media Arts aligns well with both SDSU's and UC San Diego's programs, serving as a strong transfer pathway. SWC's infrastructure, which includes courses in media production and editing, makes it well-positioned to support either program's expansion into the region. Co-locating one of these bachelor's degree programs at SWC or the City of Chula Vista's university district would provide students with access to advanced industry-standard facilities, allowing them to complete their studies locally without the need to commute to La Jolla or SDSU's main campus.

Baccalaureate Programs at Southwestern College

Many students in South San Diego County face barriers to completing their bachelor's degrees due to the high costs associated with transferring to private institutions or commuting to universities located farther away, such as UC San Diego or SDSU. Providing baccalaureate programs at SWC would make higher education more accessible, especially for first-generation college students and those from underrepresented communities. This expansion would help close educational attainment gaps and support workforce development within the region.

This section explores potential baccalaureate programs that could be offered at SWC to meet regional workforce demands, with an emphasis on bicultural and bilingual programming. Any program implemented would require approval from the California Community College Baccalaureate Degree Pilot (BDP). Additionally, SWC should partner with institutions like

National University to develop faculty through doctoral programs, ensuring qualified instructors are available to teach the upper-division coursework required for these baccalaureate offerings. These efforts aim to strengthen both the academic and professional prospects of students in the community.

The San Diego region has critical shortages in areas such as architecture, allied health, music education, teaching English as a second language (TESOL), and interaction design. By offering four-year degrees in these fields, SWC would provide students with the qualifications needed to meet local demand while simultaneously supporting economic mobility through affordable education pathways.

SWC is uniquely positioned to offer programs that are culturally and regionally relevant, such as Music with a concentration in Mariachi and Transborder Building Design, Technology, and Urbanism. These programs would cater to the bicultural and bilingual demographics of the region, providing training that resonates with local industries and community needs. Currently, there is no other institution in California offering a degree focused specifically on Mariachi music, making SWC a leader in this field.

Transborder Building Design, Technology, and Urbanism (TBDT&U) (Bachelor of Science, Architecture)
Architectural Engineering is a priority occupation in regions undergoing significant urban development, such as San Diego and the surrounding areas. Workforce demand for architects in the border region is substantial due to continuous infrastructure growth. Currently, only two private institutions in San Diego offer architectural baccalaureate degrees. The estimated cost of tuition for transfer students ranges between $90,000 and $111,400. The TBDT&U program would afford students economic mobility by allowing them to attain a local four-year degree without drowning in student loan debt. Offering a TBDT&U baccalaureate degree in architecture at SWC would address the unique needs of the region, particularly with a focus on transborder building design and urbanism, which would be locally relevant and distinct.

SWC already has a robust architecture program at the associate level, with strong ties to engineering and other related fields. The existing curriculum provides the foundational coursework needed for a baccalaureate degree. Additionally, the college has the facilities and technological infrastructure required to support advanced architectural studies, including labs, drafting studios, and design technology. Faculty members in the architecture program have demonstrated expertise in delivering high-quality education and are well-prepared to offer upper-division courses. The architecture faculty is engaged in ongoing efforts to align the program with regional workforce needs and is supported by partnerships with local institutions such as UC San Diego and Cal Poly Pomona.

Music, with a concentration in Mariachi
Mariachi music is a culturally significant art form in the San Diego and Baja California regions, and there is no other community college or university in California that offers a degree specifically focused on Mariachi. Given the vibrant cultural heritage of the region, a degree program in Mariachi would not only preserve but also promote this important musical tradition.

Many of the Mariachi students at SWC face transfer barriers due to the lack of any Mariachi baccalaureate program in the state. These students are forced to take on multiple part-time jobs teaching mariachi music vs. a full-time job due to the lack of a bachelor's degree. Music education was identified as a priority occupation requiring a bachelor's degree in our region.

SWC was the country's first college to offer a degree in Mariachi music (A.A., Music with a specialization in Mariachi) and is renowned for its program and faculty. The infrastructure, such as music labs, rehearsal spaces, and performance venues, is already in place, providing a solid foundation for the expansion into a baccalaureate program with a concentration in Mariachi.

Faculty members have shown strong interest in expanding the music program, particularly in Mariachi. The expertise of the music faculty, combined with the unique cultural relevance of Mariachi in the region, positions SWC to successfully develop this concentration. Faculty have noted that only minor curriculum adjustments would be needed to introduce upper-division Mariachi courses.

English, with a concentration in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

The demand for TESOL professionals is high, particularly in cross-border regions where there is a large population of English language learners. A baccalaureate program focused on TESOL would serve the needs of the bilingual and binational communities, helping to address local educational and workforce needs.

SWC already offers a range of courses in English and linguistics, many of which align with the needs of a TESOL concentration. The college has the necessary resources, including language labs and a strong faculty foundation, to support a baccalaureate program. Additionally, there is significant potential to partner with local educational institutions and community organizations to provide practicum opportunities for TESOL students.

The English department's faculty is highly qualified and has expressed interest in developing a TESOL concentration. Offering a bachelor's degree in TESOL would be a natural extension of the current English curriculum. Faculty have identified key upper-division courses that would need to be developed, such as Introduction to Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition, and TESOL Methods.

Allied Health Administration

The establishment of a **Baccalaureate program in Allied Health Administration** at SWC would provide a critical pathway for advancing the careers of students in the region's robust allied health programs. Health occupations were identified as priority occupations in the region (cite SDRPIC report). Currently, SWC offers associate degrees and certificates in high-demand fields such as **Dental Hygiene, Medical Laboratory Technology, Paramedicine, Medical Assisting,** and **Surgical Technology**. These programs successfully train professionals for entry-level and technical roles, but there is a growing need for leaders and administrators in healthcare facilities.

The region is rapidly evolving into a major hub for healthcare services, particularly due to its prominence in medical tourism and the growing demand for healthcare services on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. This binational area faces unique challenges and opportunities that require a skilled, bilingual, and culturally competent workforce capable of navigating the complexities of healthcare delivery, administration, and cross-border regulations. The creation of a Bachelor's degree in Allied Health Administration directly addresses this critical workforce gap by equipping graduates with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively manage healthcare facilities, coordinate patient care, and ensure compliance with local and international healthcare standards.

SWC previously applied to offer a Bachelor of Science in Educator for Allied Health as part of California's early Baccalaureate Degree Pilot Program. This proposal aimed to address the shortage of qualified educators in allied health fields such as dental hygiene, medical lab technology, and paramedicine, recognizing that community colleges require faculty with at least a bachelor's degree to teach these programs. While this initiative identified a critical need, the evolving healthcare landscape now underscores an even more pressing demand for skilled administrators and leaders who can manage healthcare operations, navigate complex regulations, and improve patient care systems. Refocusing the program on **healthcare leadership** would better meet current workforce needs while allowing graduates the flexibility to move into educational roles, given that leadership and teaching often overlap in curriculum development, staff training, and healthcare education. This adjustment would align the program with both regional labor market demands and the ongoing need for healthcare professionals who can lead and educate in diverse settings.

California's Systems of Public Higher Education: Streamlining the Community College Transfer Process Could Increase Access to Bachelor's Degrees.
A report from the California State Auditor, September 2024
2023-123 California's Systems of Public Higher Education - California State Auditor

This report was requested by the **Joint Legislative Audit Committee** of California, which directed the California State Auditor's office to evaluate efforts by the state's public higher education systems—California Community Colleges (CCC), California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC)—to improve the rate of community college transfers. The request was likely motivated by concerns over the low transfer rates and the complexity of the process for community college students. The audit aimed to assess existing barriers and recommend ways to streamline the process to increase access to bachelor's degrees.

The report highlights several financial and societal barriers that hinder community college students' ability to transfer to four-year institutions. Financial insecurity is a major challenge, as many students must work to support themselves and their families, making it difficult to prioritize the transfer process while struggling with basic needs like housing and food security. Family responsibilities further limit students' ability to focus on their studies or

attend necessary classes. Additionally, relocation issues arise for those who cannot afford to move or lack access to nearby universities, making transferring even harder. These barriers disproportionately impact underrepresented groups, resulting in lower transfer rates for disadvantaged students.

The emphasis of the report is the need for more cross-system collaboration to address several key challenges in the current transfer process between California's public higher education systems. The variability in transfer requirements across the California Community Colleges (CCC), California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC) creates significant obstacles for students, making it difficult to navigate the process. This inconsistency particularly affects the success of students transferring within four years, with certain demographic groups facing even greater challenges. Although the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) provides a more streamlined path to CSU, its effectiveness is hindered by the inconsistent adoption across community colleges and CSU campuses. Meanwhile, UC's separate transfer options do not offer the same streamlined benefits as the ADT, further complicating the process.

Additionally, some CSU and UC campuses and majors have not met the goal of enrolling one-third of new students through transfer, resulting in the underrepresentation of community college students. The lack of adequate support and outreach also contributes to the problem. Many transfer-intending students do not apply to CSU or UC due to the complexity of the transfer process and access to academic counseling, which is oftentimes overburdened in the community college system. Furthermore, CSU and UC outreach efforts could be enhanced through better data sharing by CCC to more effectively target and engage potential transfer students.

The audit ends with specific recommendations aimed at making the transfer process more transparent, consistent, and accessible, ultimately increasing the number of community college students earning bachelor's degrees.

Academic Planning and Legislative Recommendations

This section outlines key academic planning strategies and legislative recommendations that are designed to support the expansion of four-year degree offerings, enhance transfer pathways, and address the critical issue of limited access to public university education in South San Diego County—a region currently recognized as a public university desert. The legislature may consider advancing recommendations to strengthen educational opportunities that foster greater access to higher education in the thriving Cali-Baja region.

1. **Anchoring Academic Programs in Partnerships**: Prioritize, but do not limit to, the recruitment of non-competitive academic programs that are anchored in partnership between SWC and the University Partner. Anchoring new programs in partnership

prevents duplication of resources and fosters collaborative growth, maximizing the region's educational impact without creating internal competition.

UNI's recommendation to anchor new academic programs in partnerships between SWC and university partners aligns with Vision 2030's focus on increasing equitable access to baccalaureate programs and enhancing transfer pathways between community colleges and universities. Vision 2030 emphasizes collaboration between community colleges and four-year institutions to prevent duplication of resources and ensure equitable access to high-quality academic programs, particularly in underserved areas. This recommendation builds on the need to streamline course articulation and approval processes across systems, as outlined in Vision 2023 - Strategic Direction 1: Equitable Baccalaureate Attainment. In addition, the California State Audit Report emphasizes the need for cross-system collaboration to streamline the process and avoid duplication, which aligns with the goal of fostering partnerships in South San Diego County to prevent unnecessary competition and maximize educational outcomes.

2. **Prioritizing Local and Binational Partnerships**: Ensure academic program expansion to the South County ecosystem prioritizes but does not exclude, partnerships and collaborations between SWC, regional public institutions of higher education, and Baja California university partners. Prioritizing partnerships with local and binational institutions enriches the learning environment through diverse perspectives and strengthens cross-border educational opportunities without limiting flexibility.

   Vision 2030's commitment to creating inclusive and equitable educational opportunities across California supports the recommendation to prioritize partnerships with local and binational institutions. Vision 2030 advocates for partnerships that enhance regional workforce development through tailored academic programs designed to meet the specific needs of diverse populations, including cross-border learners in the Cali-Baja region. Additionally, the High Road Training Partnership framework highlighted in Vision 2030's Strategic Direction 2 supports UNI's emphasis on collaborative growth to strengthen regional education without limiting flexibility. Similarly, the California State Audit Report recommends improved intersegmental collaboration to ensure more streamlined transfer pathways between CCC, CSU, and UC, with an emphasis on prioritizing high-demand fields such as healthcare. This recommendation supports the legislative suggestions to strengthen pathways and funding for collaboration.

3. **Legislation Incentivizing Dual-Admission Programs**: Legislation that incentivizes dual-admission and 2+2 university programs with key regional universities and K-12 school systems, particularly in high-demand fields such as healthcare. Dual-admission programs streamline the student pipeline, making higher education more accessible and responsive to regional workforce demands, particularly in critical fields like healthcare.

   UNI's recommendation for legislation that incentivizes dual-admission and 2+2 programs aligns with Vision 2030's goal of equitable access and success in baccalaureate

attainment. Vision 2030 specifically highlights the importance of expanding dual enrollment to all high school students and promoting 2+2 transfer pathways to ensure seamless transitions from community colleges to four-year institutions. The roadmap calls for expanding partnerships between high schools, community colleges, and universities to meet critical workforce needs in fields like healthcare. Additionally, the California State Audit recommends increasing outreach and improving the transfer process, such as by expanding programs like dual admission and ensuring alignment between CCC and universities. The audit also supports measures that prioritize transfer students and help streamline their path to high-demand fields, which 2+2 programs aim to accomplish.

4. **Legislation Supporting System Collaboration for Transfer Pathways**: Legislation that supports and funds system collaboration between community colleges and the CSU and UC systems that strengthen transfer pathways for in-demand degree programs that meet regional workforce needs. Funding collaborative efforts strengthens transfer pathways, making them more efficient and aligned with workforce demands, ultimately benefiting students and regional economies.

   UNI's call for legislation supporting system collaboration to strengthen transfer pathways is aligned with Vision 2030's focus on increasing equitable transfer opportunities. Vision 2030 emphasizes streamlining intersegmental transfer agreements and enhancing common course numbering to facilitate smoother transitions from community colleges to the CSU and UC systems. The goal is to ensure students can efficiently complete their degrees while meeting workforce demands, as outlined in Vision 2030’s Outcome 2: Baccalaureate Attainment.

5. **Piloting a Regional Faculty Task Force**: Consider piloting a regional faculty task force with members from SWC, UC San Diego, and San Diego State University to assess academic program readiness, faculty interest, and curriculum articulation supporting the expansion of priority degree programs in South San Diego County. This ensures program development is guided by faculty expertise and regional educational needs.

   The recommendation to pilot a regional faculty task force aligns with Vision 2030's focus on faculty collaboration and curriculum articulation to support academic program expansion. Vision 2030 emphasizes the need for regional coalition-building and leveraging faculty expertise to develop curriculum pathways that meet regional economic needs. This aligns with UNI’s strategy to guide program development through faculty involvement and ensure readiness for priority degree programs.

6. **Legislation for Expanding Academic Programs into Underserved Areas**: Legislation that incentivizes the expansion of CSU and UC academic programming into community college service areas lacking a public university presence through co-location or satellite campuses. Expanding university presence in underserved areas through co-location or

satellite campuses increases access to higher education for communities that otherwise lack such opportunities.

UNI's proposal to incentivize the expansion of CSU and UC academic programming into underserved areas through satellite campuses is supported by Vision 2030's emphasis on equitable workforce and economic development. Vision 2030 advocates for expanding access to baccalaureate degrees in areas lacking a public university presence and ensuring that community colleges play a critical role in bringing higher education to underserved communities. Additionally, the California State Audit identifies geographic barriers as a significant factor in transfer success rates, particularly in underserved regions. Expanding CSU and UC academic programs into community college service areas lacking a public university presence addresses this gap, as recommended by the audit.

7. **Expedited Approval of Community College Baccalaureate Degree Programs (BDP)**: Legislation that would prioritize and expedite approval of BDP applications from community colleges in a service area lacking a public university presence ***or*** for a program that previously received approval through the BDP process. Fast-tracking approval of BDP applications in underserved areas ensures timely access to high-demand programs, helping address workforce gaps and providing educational equity.

   UNI’s recommendation for legislation to fast-track approval of community college BDP applications in underserved areas aligns with Vision 2030’s goal of expanding community college baccalaureate programs to improve regional access to high-demand fields. Vision 2030 calls for targeted expansion of BDPs, particularly in regions where students are place-bound, to address workforce shortages and ensure educational equity. Additionally, the California State Audit recommends expanding the capacity of community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees where such programs fill regional workforce needs, particularly in areas lacking access to public universities.

LOOKING AHEAD: SUPPORTING THE UNIVERSITY INNOVATION DISTRICT

The City of Chula Vista's vision to build a University Innovation District (UID) began in 1993, aiming to bring higher education opportunities to South San Diego County. The City has taken many actions over the years that have set the stage for the recruitment of an accredited university. Most recently, the City hired Carrier Johnson, a world-renowned planning architecture, interiors, and landscaping design firm to conduct a feasibility study for the initial phase of the UID development. The feasibility study will include conceptual renderings, a phased development approach, and infrastructure cost estimating for an initial 20 to 30 acres.

City of Chula Vista's University District Vision
A Binational Campus that leverages the border as a laboratory to attract students from both the U.S. and Mexico offers degrees and skills training specific for the binational region, and serves as a catalyst for growth and economic development.

This innovative model focuses on co-locating a unique mix of academic partners in an environment different from a traditional university campus. Instead, academic institutions in the university district will integrate with non-residential, retail, and residential areas in an urban, mixed-use setting.

The UNI's work to enhance the higher education ecosystem in the Cali-Baja binational region supports the City's efforts to develop a university district encompassing a multi-institutional campus center within the City of Chula Vista's 383-acre University Innovation District site. Through the culmination of research; community and industry listening sessions; regional, state and cross-border discussions; and visits to model higher education sites; the the City now contemplates the next critical step to advancing this vision by exploring possible governance structures that could inform the City's efforts to develop a university campus offering consistent with the City's binational and multi-institutional university vision.

The next sections report on visits to two model campus sites in New York City and Auraria, Colorado that helped provide insight on possible approaches to governance; and financing shared infrastructure, operations, and facilities that would overlay the multi-university campus. What follows are considerations for creating a roadmap to support advancing the university district including some options for governance, financial approaches, and collaborative strategies that integrate binational collaboration.

Examination of Model Multi-Institution of Higher Education Sites

Drawing inspiration from successful models observed at the City University of New York (CUNY) and Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) in Colorado, the University Now Initiative (UNI) aimed to explore effective approaches for establishing a collaborative and sustainable multi-institutional campus. CUNY, a comprehensive public university system, effectively manages a vast network of campuses across New York City, showcasing robust governance and resource management practices. AHEC, a tri-institutional campus in Denver, Colorado, exemplifies the benefits of shared facilities and collaborative academic programming between multiple institutions. These examples demonstrate effective governance, resource management, and the benefits of multi-institutional cooperation, providing valuable insights for the City of Chula Vista to consider. In addition to the two site visits discussed below, the City will continue to consider other higher education models on both sides of the border.

The visits to these model sites were part of a comprehensive sequence of efforts guided by the UNI Committee. This process began with extensive research work and community and industry listening sessions aimed at understanding the specific needs and opportunities within the Chula Vista region. By visiting CUNY and AHEC, the UNI team sought to gather firsthand insights and practical knowledge on how to build and sustain a multi-institutional campus. These visits were critical in contemplating the critical steps to realizing the vision for Chula Vista's UID and ensuring that we could draw on proven and successful models as the City continues to develop a roadmap in its development.

City University of New York (CUNY), New York City, NY
City University of New York (CUNY) is a 25-campus university and community college system that spans five boroughs in New York City and offers a compelling model of higher education governance characterized by integration with both city and state governments. This relationship facilitates a comprehensive approach to managing and funding educational institutions, intended to provide a stable financial foundation and a unified strategy of management. The intrinsic link between CUNY and governmental entities promotes expanded access to education and fosters community engagement. As a result, CUNY serves as a valuable case study for exploring the benefits of synchronized governance in higher education.

The conception of CUNY came about in 1961 through state legislation called the Henderson Act and championed by then New York Governor, Nelson Rockefeller to address the growing demand for affordable higher education in New York City, particularly for underserved and immigrant populations. The aim was to reduce educational inequality and to meet the City’s workforce needs by providing high-quality education to qualified individuals regardless of their financial status. Furthermore, CUNY sought to unify the existing institutions and streamline administration throughout its system. The system has been heralded as a model institution for adopting innovative programs responsive to the dynamic needs of the diverse student body and communities it serves. Furthermore, the urban integration of the campuses makes CUNY a hub for cultural and intellectual activity, attracting strong faculty while pioneering a model for affordable and accessible higher education.

The UNI team's visit to CUNY consisted of a series of meetings with CUNY's executives and administrative officials of two of CUNY's colleges, Queensborough Community College and Bronx College. During the UNI team's visits, it was indicated that a significant portion of students from CUNY's community colleges transfer to universities within the system, highlighting the strong academic pathways and partnerships that could be beneficially replicated in Chula Vista. The integrated transfer application also enhances seamless pathways to four-year institutions within the CUNY system.

However, several challenges were noted, including transportation issues between campuses, budget deficits, and the complex approval processes required for capital projects, which are funded solely by state and city sources. Because of CUNY's fiscal structure that is dependent on the availability of state and local funding, individual colleges do not have the ability to pursue their own funding capacities for operations, maintenance and capital projects independent of CUNY's centralized governance. Resource allocation, therefore, between the 25 individual campuses is inevitably leading to unequal distribution and resource disparities between the community colleges and universities, which affect student services and quality of education. Furthermore, decision-making from a highly centralized governance is characterized by a complex bureaucratic process, resulting in challenges in quickly responding to local needs of the CUNY campuses.

These are all important insights that serve as one type of model to consider in shaping the strategies for higher education in Chula Vista, with further discussions on an additional model campus to provide a comprehensive approach.

Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC), Colorado

Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) located in Denver, Colorado, serves as a dynamic example of how multiple institutions can collaborate under a shared governance model while maintaining their distinct identities. The campus houses the University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver), Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver), and the Community College of Denver (CCD), providing centralized services and facilities that drive operational efficiency and foster academic collaboration. This model serves as a valuable representation of a comprehensive shared campus model that fosters inter-institutional collaboration, sustainability practices and provides a positive economic impact on the surrounding communities.

The AHEC was established by the Colorado General Assembly through the passage of legislation in 1974 with the purpose of urban renewal in Denver's decaying downtown core, as well as expanding higher education opportunities to revitalize the city. The legislation aimed to create a shared campus for the three existing institutions that sought expansion, enabling them to pool resources, share facilities, and coordinate their operations with the centralized governance body while remaining, to some extent, independent through self-governance and academic programming.

AHEC's shared governance structure allows the three institutions to leverage collective resources, such as libraries, student centers, and administrative services, which reduces costs

and enhances the student experience across the board. This approach encourages cross-institutional interaction, creating a rich, interdisciplinary academic environment. Financial sustainability has been a priority for AHEC, which has pursued various revenue-generating activities, including the establishment of a parking district that serves AHEC but supports nearby sports and entertainment venues, leasing campus spaces for events, and developing partnerships with local businesses. This diversified approach to revenue helps to keep the campus financially viable while supporting the institutions' academic missions.

Despite these strengths, the Auraria model also presents challenges that should be considered as a multi-institutional model is explored. One of the most significant issues is the complexity of governance and coordination among the institutions. Although AHEC provides a centralized management structure, conflicts can arise over the allocation of resources, space allocation within the AHEC boundary, individual campuses pursuing their own revenue generation, use of shared facilities, and prioritization of projects. The relationship between the individual schools and the broader campus management must be carefully balanced to ensure that all institutions benefit equitably from shared resources. Additionally, Auraria's history includes the displacement of a predominantly Latino community during its establishment, which highlights the importance of community engagement and inclusion in campus development.

AHEC's experience underscores the importance of designing a governance structure that is both flexible and inclusive, allowing for effective collaboration while respecting the autonomy of individual institutions. Additionally, pursuing diverse financial strategies, such as public-private partnerships and funding initiatives, will be crucial for the higher education hub to maintain financial sustainability. By carefully considering these factors, the City and its partners can create a thriving educational complex that meets the academic needs of this binational region while fostering positive relationships with the local community.

CONSIDERATIONS IN CREATING THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT "ROADMAP"

Overview

The visits to CUNY and AHEC highlighted the benefits and challenges of multi-institutional campuses. While CUNY's governance structure is more centralized allowing for limited autonomy at the individual campuses, AHEC subscribes to a more shared form of governance that allows for centralized collaboration but allows each campus to have their own governance structures. In planning and developing the university district, the UNI Committee recommends that the City consider an approach that allows for coordinated and also collaborative governance with defined roles of a governing entity.

Given the complexity and scale of establishing a multi-university campus, it is essential to create a robust governance structure that will shepherd comprehensive planning, attract university partners, coordinate efforts, and secure financing will be vital to the success of the ultimate objective of creating a multi-institutional campus. The intentional work necessary to continue planning for the university district could be pursued in parallel to the continued exploration and expansion of academic baccalaureate programs at SWC and does not constrain the City in seeking academic partners that offer competing programs.

The following are examples of potential governance and financial models for the university district site. These options, and others yet to be identified, will require further analysis prior to Chula Vista City Council consideration.

Governance Considerations: Joint Powers Authority and Special Purpose District

- **Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Formation:** A JPA is formed under the California Government Code Sections 6500-6599.3, and is created through a joint powers agreement that outlines the roles, responsibilities, and governance structure of the participating agencies. The JPAs are bound by an agreement that spells out its authority, composition, roles and responsibilities, and governance structure. Because of the complex nature of creating a multi-institutional campus with the potential application of public financing models and public-private partnerships as well as incorporating binational educational partnerships, the JPA may require state legislative action for its formation. This government body would act as the budget and financing authority that would pursue and allocate resources derived from funding mechanisms such as property taxes, lease/service fees, and bond issuance.

- **Special Purpose District (SPD) Formation:** Unlike JPAs, with the exceptions mentioned earlier, an SPD is a government entity that must be established through state legislation to provide targeted decision-making and services within a defined geographic area. An SPD would act as an independent governmental body with specific authority within the defined geographic area. Like JPAs, an SPD would act as the budget and financing authority that would pursue and allocate resources derived from funding mechanisms such as property taxes, lease/service fees, and bond issuance. An SPD would be a permanent entity unless dissolved through state legislative action or public vote.

- **Other Considerations:** In addition to looking into governance setups such as JPAs and SPDs, establishing a public land trust could also be explored. A public land trust would prioritize conserving the land for university uses, ensuring responsible care over time while also permitting development that matches the overall higher education vision for that site. In addition, setting up a non-profit organization specifically tasked with managing and advancing the university campus could help boost fundraising activities such as major donations and endowments, as well as fostering community involvement while also supporting the implementation of key plans to advance university-aligned development at the university district. These strategies represent options that align with the educational goals and needs of the community.

Possible Next Steps:
The governance structure will be critical to the development of the university district and preparing the site to receive higher education entities. It will also require coordination and governance to ensure success in perpetuity. Specific attention should be given to governance options that allow nimbleness through the process of the university district development, as well as in coordinating the future universities that will be housed at the site. Nimbleness will also allow the City to respond to the workforce, social, and economic needs of the Cali-Baja region to ensure continued alignment with the mission of the higher education ecosystem.

The next step, to be led by the City of Chula Vista, will be a deeper examination of the different governance options such as, but not limited to joint power authorities and special purpose districts or a hybrid model that combines more than one approach. Along with this effort could be designing a scope for a newly formed entity that clearly delineates roles and responsibilities of that entity as well as the obligations that would be maintained by the City of Chula Vista, the university district project lead. Additional questions to consider include as part of a “deeper dive” into designing governance: identifying the government authorities that would have representation on the board of directors, and determining the number of representatives each government authority would have; determining the number of board of directors; terms of the board of directors; and defining the roles and responsibilities of land use and finance authority between the new entity and the City of Chula Vista. This next phase of the work could be guided by a task force made up of selected members of the UNI Committee that would

advise the City of Chula Vista throughout the exploration and design of the governance structure.

Finance: Mixed Funding Model Examples

While a number of finance strategies were included in the 2006 *University Park and Research Center*, such as pursuing General Obligation Bonds, Lease Revenue Bonds and Certificate of Participation and levying special taxes, additional considerations are included in the proceeding section on mixed-financing with additional finance options.

- **Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD):** Establish an EIFD to finance the initial infrastructure needed for the campus, including utilities, roads, and public spaces. The EIFD captures the increased property tax revenues generated by the development, making it a sustainable long-term funding source. Moreover, an established EIFD would also provide the district with its financial team the ability to issue bonds on future tax revenue. The following steps would help guide the formation of the EIFD should this option be considered:
    - A feasibility study should be conducted that estimates the amount of tax that could be generated and for what specific purposes
    - Explore the formation of a district with the City of Chula Vista and stakeholders with defined boundaries within the university, and possibly in immediate surrounding areas that would benefit from the university development.
    - Conduct public engagement in the surrounding areas prior to formal decision-making on the EIFD formation to ensure awareness and buy-in for the creation and intent of the district.
    - Approval by the City of Chula Vista and other relevant government bodies of the new district formation and the suite of infrastructure projects to be funded that support the university site development.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are collaborative agreements between public entities—such as a city, county, specifically formed governance entity or a university—and private sector partners. These partnerships leverage the strengths and resources of both public and private sectors to finance, build, and operate projects that serve public needs. In the context of university site development, PPPs can be particularly effective in accelerating infrastructure projects, reducing financial strain on public budgets, and fostering innovation.
- **Local Bond Measures:** This approach places a proposal before voters to authorize the issuance of bonds to fund specific projects within a local jurisdiction, such as infrastructure improvements, educational facilities, or public services. These measures typically require a supermajority vote for approval and are designed to raise capital by

allowing local governments to borrow money, which is then repaid over time through property taxes or other revenue sources.

- **Community Finance District (CFD):** The CFD is a special taxing district established to finance public infrastructure and services within a designated area, typically used for new developments. CFDs allow local governments to issue bonds secured by future tax revenues, enabling the immediate funding of necessary infrastructure improvements such as roads, parks, schools, shared facilities and utilities. Property owners within the defined CFD pay additional taxes or assessments to cover the costs of these improvements, which can enhance property values and support community growth while ensuring that the infrastructure keeps pace with development.

- **Local, State and Federal Grants/Funding:** Securing resources for the university district development is crucial through pursuit of funding at local, state and federal levels to develop the infrastructure and educational programs. A successful approach involves aligning project goals, with grant preferences and showcasing its benefits to attract various funding sources that strengthen the project's sustainability and expansion efforts.

Possible Next Steps:
Because of the robust needs of developing a multi-institutional campus, a mixed funding model with various options for revenue streams should be analyzed. Assessing different funding models reduces dependence on any single source of funding and should align with the evolving needs of the university district and the constituent universities. Therefore, additional research is needed to create a suite of funding options that will support the development of the university district.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As we close out the University Now Initiative (UNI) effort, it is important to embrace the transformative potential of enhancing the higher education ecosystem in the Cali-Baja region; to acknowledge our state legislative, education and local champions who spearheaded this exciting effort; to uplift the enthusiasm and wealth of knowledge of the UNI Committee members and community members who have contributed valuable feedback; to leverage strategic and intrinsic cross-border ties to bolster a competitive workforce; and to continue the momentum of this work by advancing priority academic programs while further exploring models of governance and finance in the development of the University Innovation District. While this phase of UNI is complete, critical phases of implementation and planning are to follow, building on the shared vision and ideas of those who have contributed their time and talent to this collective endeavor that will enrich lives, foster economic growth, and strengthen community ties for generations to come.

APPENDIX

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