

CHICO STATE Inside

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CSU, Chico: Serving the North State for More Than 100 Years

Alturas, Hayfork, Whiskeytown, Susanville, Willows, Forbestown, Cherokee, Quincy, and Ukiah are just a few of the towns in CSU, Chico's service region, a region as large as the state of Ohio. Our region is distinct from other areas in California, not just in terms of its size, but in terms of its history, patterns of settlement, and economic base. We serve a rural area of small towns whose economies were, and in some cases still are, rooted in the timber industry, agriculture, and ranching. We also serve a region richly diverse in historical and developing ethnic communities.

For more than 100 years, CSU, Chico has reached out to our immediate community and beyond to provide higher education for generations of college-bound students. Faculty, staff, and students from Chico have devoted countless hours to helping communities throughout Northern California meet a gamut of needs for training programs and expert consultation in all areas of life. We are the university of the North State.

Recently, CSU campuses were asked by the chancellor to assess the impact they have on their region or community. How does a university change lives? Make a difference? Meet the needs of industry? Provide leadership and innovation?

Changing lives. Changing lives is what a university is all about. CSU, Chico has offered hope and opportunity to many nontraditional and first-generation students who might never have made it to college without encouragement and academic and, sometimes, financial support. One example of a program dedicated to this task is the Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Engineering Program (MEP), which has worked for more than 20 years to recruit and retain underrepresented and educationally disadvantaged students in engineering, computer science, and technology. The MESA Schools Program (MSP) serves more than 200 students a year in six high schools and two middle schools in our region, provides teacher training, and sponsors math and science competitions. The program has an unprecedented rate of success. In 2000–2001, more than 70 percent (1,040) of MESA students went on to college, compared to 49 percent of all high school graduates in the state.

The connections of both our faculty and staff to the local educational community are so substantial that they almost defy summary. In 2000, we put together a 50-page directory of formal and informal school connections. Chico has nine subject matter projects, for example, which provide in-service training to K–12 teachers. Overall, the campus currently has more than 100 funded K–12 projects. University Public Events brings more than 25,000 grade school children to campus each year for performances. Thousands more come to visit campus museums, the planetarium, and events such as Ag Day and Fun Without Alcohol.

Making a difference. How do we improve the quality of life in our region and make the community a more desirable place? The Associated Students took the lead more than 30 years ago when they formed CAVE (Community Action Volunteers in Education). This year, 1,527 students provided 64,500 hours of community service to 83 different organizations.

Community service and service learning are also integral parts of many of our academic programs. The School of Nursing sponsors service-learning projects to benefit the health needs of high-risk groups with prevention projects for blindness and sudden infant death syndrome, tobacco use, and tuberculosis. Other projects have provided education for breast feeding and milk bank programs and health care for the homeless. The faculty in the Nutrition and Food Science Program oversee a network of projects to improve the nutrition of children from ethnically diverse and low-income populations.

Meeting needs. The College of Engineering, Computer Science, and Construction Management works with cities and counties to pursue new businesses, linking them with the research strengths of the University. Congressional funds, totaling \$1 million, were obtained to develop a plastics program and laboratory, which also has industrial support.

The state-funded Agricultural Research Initiative matches funds from industry partners. College of Agriculture projects have benefited the entire community, offering solutions to rice straw burning, agricultural waste management, and the improvement of water quality. In addition, the college has many creative partnerships, such as one with Sierra Nevada Brewery, which is testing the use of brewing by-products in cattle feed.

Providing leadership. As I once told a group of state employees, "If something is going to happen, it's going to happen first at Chico." The campus has taken a leadership position in being the first campus to build an environmentally friendly building—the new student services center. We have taken the lead in the system in creating high-quality learning environments in and out of the classroom; we are leaders in environmental education and in the sciences; we are among the leaders in using academic technology to enhance the learning environment; we have more funded projects that connect us to the K–12 community than any other campus; we have the richest performing arts series outreach to schools program; and our campus is among the system leaders in securing grants and contracts, many of which are focused on helping solve social and economic problems.

CSU, Chico has a powerful impact on our service region and a long and proud history of serving the community. Our message continues to be "We are the university of the North State; we are here to help; let us know how we can do so." We want to spread even wider the message of the rich services we provide and the ways we can work with communities to continue to create a pathway to success for children and to improve the quality of life for all in the North State.

—*Scott G. McNall*