

A New Gateway

The Student Services Complex at Evergreen Valley College redefines what a community college campus can be—bold, inclusive, and centered on student success. Designed as a new front door to the campus, the 74,068-square-foot facility consolidates 16 student services and support programs and six administrative departments into a single, welcoming hub. This strategic move transforms service delivery and cultivates a strong sense of place and belonging for a diverse campus community, many of whom are first-generation college students.

The complex responds directly to the educational and cultural needs of its users. Every design decision—clear interior pathways, colorful and multilingual signage, and warm materials—supports equitable access and intuitive navigation. At its heart, the oculus lounge bridges two building wings and serves as a vibrant community living room. The open-air breezeway below celebrates arrival and connects to the campus beyond. Flexible spaces, indoor-outdoor connections, and varied seating invite students to gather, linger, and engage beyond transactional encounters.

The project reflects an extensive participatory planning process, guided by shared equity-driven values. Stakeholders shaped not only the program but also the building's tone—welcoming, transparent, and grounded in community. From initial visioning to furniture testing, this engagement ensured that design outcomes reflected the lived experiences and aspirations of the campus. The intentional integration of student services and administration—not often the norm on college campuses—enhances access to support systems and fosters stronger connections between students and staff.

As a physical and symbolic threshold to opportunity, the Student Services Complex elevates Evergreen Valley College's mission: to guide all students to pathways that reach their educational and career goals through equity-centered, innovative academic programs and support services. It is more than a building—it is an active partner in the student journey.

SCOPE AND BUDGET

OWNER San Jose-Evergreen Community College District

PROJECT TYPE New Construction

CONSTRUCTION COST \$86.3M

DELIVERY METHOD Lease-Leaseback

COMPLETION DATE May 2024

LOCATION San Jose, California

BUILDING AREA 74.068 GSF

SITE AREA 132,000 SF



Regional Context

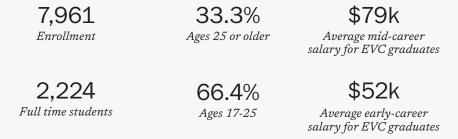
Nestled in the culturally vibrant and economically complex heart of Silicon Valley, Evergreen Valley College (EVC) serves a region defined by both innovation and inequality. The college is part of the San Jose–Evergreen Community College District, which spans over 300 square miles and serves a diverse population. While Santa Clara County is home to some of the most educated and affluent communities in the nation, it also faces persistent disparities in income, educational attainment, and access to opportunity—particularly among Latinx, Black, immigrant, and first-generation households.

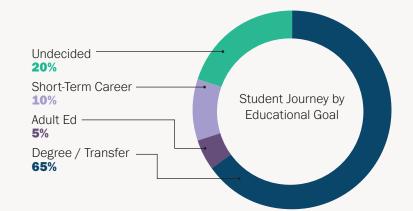
In recent years, the region's population growth has slowed due to declining birth rates, outward migration, and the rising cost of living. These shifts have created new pressures for educational institutions, especially community colleges like EVC that serve as vital gateways to higher education. Despite Silicon Valley's economic strength, nearly one in three households in the area is not economically self-sufficient, and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by poverty, food insecurity, and limited access to healthcare and affordable housing.

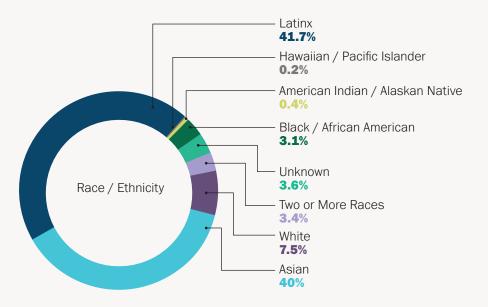
Within this context, EVC has responded to these challenges through its mission to guide all students to pathways that reach their educational and career goals through equity-centered, innovative academic programs and support services. The college is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment, as well as offering career education and transfer programs that enable students to earn a living wage. With a student body that is nearly half Latinx and significantly Asian, Black, and multi-racial, the college reflects the community it serves. Many are first-generation college-goers balancing work, school, and family. EVC's inclusive, student-centered approach aims to dismantle barriers and build a more equitable future for all.



STUDENT POPULATION







Project Vision

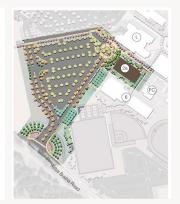
This project is a direct result of the Measure X Bond passed by the San Jose community in 2016, which provided vital funding for campus improvements that address the facilities, safety, technology, and student services needs essential to EVC's students' success. The 2016 Facilities Master Plan identified the need for a new student services complex to consolidate services and programs into a central building. To shape this vision, the college launched a robust visioning and programming process in 2019. Through student forums, interviews, surveys, case study tours, and interactive workshops, the college engaged a broad range of stakeholders to understand current challenges and future aspirations.

Students voiced that EVC lacked a centralized, welcoming space to gather, study, or take breaks between classes. They described struggling to find quiet areas to study, with available spaces often being too noisy, poorly located, or lacking power outlets or computer access. Faculty and staff echoed these concerns, describing the existing student services center as a confusing maze of hallways with no clear signage or central information point—especially confusing to new students. Additionally, many of the student support programs, vital to the college's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and student wellness, were dispersed across campus, limiting collaboration and ease of access. Participants in the visioning process emphasized the need for a culturally sensitive, accessible, and inclusive facility that breaks down barriers, balances openness with privacy, and fosters belonging.

The vision that emerged was clear: to create a vibrant, student-centered hub that consolidates services, encourages engagement, and fosters a stronger campus identity—encouraging students to not just pass through, but stay, connect, and succeed.

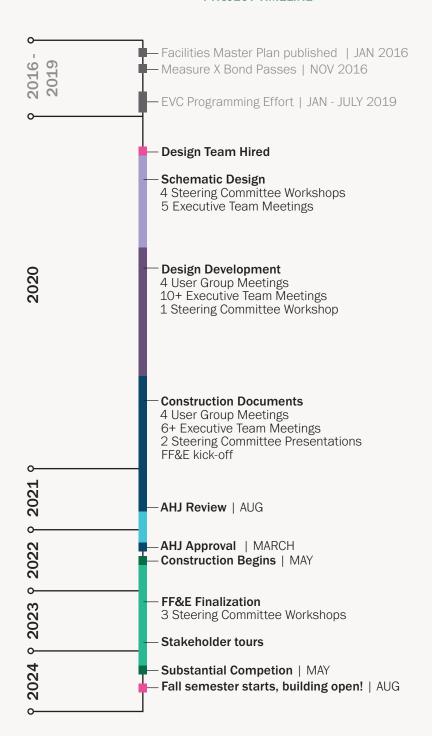
It is recommended that the current student service facilities, which are scattered on campus, be consolidated and relocated to a new 3 story Student Services Center on the southwest edge of the Academic Core, south of the Library and west of the Fitness Center. This project will consolidate the uses currently housed in the existing Student Services Building, Admissions and Records Building and other related programs currently housed outside of the Student Services Building. Other non-related functions to be relocated in order to facilitate the demolition of Roble include the Mail Room and Reprographics.

The building will be sited adjacent to the new Parking Lot B and, together with related site improvements, will provide a major entry, student drop-off and pedestrian gateway to campus. The project start is not affected by other projects, as the site is currently occupied by parking (Existing Lot B). This lot is to be relocated and expanded in the Master Plan.



Excerpt from the EVC 2016 FMP describing the new student services complex

PROJECT TIMELINE



An Equity-Driven Approach

Participatory Design Process

The design and planning process built upon the Shared Governance tradition of the California Community College system, ensuring participatory community engagement. The team approached the engagement process through a tiered system. By determining an agreed-upon communication framework, the decision-making roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder group were clearly defined for all. Methods of engagement—visioning workshops, design charrettes, page-turns, online surveys, in person presentations, etc.—were tailored based on each stakeholder group. This approach allowed the team to have an inclusive design process while building consensus and managing user group expectations.

Engagement Occurs at All Levels To Achieve Buy-In



EXECUTIVE TEAM

Comprised of the core EVC project leadership group and Bond team

STEERING COMMITTEE

Representatives from each of the student services and administrative departments

USER GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Facilities and maintenance staff, Grounds and Landscaping, Campus Security, student groups, District representatives

A Coalition of Stakeholder Groups

In addition to the Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, Business Services, Health and Wellness Services, Testing Center, and administration wing, the new facility also brought together crucial student-centered programs that provide holistic support for students in their academic and personal careers. These include:

TRIO

Provides fundamental support to high school and precollege students in their preparation for college

Umoja-AFFIRM

A program designed to increase African American students' retention, matriculation, and transfer

OASISS

Provides immigrant students with the necessary tools and information to succeed in pursuing a higher education and professional career

CalWORKS

Designed specifically for parents who want to pursue higher education; ensures that all parents can focus on college success AND raising children

Veterans Freedom Center

Support veterans and active service members as they transition into academic and civilian life

EOPS/CARE

Help students disadvantaged by social, economic, educational, or linguistic barriers get the resources needed to enroll and succeed, including providing meal cards, transportation/gas cards and school supplies

Disability Support Program

Provides accommodations and services to students with documented physical, psychological, and learning disabilities to participate in all aspects of the college community

CHALLENGES

Integrating Departments

Consolidating 16 student services and 6 administrative departments that were previously scattered across campus into one facility required extensive consensus building and dialogue.

An Active Campus Undergoing Transformation

In addition to challenges with the project being located on an active campus, the project was also concurrent with three other new construction projects on campus. This presented challenges by limiting staff time and resources as well as coordinating campus site utilties across multiple project teams.

COVID Impacts

The pandemic posed challenges from both a communications and market instability standpoint. In addition to escalation and long material lead times, the majority of the design process had to occur virtually, and the design and EVC teams were unable to meet in-person until the design was almost complete.

ASSETS

Students First Mindset

Throughout the entire design process, the Steering Committee placed the needs of the students above all else. This was the lens through which design decisons were made, and the project greatly benefitted from this aligned mindset.

Strong Leadership

The project was led by a strong executive team that had a clear vision for the project but also ensured an inclusive and participatory design process.

Design Guiding Principles

Through the early engagement process, the Steering Committee surfaced several key priorities including: intuitive wayfinding, a welcoming lobby with secure yet open counters, and physical and visual accessibility. These priorities became the guiding design principles for the project. (See more on the following page)

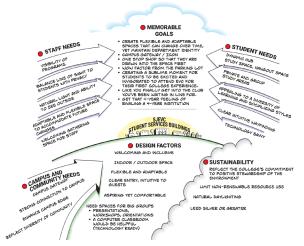
Process

Multi-modal engagement

Despite challenges posed by the pandemic, the project team leveraged digital engagement tools to collaborate and seek feedback from the Steering Committee and project stakeholders. Throughout the design, a variety of media including fly-through videos, physical models, and large-scale material mockups, helped stakeholders visualize the design and confirm alignment with their goals. Digital whiteboards, such as Mural, were used to track the history of the project and design decisions over time with transparency and accessibility.



Digital whiteboard of the early concept design phase



Visioning board created by Steering Committee members

During furniture selection, the project team was finally able to meet in person. All the furniture options, including desk chairs, tables, and lounge furniture, were brought to campus for the Steering Committee to test out to ensure inclusivity and comfort.



Interior design presentation to the Steering Committee

Engagement Through Construction

Stakeholder engagement continued through construction, with user groups such as Facilities, Campus Security, and Campus IT regularly touring the site to verify alignment with evolving needs. As some departments had evolved since initial planning, the design and construction teams collaborated to make adjustments in the field. Full-scale mock-ups helped confirm material and design decisions.

Engagement Outcome

This participatory process ensured the final design not only met functional needs but also became a source of pride and identity for students and staff.

This pride is reflected through the use of campus colors and graphics throughout, promoting the EVC brand to encourage student enrollment and retention. The design also allows departments to express their unique identities within a cohesive whole.

DESIGN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A Gateway to Campus

A vibrant new entrance to the EVC campus

Culturally Inclusive Design

Design that reflects and respects the community

Clear and Intuitive Wayfinding

Simple, clear navigation through the space

Campus Brand and Identity

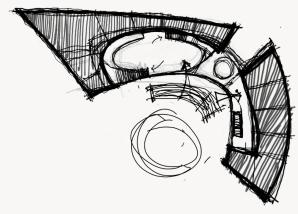
Strengthening pride and connection to EVC

Supporting Student Success and Wellness

Services and spaces to help students thrive

Physical and Visual Accessibility

Design that eliminates barriers, welcoming all



Early concept design sketch of the building as a "Gateway"

Integrating Students and Administration

Throughout the previous programming and facilities master planning efforts, the student services and administration functions were initially envisioned as separate buildings. This reflected a common approach in higher education, where administrative offices are typically placed in more private campus locations. As the design process began, the Steering Committee identified an opportunity to combine these into an integrated complex. Through stakeholder input and collaborative planning, it became clear that this approach would better support a student-centered environment. Merging student services and administration aligned with the college's goals of openness, accessibility, and connection. Rather than isolating leadership, the design places administrative offices in a visible, easily accessible location—encouraging interaction among students, staff, and college leadership.



The Student Services wing is easily accessible and from both the new entry road as well as the campus beyond.

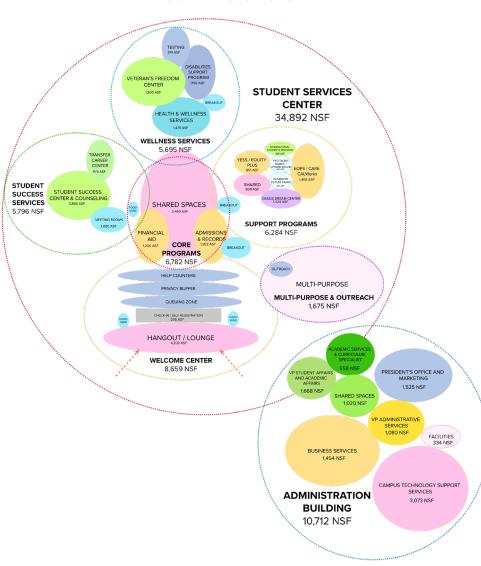


The Administration wing is accessible from both sides of campus, but less visually prominent. The two wings are separated at the ground level, allowing people to pass through.



The two building wings are connected by the level two oculus lounge. The breezeway and level 2 overhangs provide shade for the plaza space below.

PROGRAM ADJACENCIES

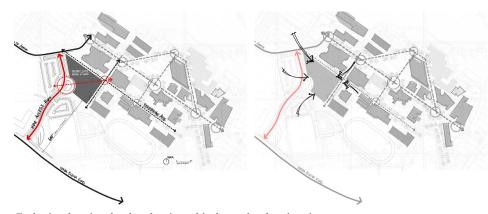


This early concept bubble diagram shows the relationships between program elements and the integration of the student services and administration programs

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Campus Context

Strategically located at the primary entry point of the campus, the Student Services Complex occupies a prominent position that enhances the campus's visual identity. The building replaces a surface parking lot and introduces a dynamic new entry that welcomes students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Surrounded by pedestrian walkways, landscaped green spaces, and community amenities such as pickleball courts, the complex is designed to integrate seamlessly into the campus's fabric, creating a vibrant space for the entire community.



Early site planning sketches showing vehicular and pedestrian site access





Before: The campus lacked a prominent front door to the campus



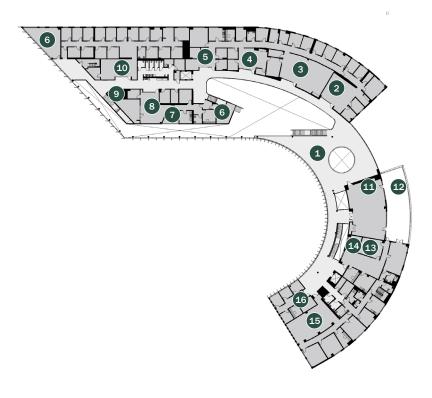
After: Along with a new entry road, the building was conceived of as a new gateway to the campus

Site Plan



Floor Plans





LEVEL 1

- 1 Student Services Lobby
- 2 Welcome Desk
- 3 Outreach
- 4 FA/AR Counters
- 5 Admissions & Records
- 6 Financial Aid
- 7 International Students
- 8 Meditation Room
- 9 Testing
- 10 Disability Student Program
- 11 Health/Wellness Services
- 12 Veterans Center

- **13** Administration Lobby
- 14 Business Services
- 15 VP Administrative Services
- **16** Facilities
- 17 Campus Technology

LEVEL 2

- 1 Oculus Lounge
- 2 Umoja-Affirm
- **3** EOPS, CARE, CalWorks Foster Youth
- 4 OASISS
- **5** Trio
- 6 Shared Meeting Room
- **7** Lounge
- 8 Student Resources Center
- 9 Lactation Room
- 10 Counseling

- 11 Symposium Room
- 12 President's Patio
- 13 President's Suite
- 14 Marketing Office
- 15 VP Student Affairs &
- VP Academic Affairs
- 16 Academic Services & Curriculum

Equity and Inclusion

The project addressed inclusion and equity through a two-pronged approach: an equitable design process paired with inclusive design features. Conversations and engagement with the stakeholders, conducted in various formats, identified important priorities that shaped the overall design concepts. This was paired with inclusive program elements such as all-gender restrooms, a lactation room, clear wayfinding, robust exterior lighting for night-time safety, easily accessible exterior

spaces, the elimination of physical barriers at the exterior, and spaces of varying scales and openness to accommodate different user needs. A large mural that wraps around a double-height volume in the lobby features the word "Welcome" in the 13 most frequently spoken languages by the community, reflecting the cultural richness of the EVC campus. By combining these approaches, equity was embedded into both the project process and outcome, ensuring the building reflects the community's values and fosters inclusivity.



Removing Barriers

Throughout planning and design, the college emphasized removing as many physical and visual barriers to the building as possible. As one example, there was a significant grade difference between the corners of the existing site, which would require either large stairs at the entry plaza or a split-level lobby. To address this concern, the project team re-graded the entire entry road from the public right-of-way to bring the ground floor to the same level, eliminating the physical and visual barrier to the entry. The district's willingness to bear this significant cost impact highlights its commitment to the project's accessibility goals.



The building plays a key role in addressing equity gaps by increasing on-campus engagement opportunities and fostering a sense of belonging"

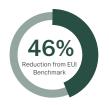
- Dr. Andrea Alexander Vice President of Administrative Services



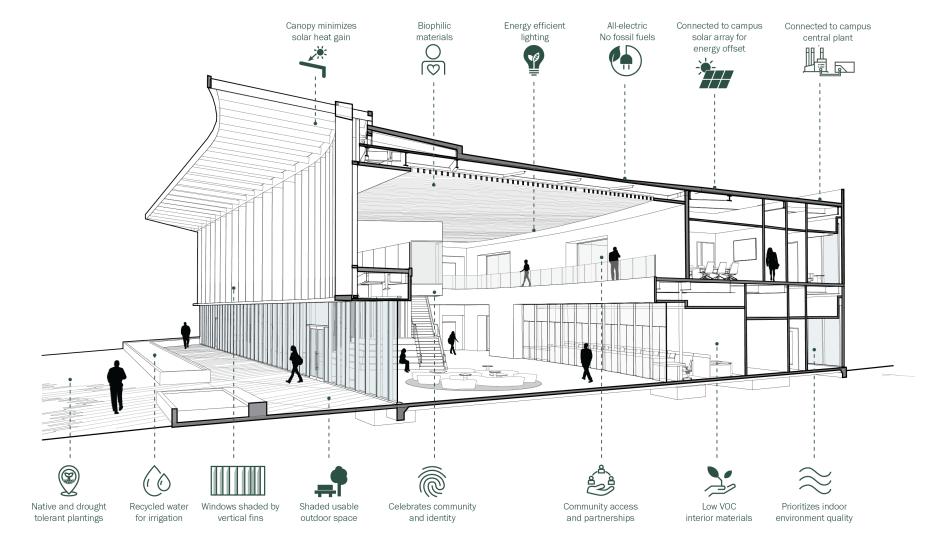
Sustainability and Well-being

High performance design and sustainability were core values embraced by the college and integrated into the building's design. In addition to focusing on ecological health, the project also prioritizes human and community well-being. LEED Silver certified, the building incorporates expansive glazing that maximizes daylight while offering views of the campus and surrounding landscape.

Efficient systems and a well-designed envelope help reduce energy consumption. The breezeway between the building wings creates a functional, shaded "outdoor room" used for events without adding conditioned space, minimizing energy use. Sustainable materials enhance air quality and thermal comfort, while space planning optimizes the building's footprint, reducing energy usage and environmental impact.







EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Educational Vision

MISSION

Evergreen Valley College guides all students to pathways that reach their educational and career goals through equity-centered, innovative academic programs and support services. By creating a learning environment where everyone feels welcomed and supported, we are committed to a culture of inquiry, growth, and respect that creates an equitable society in which all can participate and prosper.

VISION

To be the leading college advancing opportunity, equity, and social justice through supporting students' aspirations, education, and career attainment.

As Evergreen Valley College began to develop its 2022-2027 Educational Master Plan (EMP), the college intentionally focused on five key student-centered questions:

- 1. Who are the students we serve now and who will our future students be?
- 2. What are the needs of our current students and what will students' needs be in the future?
- 3. Do our current delivery systems serve student needs? Will they serve students' future needs?
- 4. How can we best serve the educational needs of the population in our service area?
- 5. What resources (e.g., technology, facilities) and practices will best ensure equitable access and outcomes for our students?

Throughout the EMP process, the college aimed to understand the student experience and what they needed to be successful. The resulting EMP identified two strategic goals, and provided a framework for how the college would focus its resources to support student success as well as the District's overarching core values of opportunity, equity, and social justice. Through the design and environment, the Student Services Complex aimed to support these strategic goals.

EDUCATIONAL MASTER PLAN STRATEGIC GOALS



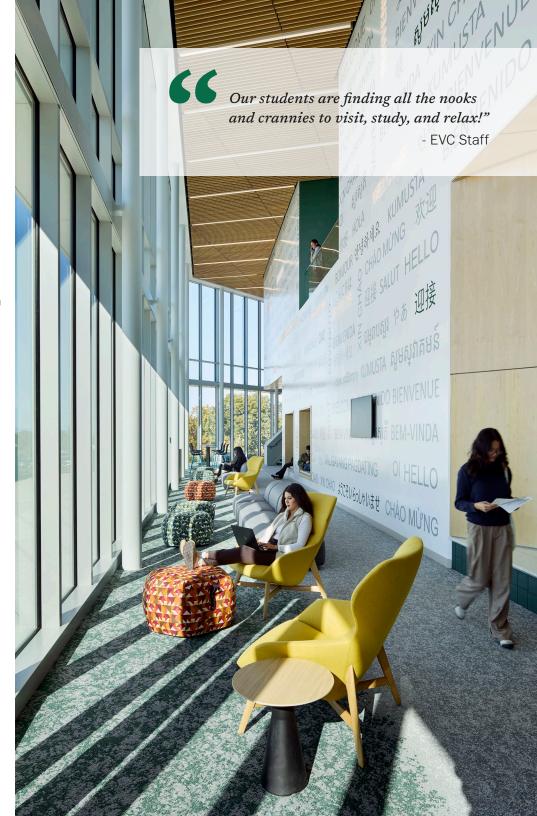
Shorten students' time to educational goal completion

How the environment supports this: Provides space for studying, collaboration, and socialization



Eliminate equity gaps in goal achievement

How the environment supports this: Increases on-campus and community-based engagement opportunities; support services are more accessible



Supporting the Educational Master Plan

SUPPORTS THE VISION



The strategic goal of shortening students' time to educational goal completion begins with helping students *start* their academic journey.

By simplifying access to support services, the design makes it easier for students to register for classes and access services. A prominent welcome desk, highlighted by a large chandelier, clearly marks the central information point. Student departments and support programs are arranged around the lobby so students can easily identify available resources. Directory maps and wayfinding tools further guide students to the right locations.

VARIETY OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

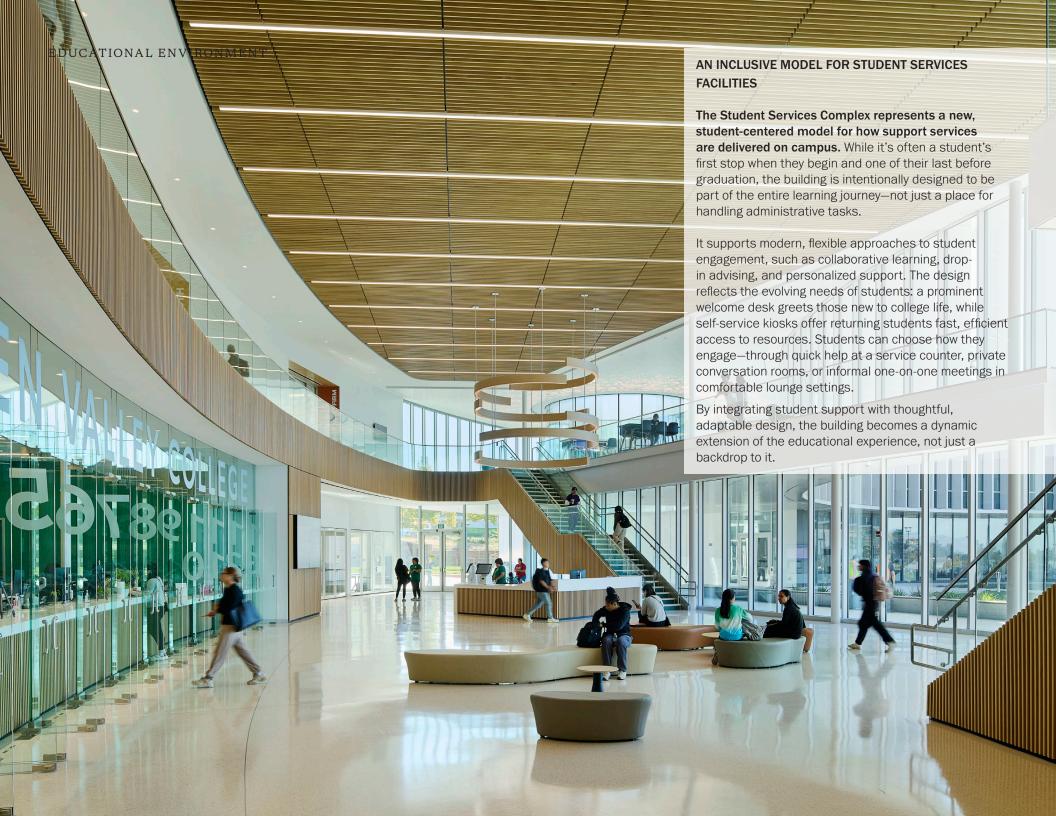


The building offers flexible furniture and gathering spaces that support modern pedagogies, peer learning, and informal advising. Furniture options range from areas for group study to quiet, individual heads-down spaces where a student may take a virtual class, and relaxed seating zones. Movable lounge furniture allows students to rearrange the space for spontaneous gatherings and social interaction. Within the student program departments are open workstations, meeting rooms, and private conversation rooms—all designed to support diverse learning and collaboration needs.

ADAPTABLE ENVIRONMENT



The college wanted a lobby that balanced openness and transparency with privacy and security. Rather than institutional-like service counters that resembled a bank, the design utilizes glass doors that act as partitions between service stations and also function as wayfinding elements. Each door can be opened or closed individually to adapt to the changing needs throughout the day or academic year. After business hours, the doors can be locked to secure workspaces while still allowing the lobby and lounge areas to remain open, preserving the overall sense of openness.





A Gateway to Campus and Community

Highly visible from Yerba Buena Road as one approaches campus, the building serves as both the new gateway to Evergreen Valley College and a symbol of civic pride and community welcome. Funded by the Measure X bond, it reflects the strong commitment of San Jose taxpayers to support students' educational journeys both locally and beyond. The project was managed by a dedicated Bond team to ensure it met community values while the District's Board of Trustees and a Citizen's Bond Oversight Committee provided financial stewardship. More than just a student facility, the building stands as a beacon of access, inclusion, and service to the entire community.







Strengthening the Campus Identity

A key objective for the college was to strengthen the EVC brand and identity. This vision was seamlessly integrated into the building's design through the use of campus colors, graphics, and logos. Exterior signage, featuring vertical fins that echo the façade design, clearly highlights each building's entrance. These design elements aim to foster community connection, promote engagement, and cultivate pride, ultimately enhancing enrollment and reinforcing the EVC community spirit. The 'Welcome Wall' featuring the major languages spoken on campus, along with EVC branding and graphics throughout, reinforces a sense of place and identity.

UNINTENDED RESULTS

The Social Stair in the lobby has served as a popular backdrop for group photos, including those of academic programs like the nursing students (shown below) and campus clubs. Students also take photos in front of—or on top of—the 3D logo sign.

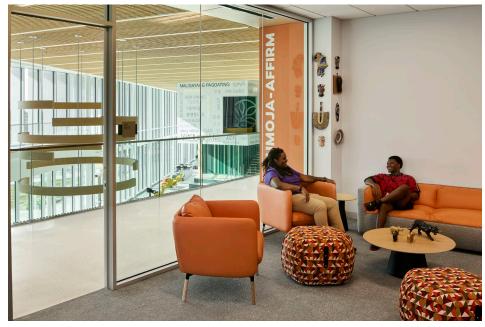






Clear and Intuitive Navigation

The previous student services facility was a maze of confusing hallways and lacked a central information point. To reduce stress and eliminate barriers—especially for new or first-generation students—the college prioritized clear, intuitive wayfinding for the design of the new complex. A prominent welcome desk and open counters streamline navigation, while the visibility of the Level 2 department entries from the lobby promotes clarity and ease for students navigating the space. To support the diverse multi-lingual campus community, the use of color throughout provides an inclusive wayfinding experience beyond reliance on written English text. Key visual cues—such as wood wall slats connecting the two lobby stairs, a chandelier highlighting the welcome desk, and a large canopy marking the main entry—guide students through the space. The goal: to make the first steps in a student's higher education journey as streamlined and stress-free as possible.



Through strategic use of color, signage, and furnishings selections, the design allows departments to express their unique identities while maintaining a cohesive whole



Supporting Student Success

An example of two key programs the building brings together are the First Stop Center and Wellness Center. The First Stop Center helps new students get started, offering guidance on college navigation, academic pathways, and campus resources. The Wellness Center provides personal counseling, crisis support, and case management to help students overcome emotional challenges. Together, these services, along with many others, create a one-stop hub for comprehensive student support—academically, personally, and emotionally.



UNINTENDED RESULTS

Since opening, the large open space of the lobby has been used for a variety of educational and campus events, such as the Research Symposium (pictured below). These informal spaces become extensions of the learning experience—supporting academic persistence and peer interaction.











