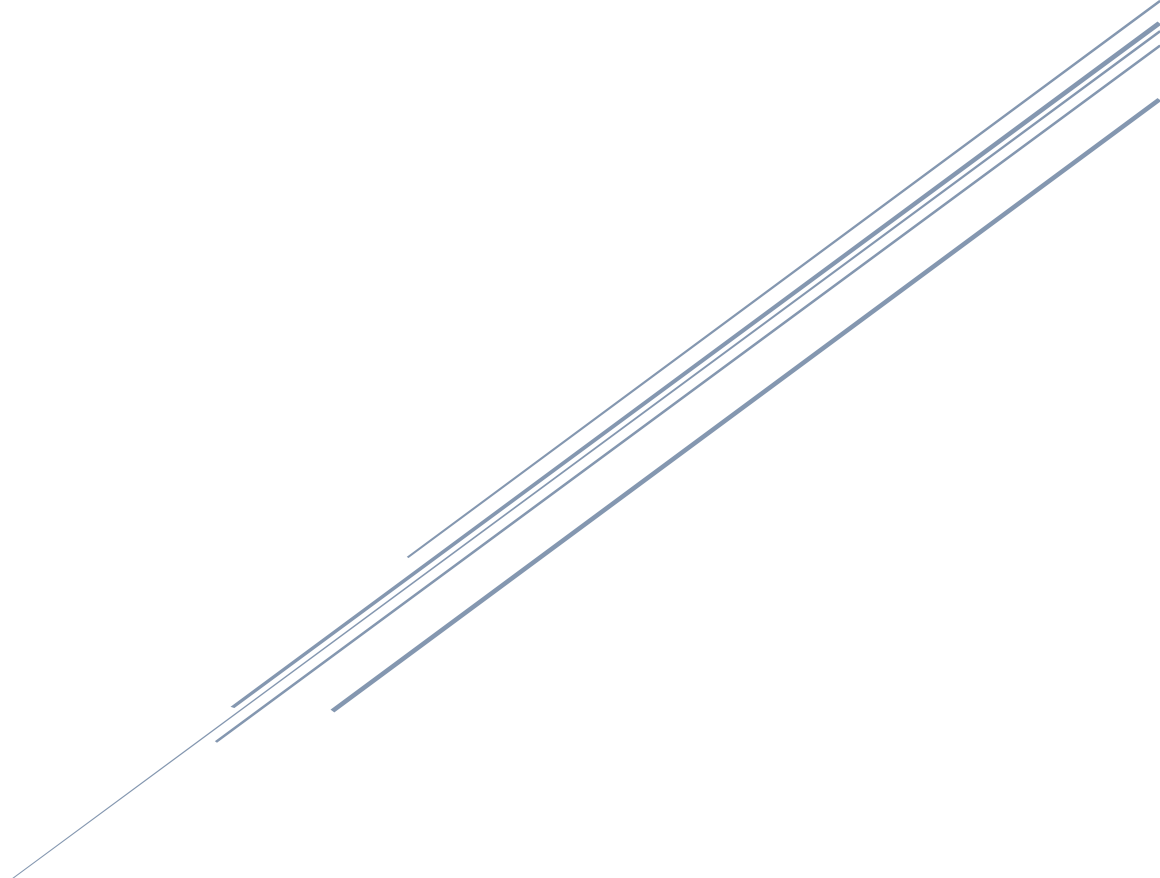


COUGAR EXPERIENCE

College of the Canyons is the place to learn, grow and have fun!

LEAP – SPRING 2022

SOLUTION TEAM PROJECT

- 
- Jim Schrage – Team Mentor
 - Hiba Edgheim – Team Lead
 - Jeff Gregor
 - Cynthia Rodriguez
 - Steve Ruys
 - Lisa Sawyer

Executive Summary

Cougar Experience aims at creating a fun and engaging campus life experience for students and the campus community as a whole.

A lot of evidence shows that students who join a 4-year university instead of a community college highlight the importance of amenities and experiences that are not typically available in community colleges. 44% of high school graduates transition to a 4-year institution and only 22% enroll in a 2-year institution.¹

Cougar Experience targets to increase student enrollment and retention by transforming College of the Canyons' Valencia campus into a more inviting space through:

- Promoting and highlighting the welcoming aspects of our campus to draw students and faculty back on campus
- Creating areas for students, staff and community to gather, socialize, engage in activities - Recreational Zones!
- Offering cutting-edge, competitive and innovative student and community events
- Re-imagining, re-designing and re-purposing key spaces on campus

The plan is to implement the below four projects within the next 1-5 years:

Project	Experience	Timeline
1	Outdoor gym & pop-up fitness events	Year 1
2	Re-imagining the Student Center Phase 1: Preview of the Student Recreational Area in the Student Union Phase 2: Design and build recreational space in the Student Union	Year 1 3 – 5 Years
3	Building wraps to create an immersive experience	Year 1
4	“Friends & Family Fun Day”	Year 1

The projected cost of all four projects is \$89,991.

Business

Cougar Experience is aimed at creating recreational zones on COC Valencia campus to make the college experience fun and memorable. We believe that College of the Canyons is the place to learn, grow and have fun!

Problem(s)/Need(s)

College enrollment has been decreasing for several reasons and fewer students are enrolling in in-person classes, especially post COVID.

One thing we are sure of is that campus life experience is a key determining factor for students, mainly those graduating high school. A lot of evidence has shown that students who join a 4-year university instead of a community college highlight the importance of amenities and experiences that are not typically available in community colleges. As per National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), data collected between the years 2010 and 2019 showed that higher percentages of high school completers immediately enrolled in 4-year institutions than in 2-year institutions. In 2019, about 44 percent of high school completers immediately enrolled in 4-year institutions and 22 percent immediately enrolled in 2-year institutions. The immediate enrollment to a 2-year college in 2010 was 27 and there was no measurable change in immediate enrollment to a 4-year institution from 2010. ¹

Also, the findings of a study completed by National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) on 33,500 students from 38 universities and colleges in 2014 showed the following:

- Enrollment
 - ▶ 68% of students report that campus recreation **facilities** influenced their decision of which college/university to attend.
 - ▶ 62% of students report that campus recreation **programs** influenced their decision of which college/university to attend.
- Participation
 - ▶ 75% of students use on-campus recreation center **facilities, programs, and services.**
 - ▶ Of those participants, 80% participate in campus recreation programs and/or activities at least once/week.
- Retention
 - ▶ 74% of students report that campus recreation **facilities** influenced their decisions to continue attending their chosen college/university.
 - ▶ 67% of students report that campus recreation **programs** influenced their decisions to continue attending their chosen college/university.

¹ Fast Facts: Immediate transition to college (51), nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=51

Our college campus is nicely landscaped and is inviting, but is not engaging, especially from a student point of view. To solve this problem and increase our student enrollment and retention, we need to address the following:

- Modeling the 4-year campus life experience
- Eliminating the shift students go through when they transition from high schools rich with recreational facilities to a community college
- Drawing more students to take in-person classes and engaging them to keep them on campus

Solution(s)

COC should not be a typical community college that only offers diplomas and certificates, it should offer students the opportunity to socialize, network, grow and have fun. As innovators, we want to elevate students' experiences through creating recreational areas on the Valencia campus in the form of four projects:

1. Outdoor Gym & Pop-up Fitness Events

Exercising outdoors is known to have multiple physical and mental benefits. The Cougar Experience will create an outdoor gym by installing eleven beginner to intermediate level outdoor fitness equipment near the coffee kiosk and amphitheater area to promote good health and create a social gathering space that is ADA compliant. The fitness equipment will be installed on a rubber tile ground and each piece of equipment will have a sign explaining clearly how to safely utilize it.

The Cougar Experience will also provide spontaneous, intermittent outdoor fitness sessions (Pop-up Zumba, Yoga, Meditation, Tai Chi, etc.). These events will be added to the COC calendar of events and will be popping up in different locations on Valencia campus so that the campus community would have the chance to explore several campus locations (Honor Grove, near Mentry Hall, the grassy area behind the tennis courts, soccer field, etc.). The sessions will be conducted by volunteers from throughout the campus.

2. Re-imagining the Student Center

The Cougar Experience team will be an integral part of the design user group in charge of the Student Center Modernization.

In the meantime, we will create a preview of what the Student Recreational Area would offer once the Student Center is rebuilt. We will utilize a corner in the current Cougar Café and add a few games (air hockey, foosball, table tennis, cornhole, connect 4, jenga, etc.) for students to use while hanging out in the cafeteria.

The renovated Student Union will host the Student Recreational Area, which will have comfortable furniture, additional game pieces, relaxing music. Designated walls of the

Student Union Center will showcase student art and photography. An inspiration wall will feature names of alumni who have gone on to play professional sports, become rocket scientists, prominent political figures and more which will inspire students and establish, reinforce and perpetuate COC's legacy for success.

3. Building Wraps

Creating the Cougar Experience will include enhancing the look of certain building(s) on COC Valencia Campus by wrapping them. Various designs for the wraps will have a focus on the cougar head/logo, fortifying the idea that you are in cougar space (i.e., Home of the Cougars) and adding appealing and inviting color to the campus.

The suggested buildings/locations for this project are:

- Internal wall of the Cougar Café (Preview of Student Recreational Area)
- North side of the East Gym (EPEK)
- Upper left west side corner of EPEK (facing baseball field)
- Backside of the hitter's/batter's eye
- Modular (near baseball field) - Cougar head with "Home of the Cougars"
- Side of West Gym (WPEK)

4. Friends & Family Fun Day

The Cougar Experience team will organize an annual, one-day event dedicated to the enrichment of the student experience at COC and to engage community members of all ages. The event will be free and open to the public to allow community members to enjoy our engaging campus, which ties in with our philosophy of partnering with the community. The event will take place in October on a Saturday and would be an opportunity for student clubs, alliances, and departments to do some friend-raising. There will be music, performances, food trucks, and activities for all age groups including face painting and storytelling for younger kids.

The event will be heavily marketed through social media campaigns, radio spots, bridge banners, post cards sent to community residences, on-campus flyers, advertising on our COC marquees and TV monitors.

Fit with COC Strategic Goals

- **Access**
 - ▶ The Cougar Experience will promote equitable student access by offering the improved amenities and activities to all COC students and staff
 - ▶ Benefits of the campus life experience will result in increased enrollment across all student demographics at COC, including high school students, 24 or younger and 25+
- **Engagement**

- ▶ The Cougar Experience will cultivate a welcoming environment that fosters engagement for students, staff and the community
 - ▶ The modernization of the Student Center, recreational zones around the College, beautification of certain buildings with the addition of wraps, the Friends & Family Fun Day and the overall campus climate will promote a sense of belonging, resulting in increased student participation and interconnectedness with the campus life at COC
 - ▶ Upgrades to the campus, and specifically the outdoor fitness equipment and fitness pop-up session offerings, will sustain the well-being of our students by providing opportunities to improve their health and create areas for social gatherings
- **Success**
 - ▶ The Cougar Experience will promote student success and motivate students to attain their goals by creating the environment and providing the physical resources to entice students to come to and stay on campus
 - ▶ By creating an innovative, immersive experience, student persistence should be increased term-to-term, as students look forward to coming to COC

Target Markets

In terms of demographics, the Cougar Experience targets COC students, K-12 students, Santa Clarita Community in general and COC Staff. Below are some details about these populations, their personalities and/or behaviors:

- **COC students:** current and prospective students (high school students) are the driver for this project since they will be the primary users of the Cougar Experience recreational zones. Recent studies show that Gen Z prefers the face-to-face mode of communication, which is why we are creating these areas for them to meet in-person and socialize.
- **Santa Clarita Community:** as innovators, we dream to enhance the locals' sense of community by offering better physical resources, a better overall campus climate as well as engaging them with our events:
 - ▶ Adults would feel a sense of belonging and might turn into adult re-entry students
 - ▶ Parents would get a feel for what their kids are experiencing on campus
 - ▶ Young children would become familiar with the campus and would hopefully look forward to joining COC one day
- **COC Staff:** we'll offer them convenient spots to meet others, network and enjoy the campus while engaging in on-campus activities.

Competition

On-Campus

- The direct competition to this initiative on campus is that students and staff have access to the fitness facilities in Kinesiology through classes and the Employee Wellness Program.
- Indirect competition on the campus are the pathways, stairs, trails, and old SNAC fitness station around campus.

Off-Campus

- The direct and in-direct competition to this initiative that are off-campus are the local parks, trails, paseos, lakes, gyms, and fitness studios around the Santa Clarita Valley.
- Another direct competition for this initiative is the Student Wellness Programs at other colleges and universities. Examples of this are the Student Wellness program at L.A. Mission College, and the Student Recreation Center and Oasis at CSUN.

Understanding the local competition is an important step in knowing the challenges facing this initiative. We also know that prospective students are leaving our valley to go to other colleges and universities. We believe that providing state-of-the-art recreational facilities and innovative programming will be another reason for students to come to College of the Canyons. Several studies have been conducted over the last decade that show student wellness and recreation programs on college campuses are a driving force in retention, success, and engagement. The study mentioned above showed that 68% of all students surveyed were influenced to go to their college or university because of the recreational facilities.

College of the Canyons has always been a place of innovation and creativity, which is why this initiative aligns with the mission of the college.

Team

- Jim Schrage – Team Mentor
Assistant Superintendent/VP, Facilities Planning, Operations & Construction
- Hiba Edgheim – Team Lead and Employment Center Coordinator
Achiever, Analytical, Responsibility, Relator, Individualization
- Jeff Gregor – Dean, School of Business
Achiever, Positivity, Strategic, Communication, Developer
- Cynthia Rodriguez – Administrative Assistant V – Business Services
Achiever, Self-Assurance, Input, Relator, Analytical
- Steve Ruys – Dean, Physical Education, Kinesiology, Recreation, & Athletics
Command, Self-Assurance, Relator, Competition, Significance
- Lisa Sawyer – Executive Director, Enterprise Applications
Analytical, Discipline, Responsibility, Focus, Belief

Financial Projections/Cost Estimates

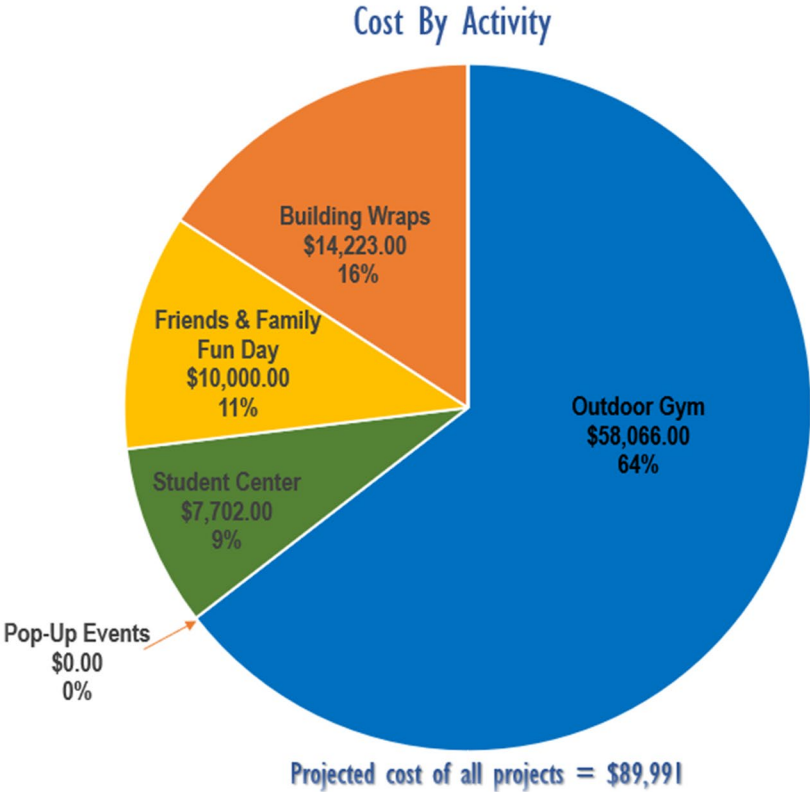
The project costs are associated with the four specific activities. Once the specific items have been purchased and installed, there is minimal maintenance or ongoing costs associated with these projects.

The Cost per activity is outlined below.

1. Outdoor Gym & Pop-up Fitness Events
 - Fitness Equipment costs = \$58,066
 - Pop-up Events costs = \$0
2. Reimagining the Student Center
 - Total anticipated costs = \$7,702
3. Building Wraps
 - Total anticipated costs = \$14,223
4. Friends & Family Fun Day
 - Total anticipated costs (rentals, marketing, other services) = \$10,000

Complete cost of all projects = \$89,991

The goal is to simultaneously look for outside sponsors to assist with ongoing costs and upkeep.



There is no tangible way to quantify the return on investment. Although there is an anticipated increase in morale, sense of community, and positive impact on student return/enrollment, there are too many extrinsic factors this project is not able to control.

The Cougar Experience Team Ongoing

- Track and invite Alumni to provide updates on successes for the inspiration wall
- Continued coordination of Friends & Family Fun Day
- Ensure experiential activities and designs are in line with current trends
- Continue Cougar Culture additions
- Refresh of Cougar Experience locations and items