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CSUN gets \$2 million for arts center

Posted by Carmen Ramos Chandler
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Seeking to expand arts opportunities in the Valley, L.A. County Board of Supervisors Chairman **Zev Yaroslavsky** announced a \$2 million contribution for the new Performing Arts Center at California State University, Northridge, part of a unique new initiative to explore arts partnerships between the university and the county's Music Center.

During a morning ceremony on the Cal State Northridge campus, Yaroslavsky presented a symbolic \$2 million check to University President **Jolene Koester**. The contribution is one of the largest yet for Cal State Northridge's 1,700-seat, \$100 million performing arts center project, which is due to begin construction this year and be completed by late 2009.

During the ceremony, officials from Cal State Northridge and the county-owned Music Center, based in downtown Los Angeles, also signed a formal agreement to begin exploring joint programming and other collaborations. The goal is to expand arts opportunities in the underserved Valley region that is now home to 2 million people.

Preliminary discussions have already commenced between Cal State Northridge and the Music Center and two of its resident companies — the Center Theatre Group and the Los Angeles Opera — regarding future presentations on the Northridge campus.

"We are very proud today to unveil this unprecedented partnership between the county and Cal State Northridge to enrich the performing arts experience for the people of the San Fernando Valley," said Supervisor Yaroslavsky, who represents most of the Valley. "Thanks to the collaborative participation of the

Music Center and its resident companies, I am confident this will become an outstanding cultural amenity for the Valley, the Music Center and arts lovers in general."

The county Music Center, one of the three largest performing arts centers in the nation, draws about 1.3 million people annually to performances at its four major downtown venues. Upon its opening, the Performing Arts Center at Cal State Northridge, also publicly operated, will be the largest arts venue in the San Fernando Valley and adjoining valleys.

"As the intellectual, economic and cultural heart of the San Fernando Valley and beyond, Cal State Northridge already hosts hundreds of performances each year that are local and affordable for Valley residents. This financial support from Supervisor Yaroslavsky and the county of Los Angeles is a powerful endorsement for our Performing Arts Center project. And, through our new alliance with the Music Center, we now have the potential to bring even greater arts opportunities to the university and the region," said President Koester.

Joining Yaroslavsky and Koester at the ceremony were **John Emerson**, chairman of the Music Center's Board of Directors; **Howard Sherman**, the Music Center's vice president for operations; and **Laura Zucker**, executive director of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. Also representing the university were **Ralph Hoskins**, the new executive director for the university's Performing Arts Center, and attorney/Valley leader **David Fleming**, vice chairman of the university's Imagine the Arts fundraising campaign for the center.

Since its inception, Cal State Northridge officials have planned for the campus's Performing Arts Center



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Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky, left, presents CSUN President Jolene Koester, second from left, with a \$2 million check.

to be a cultural and economic landmark for the Valley. The center will be located on the Cal State Northridge campus at the northwest corner of Nordhoff Street and Lindley Avenue, with easy access to the San Diego (405), Ventura (101) and Ronald Reagan (118) freeways.

The Performing Arts Center at CSUN will include sophisticated features such as the ability to acoustically tune its main Performance Hall to fit particular presentations, whether they are music, dance, theater, films or speakers. The hall also will be large enough to accommodate full-scale Broadway productions and operas, opening the Valley to such shows for the first time.

"The Music Center of Los Angeles County welcomes this wonderful new performance venue in an important, populous, but underserved area of the county," said Music Center Chairman

John Emerson. "Obviously, the Music Center serves audiences from the Valley. But as much as we do, we can only scratch the surface in terms of the rich artistic possibilities that can be made available."

Emerson added, "We are honored that Supervisor Yaroslavsky asked us to provide counsel to CSUN as it builds this new center. The Music Center and its management team are uniquely positioned to share the wealth of information we have garnered. The center at Cal State Northridge will bring a new performance venue to more citizens and greater richness to the mix of arts in the county and many exciting opportunities for us to collaborate and share innovative ideas."

Editor's note: This story was cut for space reasons.

Carmen Ramos Chandler handles public relations for CSUN. She posted this story June 15 to the Northridge hub on valleynews.com.