

Growing and Transforming for Our Community

By Dr. Gregorio A. Ponce



In 1959, the vision and hard work of many community leaders from all over Imperial County came to fruition with the establishment of San Diego State University Imperial Valley (SDSU IV). Today, SDSU IV serves over 900 students a year with 10 undergraduate degrees, 3 teaching credentials, and 1 master's degree program.

The time has come for SDSU IV to once again grow and transform to better serve our community.

Over the past two years, I have been listening to the ideas, visions, and aspirations about how to propel SDSU IV forward from various Imperial County groups and individuals, SDSU IV faculty, staff, students, and alumni, and our SDSU leaders in San Diego. What follows is an outline of an initiative that brings together all that has been shared into a comprehensive, integrated, and flexible plan of action to better meet the higher educational needs of our community.

STUDENT PATHWAYS

Currently, SDSU IV accepts eligible high school students on a part-time basis through its IVUP partnership with Imperial Valley College; college transfer students from Imperial Valley College; and graduate/credential students. This initiative aims to add a new pathway to SDSU IV by offering a full-time freshmen program for eligible high school graduates.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Improving student access to SDSU IV necessitates strengthening current programs (Credentials, Mathematics, Nursing) and reopening viable inactive graduate programs (Public Administration). Transformational growth requires adding new undergraduate programs such as General Business, Nursing, Social Work, Agriculture, Engineering, and Interdisciplinary Studies.

INFRASTRUCTURE

More students and more programs go hand-in-hand with securing resources to add buildings, hiring faculty and staff, establishing endowments, providing internships, and awarding student scholarships.

A basic premise of this initiative is that SDSU IV is the only public institution of higher education to support the economic development of Imperial County through the granting of Bachelor and Master degrees. While our K-12 school system and community college are growing, and graduating students at a pace consistent with the needs of Imperial County, SDSU IV is not.

Case in point: From 2011 to 2015, the Census Bureau reported that 66% of county residents (25 and older) have completed a high school degree or higher. In the same time period, 14% have completed a bachelor's degree. This means there are thousands of additional residents in Imperial County that can be served by SDSU IV in their pursuit of bachelor degrees, credentials, and graduate degrees.

Without a doubt, SDSU IV will need the financial support of Imperial County leaders, philanthropists, corporations, public agencies, and other organizations that share in the vision held by so many back in 1959 -- that SDSU IV can and should be a thriving four-year university meeting the higher education needs of its residents.

Dr. Gregorio A. Ponce is a native of Imperial County, a Professor of Mathematics Education, and Dean for SDSU Imperial Valley.