



# West Valley VIEW

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## College weathering economic storm well

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Estrella Mountain Community College took some sage advice from the Boy Scouts and decided to "be prepared" for state budget cuts.

The college found ways to cut unnecessary spending before the state Legislature even made its final economic plan.

Despite a stormy economic climate, Estrella Mountain Community College is continuing to grow. At a time when many institutions and businesses are barely keeping their heads above water, the community college in Avondale is continuing to thrive. Construction has begun on Mariposa Hall, new classes are continually added to the schedule and staff positions are secure.

"When the state began to formulate plans to balance the budget shortfall, our district office asked the college to be proactive in planning for a reduction of 2 percent of our operational budget equaling \$457,000 over a two-year period," college spokeswoman Carissa Pool said.

While the college had to make some decisions about where to cut spending, officials made sure those cuts were virtually invisible to students.

The cuts came in areas such as business travel, contractual services, supplies and event planning, said Sue Tavakoli, vice president of administrative services.

"We have made these cuts without having to impact employees' jobs and students' education," she said. "In making these decisions, we wanted to maintain our core focus."

A cut in capital state aid has also been made, equaling \$220,000. While it wasn't easy, the college has found ways to maintain the level of services it provides, Tavakoli said.

"These cuts are being absorbed into the background," she said. "We are here to serve the students and we want to continue to offer the highest level of service to the community as possible."

Estrella Mountain Community College is part of the Maricopa Community College District, which has 10 colleges in the Valley. Estrella's operating budget for this fiscal year is \$23 million.

While many industries are suffering, the community college is flourishing with students coming in to get an education to enhance their career opportunities.

"Enrollment is doing excellent," Tavakoli said. "We are noticing about 10 percent growth. So there's a ray of hope there."

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