

# EMCC prepares to open performing arts center

Submitted by Charity Yodis on Tue, 12/09/2014 - 12:00am



*CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES on Estrella Mountain Community College's new performing arts center Dec. 3 in Avondale.*

Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale is preparing for the opening of its new 30,000-square-foot performing arts center in the spring.

Construction crews first broke ground a year ago, and EMCC officials said they are tentatively planning for a grand opening April 2, 2015.

Though construction has been in the works for about a year, the project has been in the works for more than a decade.

The \$12.4 million building is funded by the interest off a bond voters approved for the Maricopa County Community College District in 2004, according to officials.

Currently, guitar students practice next to the math and reading classrooms and dance students share the floor with the physical education classes.

The performing arts center will give music, dance, acting and other arts students the space to practice, and it will make room for future performing arts courses.

“I’m really excited about it,” Tim Butterfield, EMCC theater technical coordinator, said. “It’s giving the opportunity to house some classes that we weren’t able to previously house.”

The college’s first theater majors are set to graduate in the spring of 2016, he said.

Kathleen Iudicello, EMCC dean of academic affairs who recently joined the West Valley Arts Council’s board of directors, said the performing arts center grew out of student and community need.

“It’s been over a 10-year process, working with the district, working with [the West Valley Arts Council] ... to create the PAC, which came from a student and community need for a performance venue and a learning space for performing artists in this part of the West Valley,” she said.

She said she hopes to bring in more local professional artists to train students through her partnership with the arts council.

“We’re just incredibly excited about this, and we’re really pleased to be able to meet student demand,” she said.

The venue will include a main theater stage with nearly 300 seats and an orchestra pit, a black box theater room, dance studio, music classes, a costume lab, a makeup lab and a technology lab where students can learn to do light design and other performance related tech work.

The main lobby will include a welcome center and displays with student artwork. The outside area is designed to allow future outdoor performances as well.

“We’ll really be able to give students the full experience behind the scenes and on the stage,” Iudicello said.

In addition to being a place for students to practice and showcase what they are learning, the performing arts center will also be available for community classes and use.

“We have this organic interest in the fine arts programs,” said Sue Tavakoli, EMCC vice president of administrative services. “So [the performing arts center] is going to help support and grow our program to a great extent, and also it’s a venue for the community to use when it’s available.”

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