

# LTCC on path to become 4-year destination college

By Kathryn Reed

A bachelor's degree with Lake Tahoe Community College's seal. That could be a reality for students graduating in 2016 if college President Kindred Murillo gets her way.

She would also like to turn the two-year institution into a destination college – as in people would move to South Lake Tahoe to go to college here.



LTCC President Kindred Murillo has big plans for the South Lake Tahoe college. Photo/LTN file

A few select programs would be expanded or introduced for students to complete all four years of study at LTCC. She foresees turning the fire science program into four years, possibly environmental sciences, as well as sports medicine.

With LTCC having the highest transfer rate to the UC and CSU systems of the eight small community colleges, this proves

local students are seeking a four-year degree.

The idea is for the four-year programs to complement other things the area has to offer – which translates into being able to work in the region upon graduation, as well as not competing with the UC and CSU systems.

Plenty of potential roadblocks could thwart Murillo's plans of LTCC starting as a four-year college in fall 2014, but she is not shy about confronting the challenges head-on.

"It requires building community support, support through the community college system and the Legislature," Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It's possible the state will launch a pilot program that LTCC could be part of. If that doesn't come to fruition, Murillo is prepared to work with officials in Sacramento to have LTCC be a test case for a community college to expand its offerings.

Murillo said with higher education in California going through major changes, now is the time to try new things – like having a community college offer a four-year degree.

The board of education at its retreat earlier this summer voiced support for staff to pursue this goal.

Even if LTCC does not evolve into a four-year institution, Murillo and the board are committed to attracting students from out of the area. This will require building student housing on campus. She said parents don't want their offspring to be living in apartments or hotel rooms right out of high school.

"Becoming a 24/7 campus is the linchpin to being a destination college," Murillo said while sitting in her office, with plenty of developable land outside her window.

Besides recruiting students from California and Nevada, Murillo wants a true push to lure international students here.

She expects to work on this more in the 2013-14 school year. Why she believes it will be more successful than what the college tried a few years ago is that she would employ people who do this for a living.

“We need to globalize this college,” she said. “It could be a great economic development tool for this community.”

But to entice some of those students who might not be thinking of Lake Tahoe as a college destination, Murillo also knows the campus needs upgrading.

“We don’t want to let the college deteriorate. Instructors and students deserve modern facilities,” Murillo said. Plus, using technology that is found in the workplace is critical to being able to land a job.

While the college once had classrooms in a motel, it moved to its current location off Al Tahoe Boulevard in 1988. It has grown since then, with the newest building – the library – opening six years ago this month.

But the science classrooms and labs are 24-years-old. Technology has changed, how classes are taught has evolved. At a minimum, a remodel is needed; though a whole new science complex could be possible.

The college has submitted an initial capital outlay plan to the state chancellor’s office. This meant looking at how every inch of space is used – even closets. The goal is to obtain an efficiency remodel grant.

Any grant will require the college to come up with matching funds, but that dollar figure is unknown. It would depend on what the state allocates and what all the college wants to do.

Besides the science upgrades, most of the technology on campus needs to be brought into the 21st century. New servers are part of those upgrades. The art department is also in drastic

need of being revamped. A less visible improvement that is needed is fixing the roof.

The finishing touches of the initial facilities master plan are being worked out. The first reading of it is expected to be before the board Sept. 25. It's expected to be a fluid document that talks about the college's needs for the next 15 to 20 years.

To pay for the upgrades or have a match for state dollars the college is talking about going to voters in 2014 at the earliest to ask them to approve a general obligation bond. The amount would depend on the needs of the college.