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Cal State Los Angeles prepares for two new leaders

By James Figueroa, Staff Writer
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Posted: 12/01/2012 06:19:08 PM PST
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LOS ANGELES - Take a look at the Cal State Los Angeles campus today, and it's easy to see big changes since 1998, when Charles Reed became chancellor of the Cal State system.

A series of construction projects in the past decade have transformed the campus, right down to the circular welcome center in the middle of the main entryway.

CSULA is on the verge of even bigger changes in its leadership - not only because of Reed's departure, but because President James Rosser plans to retire by the end of the school year, after 33 years.

Administrators and teachers credit Rosser with keeping the university afloat through the difficult economic downturn, while Reed has been targeted more often in student protests on campus.

Rosser declined to return calls seeking comment.

"We know that the job of being chancellor is really a difficult one," said Melina Abdullah,

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president of the California Faculty Association's Los Angeles chapter. "We always expected the chancellor to advocate for a public system of higher education. Most have been disappointed."

The mood on campus has vastly improved with the passage of Proposition 30, which staved off drastic cuts at CSULA, Abdullah said.

"I don't know if we would have been able to call ourselves a university," she added.

The six colleges at CSULA do have some top-notch programs, and gained traction in recent years with the addition of doctorate programs in education and nursing, said Ashish Vaidya, the CSULA provost and vice president of academic affairs.

Construction of a new green energy center is also on the horizon

Vaidya is particularly happy that CSULA ranked sixth in this year's national universities ranking by Washington Monthly.

"We're well-positioned for whoever is the next president," he said. "That person will find a very engaged campus, great students right in the middle of one of the great global cities in the world."

The recession created some difficulties for students who found fewer class options, but the university responded by tailoring its programs for more precise coursework and improvising student advisement, Vaidya said.

"Our focused attention is making sure we improve our retention and graduation rates," he said.

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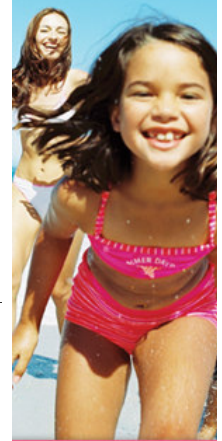
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