Serving the Community

A large percentage of area High School seniors choose to attend Sierra College after graduation:

- Nevada Joint Union High School District: 30%
- Placer Union High School District: 37%
- Rocklin Unified School District: 35%
- Roseville Joint Union High School District: 32%
- Tahoe Truckee Unified School District: 16%
- Western Placer Unified School District: 35%

Meet our new President

Last year, Sierra College celebrated its 75th anniversary and as we reflected on how far we have come since the early 1900s, we took a step into a new future with the selection of our sixth president, William H. Duncan IV.

Mr. Duncan, or Willy to all who have met him, was selected as the President of Sierra College in July 2011 after an extensive search. Prior to his arrival at Sierra College, Willy was the President of Taft College where over a course of 14 years he progressed rapidly through a series of leadership positions. At the time of his appointment as President of Taft College, Willy was the youngest president in the California community college system. Born and raised in Bakersfield, Willy received his BA in Business Administration and his MBA from CSU-Bakersfield.

Willy and his wife, Melody, have two sons and a daughter, who is a student at Whitney High School. They are excited to be living in Rocklin and have thoroughly enjoyed exploring the surrounding area. “Everywhere I go, I find examples of how Sierra has enriched lives and helped local businesses thrive,” Willy noted. “I am honored to be a part of such a vibrant organization.”

Willy has been a Rotarian for 14 years and he has enjoyed visiting the area Rotary Clubs. He is also active in the area Chambers of Commerce and is currently serving on the board of LEED (Linking Education and Economic Development) and Valley Vision.
1930: Sierra Normal College is established in Auburn.
1903: Placer High School District purchases the Normal College.
1914: College classes are offered at the newly named Placer Junior College.
1920: Placer Junior College is abandoned due to enrollment loss caused by World War I.

1930
- before 1930: 1882 Sierra Normal College is established in Auburn.
- 1903 Placer High School District purchases the Normal College.
- 1914 College classes are offered at the newly named Placer Junior College.
- 1920 Placer Junior College is abandoned due to enrollment loss caused by World War I.

1936: Voters agree to reestablish the college in Auburn. The college is again named Placer Junior College.
1903: Placer High School District purchases the Normal College.
1941: World War II. Enrollment dropped significantly when Americans of Japanese ancestry were forced into internment camps. By 1943 student population dropped to 53.
1946: 467 students were enrolled—half were veterans.
1949: 856 students were enrolled in 1949 and the Placer College facility was bursting at the seams.
1950: Placer College won the State Championship in Men’s Basketball. In 1954 Placer College was renamed Sierra College. The college athletes gained a new nickname, “Wolverines.”
1961: Rocklin campus opens. The district had more square miles, 3,200, than students.

1960
- 1960s: The student population increased by 45% in 1962 alone. A 32% increase happened the next year. And a 40% boost the next. By the turn of the 1970s, more than 4,000 students were enrolled.

President/ Superintendents:
- 1936-1941: Dr. John Napier
- 1942-1948: Harold Chastain
- 1948-1971: Harold Weaver
Cultivating the community

Natural History Museum

The Natural History Museum was created when Sewell Hall, the college’s first science building, was constructed in 1960. It was the brainchild of Sierra College Zoology professor Ray Underhill who felt school children and community members would benefit from viewing artifacts of nature. In 1964, the museum received two major donations, a collection of mounted specimens from Dr. Nathan Dubin’s big game hunts in Africa and a Polar Bear mount from the Koshel Family. Since that time, the museum collection has continued to grow in size and importance.

In the 1960s, through a state-funded community outreach effort, museum staff engaged the local elementary schools presenting to students and the teachers and providing instructional kits for their classrooms. These were accompanied by guided tours of the museum and hands-on activities.

The museum expanded its outreach efforts by offering field trips to the Pacific coast or the Sierra Nevada, Saturday “Family Days” as well as monthly multi-media and planetarium programs. Over the course of a year, the museum hosted an estimated 27,000 visitors.

With the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, the Community Services Tax was eliminated and the outreach efforts ceased. But the Museum was preserved through the dedication of volunteers and Sierra College staff. Each year new specimens are acquired; the museum now holds displays of a Gomphothere, an Irish elk, elephant, a rhino and a grey whale to name just a few. The Arboretum was expanded to include a cactus and desert rock garden, representative of the three desert ecosystems in the west.

The Museum continues to be an integral component in the education of Sierra College students through the use of specimens in lectures, museum tours, educational displays, and field trips. It provides current college students with an experience unlike any other community college in California.

In the 2011 assessment of the museum, the American Association of Museums noted, “The geology and paleontology exhibits are noteworthy. Many are of regional and in some instances, national significance.” The committee added, “The students, faculty and staff of Sierra College, the community of Rocklin and the people of California should be proud of the Natural History Museum.”

Visit the museum website www.sierracollege.edu/museum