

## EDUCATION

### VVC breaks ground on new Automotive/Welding complex

**\$6.5 million project will include lab space, lecture classrooms**



Balfour Beatty Construction and Victor Valley College Board of Trustees members dig in during a groundbreaking ceremony at the construction site of the new Automotive/Welding Vocational Complex at the college on Monday. Jose Huerta, Daily Press

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VICTORVILLE — Victor Valley College officials and regional dignitaries gathered Monday morning for a groundbreaking ceremony of the new Automotive/Welding Vocational Complex.

The structure will include a new Automotive/Diesel Mechanics lab space, new Welding Lab and an additional 6,240 associated square feet for lecture classrooms.

The project, costing \$6.5 million, utilized a competitive bidding process, according to college officials, and is funded through Measure JJ bonds.

“It’s a great marriage — the automotive and welding departments — that will make students more valuable to employers,” said John Sweet, VVC Automotive Technology Instructor.

Sweet, the soon-to-be retired department chair of the automotive department, and Gary Menser, the recently retired chair of the welding department, gave the welcoming address and flag salute Monday.

VVC Superintendent/President Dr. Roger Wagner introduced the ceremony’s special guests, including VVC Board of Trustees President John Pinkerton.

“This is an industry that I don’t see going away anytime soon,” Pinkerton noted of the automotive field, which he said is a practical skill the college teaches that is sometimes overlooked amid more “academic” programs. “Sometimes we need real work being done by real folks, and I value that a whole bunch.”

Sumeet Gadi, vice president of Balfour Beatty Construction, said the project will take six months to complete. Construction began two weeks ago, he told the Daily Press, beginning with one week of demolition followed by another week of grading.

“We are excited about the number of local contractors,” Gadi said. He said there are six local contractors working on the project, and almost 80 percent are from the Inland Empire and High Desert.

VVC Director of Facilities Steven Garcia, who Wagner said “made it all happen,” led a workshop recently for local contractors to learn “how to be competitive in the bidding process.”

“We want to bring local contractors in and educate the public on the bidding process, not only for this project, but for future projects,” Garcia said.

The new complex will provide for a service writer program, machine shop and bay space for car lifts, while the welding department will also be equipped with a new facility.

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