Maya Angelou said, “We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.”

As we await “the butterfly” of our new Student Services Center, all of us — students, employees and community members — have no choice but to “admit” the changes we are going through to achieve this beautiful new building.

The good news is, after nearly four years of planning, construction of our new Student Services Center is underway. The bad news is that same construction means (temporary) inconvenience.

In fact, as I write this, the constant chirp of heavy equipment back-up beepers is serenading me and the rest of the campus.

I ask for everyone’s patience as we move through construction on our way to better serving students and the public with this “one stop” facility that will house under one roof most of the services our students need.

Some of the “work a round” students and staff are experiencing include temporary closure of a Bradley Road entrance and the northeast parking lot. The Bradley Road entrance will remain closed while our contractor develops a new loop road to the Children’s Center Lab parking lot.

This new loop road is anticipated to be ready by Aug. 23 for the beginning of the fall 2010 semester. Should it not be ready, we are working on a backup plan that includes a temporary entrance at Jones Street.

In the meantime, access to the Children’s Center Lab and Science Building parking lots is available.

from College Drive near Building O (northwest side of campus).

I have heard the concerns of students regarding parking for the summer and fall semesters. In anticipation of the loss of parking at the north end of campus, we completed an expansion several months ago of the Community Education Center parking lot and a new parking lot adjacent to the tennis courts at the south end of campus.

Between these two new parking lots, the campus gained 184 new spaces to replace the 243 lost with the closing of the northeast lot.

In addition, before the fall 2010 semester begins, we will provide 150 more temporary parking spaces near building S, bringing the net gain in parking spaces to 91. Students may not be able to park in the same area they are used to, but we are working hard to assure there will be enough parking for all.

For more information about the entrance and parking detours, you can go to our website at www.hancockcollege.edu and click the red “Santa Maria campus construction detour” link on our homepage.

While we work through the challenges necessary to complete the Student Services Center project, and soon the Children’s Center addition, which breaks ground in spring 2011, I want to remind all of us what we are working toward.

Our current Student Services building was completed in the 1960s when enrollment at Allan Hancock College was less than 2,000 students. With more than 11,500 students now, the need for an improved facility is great.

The Student Services Center is designed so that students can complete their business quickly and efficiently. The building features an open transaction lobby where students can easily access Admissions and Records, Financial Aid and the Cashier in one location.

The new center will also house multiple departments in the same space, allowing for increased efficiency and sharing between departments and staff. Some of the programs set to reside in the center are the Learning Assistance Program (Disabled Students Programs and Services), Counseling, Testing and Assessment, the University Transfer Center and the Career and Technical Education Center, among others.

In less than two years, the Student Services Center will be an impressive two-story structure that will serve as our “mirror door” to the Santa Maria campus and a welcoming sight for new and returning students and community members.

We have put every effort into making this center beautiful, from the landscaping, including an exterior water feature, to our desire to display public art in and around the building. We are also proud that the new center is LEED-certified sustainable building.

Thank you for your continued support of Allan Hancock College, first through passage of bond Measure I, the funding that is making this transformation possible, and now as you grin and bear it with us through the construction dust and noise.

I hope you are as excited as we are to be making progress on this project. Great strides cannot be made without great effort. We believe this building, and the others to come, will serve our students well for decades to come.

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