

TAKING TO THE AIRWAVES



SUN-STAR PHOTO BY JACK BLAND

UC Merced's Radio Club members are planning on launching the school's first FM radio broadcast from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. today.

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UC Merced students today will take a first step toward their dream of starting a campus radio station.

Students from the campus' Radio Club and Engineering Service Learning Program will initiate the school's first FM radio broadcast from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., ac-

cording to Christian Ayeni, president of the Radio Club.

Ayeni, 19, said the students still have to determine the radio frequency of their broadcast and it only will be able to be heard within a half-mile radius of the campus (the students are using an amateur transmitter that uses one watt of power).

Even though the broadcast will be small-scale, Ayeni said it marks a starting point for UC Merced's radio aspirations.

"I am excited about it and nervous at the same time," Ayeni said. "I really want to put on a good show."

Uday Bali, 21, a student with Engineering Service Learning Program, said the broadcast will also serve as a test for future broadcasts.

"It's basically setting the foundation and showing people we are capable of having a radio station at UC Merced,"

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Bali said.

The broadcast also can be heard on the Internet at www.ucmradio.com.

Ayeni said Thursday's broadcast will include student news, music and discussion.

A second broadcast will occur during the school's Bobcat Day on April 14, Ayeni said.

Students from the campus' Engineering Service Learning Program also have taken on various roles in the establishment of a radio station as a part of a classroom assignment.

Shawn Newsam, assistant professor at UC Merced's School of Engineering, said the 18 students in the class have separated into teams to investigate the various aspects of technology, business, management, programming and community outreach that would be necessary to create a station.

As a part of the class project, Newsam said the students also will formulate a plan for the station that includes seeking sponsorships from local businesses to help fund airtime.

The students will also get feedback from members of the community to find out what kind of programming they would like to see on a new radio station.

"We want to have fun with broadcasting for a day, but also try to use it to raise awareness about our effort to try and get a real radio station happening at UC Merced," Newsam said.

"We kind of see this as a test. Hopefully by April 14 we can have a lot more informational stuff going out," he added.

Although the students are excited about the broadcast, Newsam said getting a radio station established will not come cheap.

Just receiving a broadcasting license from the Federal Communications Commission (if it's approved) would cost \$5,000, while the price of building a station can run in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The students recently visited UC Davis' radio station KDVS to get a taste of the broadcasting business.

"It's not going to work on chump change," Bali said. "We're going to need outside assistance and we need help from the community and dif-

ferent local industries."

If the FCC did not grant UC Merced a broadcasting license, Newsam said the campus could always operate an online radio station.

"But that's not nearly as exciting," Newsam said.

Many UC Merced students said they will make an effort to listen in on today's broadcast. They also welcome the idea of the campus having its own radio station.

Student Rodney Nickens said the radio station would help raise UC Merced's profile.

"I think it would bring us a lot more exposure to the community. More student voices, opinions and our identity coming from that, I think it would be awesome."

"I think it would be great to have talk shows or something about student and college life," said student David Haskins, 19, from Bakersfield.

UC campuses in Santa Barbara, Irvine, Berkeley, San Diego, Santa Cruz and Riverside currently have radio stations, in addition to UC Davis. UCLA also has an online radio station.

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