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The Fresno Bee



Fresno Unified begins school year amid ICE raid concerns

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Students in Fresno Unified went back to school earlier this month amid concerns that fears of mass deportations would keep several pupils of immigrant families from attending class.

Officials of California's third-largest school district have braced for the potential that worried families would keep a significant portion of students home, further increasing Fresno Unified's already high rate rates of chronic absenteeism. A recent Stanford University study found a rise in Central Valley student absences following the January surprise immigration raid in Kern County.

Fresno Unified attendance from the first week of school showed student attendance levels remained mostly stable with previous years, so far.

When school came back in session Aug. 18, first-week attendance levels dipped by about 0.5% but were still well above fall 2020 and 2021 numbers. Chronic absenteeism rates also began improving after an initial post-pandemic spike.

Fresno Unified's superintendent has discussed efforts to combat potential attendance declines, but are recent concerns surrounding immigration enforcement impacting the district's progress?

Superintendent Misty Her meets with chronically absent students at home, encouraging them to return to school. She told The New York Times in June that some parents take their children with them during their seasonal farm work due to fear of being separated via deportation. Her says the district offers synchronous online instruction, which has steadily held an enrollment of about 600 students, as a way of allowing students to continue

SEE ICE, 2A

3 lessons from Shakira concert at Valley Children's Stadium

BY JOSHUA TEHEE AND ROBERT KUWADA

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Fresno State has had several weeks now to piece through Shakira's concert performance at Valley Children's Stadium.

There have been some key takeaways in terms of economic impacts.

The concert was listed as a sell-out at 27,835 tickets and \$2,709,872, according to industry trade publication Pollstar.

It made \$400,000 for the university, mostly in concessions, parking and the 22 suites on the east side of the stadium (available for a premium).

The region's restaurants, hotels and the like saw more than \$2 million spent on all ancillary things that come with hosting a pop star's world tour.

Those numbers are enough to call the the concert a success, or at least ensure the university will make good on its promise to diversify the offerings at Valley Children's Stadium, which is in need of an upgrade and (side note) has its football home opener against Georgia



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Colombian singer Shakira, left, performs during her sold out Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran World Tour show at Valley Children's Stadium, August 7, 2025 in Fresno.

Southern on Saturday.

Athletics director Garrett Klassy confirmed as much in an interview with The Bee this week.

"The reality is, if we can get a few of these a year that's going to be really helpful."

That's not to say Shakira's Fresno debut went off without a

hitch or that there aren't lessons the university should keep in mind as it fields calls from

SEE CONCERT, 3A



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The air traffic control tower at Fresno Yosemite International Airport is facing backlash after a proposed plan by the City of Fresno to demolish and rebuild it. Photographed Wednesday, Aug. 20, 2025 in Fresno.

Plan to rebuild air traffic control tower draws criticism

BY EDWARD SIMON CRUZ
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Fresno Yosemite International Airport's air traffic control tower began operating in 1962. A Fresno Bee story from that year noted its "strict, simple" lines and "modern American" materials — hallmarks of in-

ternational-style architecture under the vision of Fresno-based Chinese American architect Allen Lew.

Now the city aims to tear down the tower and build another one nearby.

Project leaders dismissed the existing tower as inefficient and not meeting current safety standards, and its preliminary

environmental assessment ruled out the possibility of keeping the building intact. Yet the Fresno Historic Preservation Commission has challenged the demolition plans, heralding the tower as a historical artifact and asking the city to reconsider its plans.

The tower spans 80 feet from the ground to the cab floor,

which houses the controllers — an "inadequate height," according to the city's report, since operators cannot see parts of the airfield and can sometimes lag in communicating with pilots. The city also cited the need for additional security around the building's parking

SEE TOWER, 3A

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