

The Name Game

Let the controversy over the name change begin. California State University, East Bay is no longer a concept; Cal State Hayward President Norma Rees intends to speak with Chancellor Charles Reed to take the name change proposal to the CSU Board of Trustees.

The school has changed its name four times since 1963. The last name change was over 30 years ago. While there appear to be many people for the change — CSUH students included! — there are many adamantly opposed to the school's taking on a new name.

We get the idea of those who are for it. We appreciate and comprehend all the potential nuances and prestige a name change could bring to the reputation of CSUH, or rather, CSUEB. But that does not mean we like or welcome the change.

According to Rees, the funding will not come from state funds. But the time Rees and others have to dedicate to raising private donations hinders their ability to concentrate on other parts of CSUH that desperately need money, attention and time.

The issue remains speculation until the process is actually initiated, which according to Rees and other CSUH administrators, will be soon. For now, the battle lines are being drawn between those in favor of the name change and those against it.

One of the principal reasons behind the planned name change is reasonable: CSUH has three locations throughout the East Bay, not just in Hayward. The new name would reflect that the school has multiple venues. The school is also looking to capitalize on its current momentum and wants to elevate itself to a more esteemed position.

But let's just be honest about some of the unmentioned reasons. Not many people outside the Bay Area have the first clue about where Hayward is. Additionally, Hayward does not exactly signify prestige and higher learning for those who know or reside in the city. Part of this name change is to avoid raised eyebrows at the mention of the word Hayward at the end of the Cal State sentence.

Unfortunately, this aspect is a meat point because

the city of Hayward will not necessarily be openly cited as a motivating feature on the list of name change justifications. It will be the elephant in the room that will alienate the school from the city and its residents.

There are reasons far more critical to counterattack the pro-name-change camp such as the cost, the concept of tradition and three decades of students who have the CSUH name and emblem on their diplomas. If the name changes, do all those students get new diplomas or will their degrees be considered "intact"?

And what about the school mascot, the school newspaper, the logo and dozens of other items that have the CSUH name attached to them? To transform all these attributes of the school will eventually cost money, far more money than is being currently quoted.

The debate over the name change has bred distinct stances. There are students who are for the name change, students against it and students on the fence about it. Those against it seem to be holding to the arguments of cost and tradition, while those for it welcome the possibility that the name change could elevate CSUH's status within the CSU system. Those on the fence either do not perceive the name change as an important issue or perhaps want to wait and see what the outcome is.

Regardless of one's position, at some point we all must recognize that external changes — buildings, names, etc. — do not always ensure status. Those for the name change must note that modifying the outside does not guarantee a distinguished reputation, and those against it must take into consideration the likelihood that the new name could benefit them in the future.

We may come to understand the reasons behind the name change, but that does not mean we approve of the idea, its implementation, its ramifications and its costs to the school. Whether the expenditure causes the loss of money or reputation or both, the consequences of changing the school's name will inevitably entail sacrificing qualities and relationships connected to the CSUH name.