

# University missing the point with proposed name change

**P**AINTING A canoe white does not make it a yacht. Similarly, renaming a university does not make it a more vibrant institution. Along with many other people, I oppose the recent move by university administrators to change the name of California State University, Hayward. The reasons offered by the administration ignore the recent historical circumstances that created some of the perceptions regarding the university.

Cal State Hayward administrators say that more prospective donors to the university will be inclined to give if the institution disassociates itself from the city of Hayward. Yet one must wonder if donors are reluctant to give because, under the watch of the current administration, university foundation staff embezzled more than \$150,000 over a five-year period. Perhaps donors' desire to give is tempered by the almost \$1 million loss sustained by the university in 2001 because of a soccer deal gone sour? Or maybe donors are reluctant to give because this past year the faculty had to sue the administration for budgetary information that was readily made available to the public on other Cal State campuses throughout the state? A name change will not alter these facts or behavior regarding the fiscal mismanagement of the current administra-

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tion, and clearly the community of Hayward had nothing to do with these occurrences.

Another rationale applied by the administration conjectures that student enrollment will increase with a name that hearkens a more regional affect for the university. I travel to San Jose State University (SJSU), where I teach, by riding BART and transferring to a bus. The amount of student traffic similarly traveling with me on these modes of public transportation is rather astonishing in size. The numbers of students made me wonder why someone would travel such distances, bypassing Cal State Hayward. So I asked students in an informal poll as to the reasons for their long journey; the sample included 31 students who traveled one recent Thursday morning on the 8:09 a.m. VTA 180 Express bus with me. I discovered a limited range of reasons as to why students travel so far to school. There is not sufficient space here to include them all. But I offer two examples in order to illustrate the point:

One student remarked that San Jose State offers more than 15 undergraduate specializations

in the field of engineering, while Cal State Hayward offers but one. Another student said that San Jose State offers a bachelor's and a master's degree in social work and that the department holds the distinction of being accredited by the National Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education. Cal State Hayward offers no undergraduate level social work major and the master's program is not accredited. Not a single student in the sample indicated that the university's location in or affiliation with Hayward was the reason for their bypassing the university to attend San Jose State.

The students' comments regarding the lack of programs made me reflect on the fact that over the past 10 years, notable faculty have departed Cal State Hayward as their departments and or programs have been eliminated or drastically cut. As example, one need only observe the decade-long decimation of the art department that once boasted such luminaries as Allen Temko, Raymond Saunders, Misch Kohn, Corban LePell and Enrique Chagoya. The art department faculty that remains on campus labors under the scorched earth policies of an administration that has little need for or understanding of the import of the spatial arts and their effect on the vernacular.

San Jose State, on the other hand, boasts renowned textile, glass blowing, ceramics and metallurgy courses of study that are arguably unmatched at any of the other Cal State campuses in the Bay Area.

My passion regarding this matter of the name change is in large measure fired by the fact that my immediate family and longtime friends are connected in numerous ways to Cal State Hayward. My husband and mother each earned bachelor's and master's degrees at CSUH and, in the mid-1990s, my husband was named alumnus of the year. In 1971, my father was appointed to lead the then-emergent department of Mexican American Studies, and he taught there until his death in 1989. I myself have taught on occasion at Cal State Hayward. My experiences show me that the students, faculty and staff are engaged and spirited members of the university community and of our city. They have an ongoing active engagement in what is commonly referred to as the "town and gown" relationship. Their collective vibrancy belies the moribund atmosphere that the administration projects. I wonder if a name change or a change of leadership is in order at this time?

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