

Board rejects Cal State East Bay

Academic Senate narrowly defeats university name change

By Michelle Meyers, STAFF WRITER

Daily Review - January 12, 2005

HAYWARD — Members of California State University, Hayward's faculty board narrowly rejected the idea of changing the school's name Tuesday afternoon.

The Academic Senate — an elected body of professors, instructors and other campus leaders — voted 23-20 against a resolution that would have supported President Norma Rees's proposal to change the school's name to Cal State University, East Bay. One member abstained.

The vote cheered students vocal in their opposition to the proposal, which will go before the CSU Board of Trustees for a committee vote Jan. 25 and a final vote Jan. 26 in Long Beach.

The vote was closer than last week's tally from the alumni association board, which was unanimous in its opposition to the proposed name change.

Rees sparked a divisive community debate in October when she announced her plan to change the university's name to something that better reflects the geographic region it represents. The 13,500-student university has a satellite campus in Concord and operates the East Bay Small Business Development Center in Oakland.

City officials have vehemently opposed the idea through City Council resolutions, a parade and campaign rally, and even a Web site launched to advocate against the move.

The issue has also caused a rift between Rees and students, who feel they were never consulted on the issue and that their opinion has been disregarded.

Academic Senate members were no less passionate about the issue. The 50-minute discussion preceding the vote Tuesday was uncharacteristically heated, longtime senate members said.

Rees contends that the name change would make it easier to solicit donations from non-Hayward residents and would send a message about the university's commitment to fast-growing Contra Costa County. She added that through interviews with students, prospective students, alumni, faculty and donors, the university determined that the Hayward name "often communicated an unfortunate image."

Professor Cal Caplan, who has been recruiting athletes as a coach for 25 years, supports Rees' proposal. In his work, "the name Hayward, in and of itself, was not a help," he said.

But those opposing the name change cited concerns about going against the students' will, a lack of data proving that the name-change will make a difference and the vagueness of the term "East Bay."

Sociology lecturer Mike Schutz said he opposed the name change until he learned of Contra Costa leaders' dissatisfaction with Cal State Hayward and their interest in building their own university.

"This is one small part of her broader vision," he said, referring to Rees' interest in improving the school's standing as a regional university.

Cal State East Bay "will describe exactly what this university does," history Professor Hank Reichman said. "Our name should reflect who we are and who we serve."

But those opposing the name change cited concerns about going against the students' will, a lack of data proving that the name-change will make a difference and the vagueness of the term "East Bay."

Accounting and Computer Information Systems Professor Frank Lowenthal said he recently got a Verizon phone book for the East Bay that left out cities such as Walnut Creek and Concord.

"The name East Bay is not something that's universally understood," he said.

Anthropology Professor Laurie Price said if all universities use catchall phrases such as East Bay to show the areas they serve, "UC Berkeley would be UC the World."

Retired economics professor Jay Tontz, a former dean, criticized the name-change process as flawed and the research tainted. He said Cal State Hayward is a brand name, and the university will likely lose students, among other things, if the name is changed.

Charles Cole III, co-chair of the student group Democracy Matters, was one of just a few students who spoke. He estimates that more than 80 percent of the students oppose the name change.

A board of retired faculty also recently voted against the change.

Michelle Meyers covers Hayward, Cherryland and Fairview. Call her at (510) 293-2463 or e-mail mmeyers@angnewspapers.com.