

Daily Review

Students question renaming CSUH

University president tells forum change is needed to boost enrollment

By Michelle Meyers

STAFF WRITER

Thursday, November 11, 2004 - HAYWARD -- City officials have some unique political allies in their fight against a controversial proposal to change California State University, Hayward's name -- students.

Two City Council members joined collegians at an Associated Students forum Wednesday in grilling President Norma Rees about her recommendation to change the school's name to California State University, East Bay.

Although the event was billed as an opportunity to ask Rees questions and voice opinions for or against her proposal, almost every speaker voiced opposition, or at least questioned the way in which Rees made her decision. Charles Cole III, co-chairman of the student group Democracy Matters, told Rees that students should have had the opportunity to vote on the name change.

Rees, however, said her decision was deliberated carefully and based upon a long investigative process that included students.

"It was not, in my judgment, something you can decide by a popular vote," she said. "This is a judgment call."

Rees told the group that the idea came out of discussions of how to improve the university's image and boost enrollment, which has lagged behind that of other state universities.

"This is very much about the future of the university," she said. "We're almost to our 50-year anniversary. This is about the next 50 years."

She added that, while she loves the city and plans to retire here, Hayward donors represent a small portion of the total pot.

"Hayward as a city is not a place of great wealth," Rees said, emphasizing the importance of a name that better reflects the student body and university community.

Student Sonny Vuong challenged Rees' premise, arguing that changing the name isn't going to enhance enrollment.

"Instead of changing the name of the product, maybe you need to change the product," he said.

Other students expressed concerns about the cost of changing the name. Rees said donors, not the state, would foot the cost of the name change.

Student Shane Lunceford said he worries about being the graduate of a school that's known for changing its name, "cause it can't get enrollment."

Rees assured Lunceford, and others, that current students will be able to decide which name they want on their diploma.

Councilmen Kevin Dowling and Matt Jimenez voiced their intense opposition to the name change and both received a strong round of applause from the 100 or so forum participants. They challenged Rees' assertion that the City Council has known for a long time that the name-change proposal was in the works.

Dowling told the group that the City Council approved a Web site Tuesday night that will campaign in opposition to the name change.

The name change proposal is scheduled go before the California State University trustees for review Tuesday in Long Beach. The board won't vote on the matter, however, until its January meeting.

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