TO: The Academic Senate

FROM: The Committee on Budget and Resource Allocation (COBRA)

SUBJECT: 14-15 COBRA 4: Restoration of Faculty Lounge/Club Facility on Hayward Hills Campus

PURPOSE: For Action by the Academic Senate

ACTION REQUESTED:
That the Academic Senate approve 14-15 COBRA 4 for restoration of Faculty Lounge/Club Facility on Hayward Hills campus, and submit the request to the President for consideration and implementation.

BACKGROUND:
Currently, there is no dedicated gathering place for faculty to meet informally, semi-formally, or formally. The meeting area in LI2800 is in the middle of the open area in the office suite used by MATS and Center of Faculty Development, surrounded by various working desks, partitions, and open-door offices. It is workable for official business meetings with low voices, but it can be quite distracting to others if the meetings involve more people or enthusiastic discussions. In addition, it cannot house more than one group of faculty at a time. The campus is in dire need of a gathering place for the faculty. The Committee on Research delivered a referral (February 5, 2015), stating that “CR voted unanimously to request that COBRA recommend allocating space and funds for creating a new faculty lounge.”

The following lists the background, justification, and benefits for allocating such a space.

1. How did this issue arise?
   a. During new faculty orientation and when candidates visit our campus, one of the questions commonly asked is “Where is our Faculty Club?” It triggers the embarrassing reminder that we used to have one, but it no longer exists. A puzzled expression appears, but people soon get used to it, till another round of hiring comes.
   b. During AY 2014-15, a group of faculty wanted to gather informally to discuss each other’s research, exchange instructional experiences, knowledge, and concerns (outside the formal and structured platform of FLCs and grant-based collaboration groups). A “Faculty Lounge” group (originally called “Faculty Conversation”, facilitated and supported by Center of Faculty Development) is currently meeting every third Wednesday afternoon. The group consisted of about 10 people, including faculty from different departments and colleges, and staff from ORSP, facilitated by Jiansheng Guo (Human Development and Women’s Studies Department). It is open to anyone who has research and instructional interests they would like to share and discuss), and more people showed interest and was planning to attend future meetings. But due to the lack of a dedicated faculty space flexible for both formal and informal meetings, the current activities of this group are limited to the formal meeting/presentation format. A dedicated faculty space would a) allow the diverse formats of
faculty meetings and gatherings, and b) encourage, sustain, and institutionalize such faculty interactions in diverse meeting formats, informal formats in particular. The group would like to have both a “virtual” lounge and a “physical” lounge.

2. Current practice for faculty gatherings for casual/semi-formal meetings on campus
   a. Hallways, parking lots, incidental interactions: Faculty members often find themselves lingering in the hallway, outside, or on the parking lot to discuss some instructional and research ideas sparked as a result of a meeting discussion, an ongoing discussion topic, or a casual greeting and remark. But they often find that there is no suitable place to sit down and flesh out the ideas which could end up in a serious collaborative project. This scene often ends up in “Let’s talk about this later”, and then the potentially valuable ideas are lost.
   b. Classrooms or Conference Rooms: When faculty need to discuss or work on collaborative projects, individual office space is too small to allow for a meeting beyond 3. Although meeting rooms can be used, they require prior reservation, and the meeting rooms are often not fit for informal or semi-formal gatherings/meetings, which are the typical situations where initial ideas and collaborations are sparked and first initiated.
   c. Faculty Offices: When faculty want to take a coffee/tea break or lunch break, they typically eat in their own offices. They don’t have a place to break away from their office, and get connected with other faculty, and a valuable opportunity to socialize and build community is lost.
   d. Union, Dining Commons, other public areas: On campus, places suitable for informal/semi-formal gatherings/discussions of initial ideas, possibilities, etc., such as the New Union, the Old Union, Starbucks, and the Dining Commons, are fully occupied by students. They are also so noisy that they are not suited for more relaxed and casual discussion. Although the Dining Commons is much quieter, it is primarily an official eating place, with fixed open hours. It is an interesting observation that the Dining Common is a place often used by groups of faculty, staff, and administrators alike on campus, for such casual/semi-formal gatherings. In addition, China Best Restaurant in the plaza off campus is also a popular gathering place of this nature.

3. Historical background
   There used to be a faculty club in the space currently occupied by the Welcome Center. The location of that facility was inconvenient. When the Office of Faculty Development moved to LI 2300, a small meeting room/library was used frequently as a gathering/meeting place for faculty. Although the room was small, it was a very popular place for faculty. When the Office of Faculty Development moved to LI 2800, that gathering/meeting place was lost.

4. Benefits of having a faculty lounge/club facility
   a. Initial ideas, creativity, and collaboration often get sparked and occurs in casual/semi-informal situations, or as follow-ups of formal meetings. A location that houses and facilitate such occasions provide opportunities, enhance, and sustain such creative moments among faculty for both instructional and research innovations.
   b. A stable and dedicated facility will facilitate the development of a sense of faculty community on campus. Although we have developed a culture of faculty innovation and collaboration by providing funding grants, organizing formal meetings/presentations, and presenting prizes to recognize faculty work and accomplishments, this culture will be significantly enhanced and fortified by a facility that facilitate and encourage daily activities and habits as part of this culture.
   c. It will facilitate more and faster exchange of information, allow faculty across the campus to get acquainted frequently, and break the departmental and college silo.
   d. It will provide venue for meeting and working with visiting scholars, faculty visitors from other universities, and community collaborators, as well as new faculty hire candidates for campus visits, and for the invited presentations and workshops.
   e. It will make faculty feel more at home on campus, in addition to a work place.
f. It will help to serve partially as a social place, where faculty share concerns, reduce stress and anxiety, and become happier workers who can accomplish and achieve more.
g. It will be a symbol of faculty life and recognition on campus, among other efforts to achieve this goal. Currently, the major facilities are for students. There are kitchen or kitchen areas provided for administrative offices. But there is no such place for faculty.

5. The type of facility that may serve the purpose
   Ideally, this space should facilitate informal, semi-formal, as well as formal gatherings and meetings for faculty to chat, brain-storm, present, and discuss about either collaborative or individual instructional and research/creativity ideas, thoughts, projects, and training. This facility should provide adequate space to provide an informal, relaxing, ambient, and stimulating social setting and atmosphere. Below are some needed components:
   a. A large room that can house re-arrangeable tables (with chairs) that can seat 25-30 people, which can be divided into 3-4 table groups.
   b. The space should be ideally located next to the Faculty Development Center and MATS, where faculty could get easy consultation, or have the follow up meetings after some more formal meetings.
   c. In addition to tables and seats in (a), there will be easy-to-sit couch-chairs to allow casual conversations.
   d. 2-3 partitioned small rooms/partitions for small group meetings that need more privacy.
   e. Kitchen facility with water and sink, so that coffee and tea can be made and provided.
   f. Ideally, the faculty lounge should be located adjacent or close to offices that faculty frequently go to, such as Office of Faculty Development and MATS.