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California State University, Hayward  
Academic Senate Meeting of 2/03004  
University Name Change Exploration Forum

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## INTRODUCTION

Good Afternoon. My name is Jay Colombatto, and I am Cal State Hayward's Director of Marketing Communications. I also am an alumnus of Cal State Hayward, as well. Although it's been a number of years since I graduated, some of my instructors, advisors, and mentors are still active members of the University community. In fact, I believe at least one is in this room today. So, before I begin, please accept my sincere thanks for the exceptional education you gave me. You taught me everything I needed to know. I am truly honored to be standing before you today.

I want to thank you for taking the time to offer your opinions and counsel and take part in this important exploration of the University's identity and a possible change that's now being discussed: the University's name. The process we have embarked upon involves inviting members of key constituencies to share their perceptions and ideas. We have come to you because of your role in the governance of the University and because we believe your opinions will provide essential insights.

I am here to present background information and explain how this discussion of a name change got started. I will do my best to answer your questions. And, I also have questions of you. Most importantly, I am here to listen to what you have to say about this very important matter.

Before we begin, I'd like to introduce Aline Soules, our Associate University Librarian. Aline will be our forum recorder. Her role will be to capture the sentiments and opinions you express today.

## BACKGROUND

First, some background: Roughly two years ago, about the time I joined the University, Cal State Hayward embarked on a quest to find new ways to:

- strengthen its image
- improve its recruitment outcomes
- increase its capacity to secure private financial support
- and communicate its role as a regional university and steward, with responsibility for -- and a central role in -- the economic, social, and cultural well being of the communities it serves.

Working with committees charged with integrated marketing, student research, and enrollment strategy, our work began by revisiting

existing institutional research. We also conducted new perceptual research.

Our intent was to gain a better understanding of

- the students we serve
- our strengths and weaknesses
- what our constituents need and expect of us
- and how we are perceived in primary markets we serve --  
Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

At the same time, the University began a long-range enrollment management and planning process. Through this process we came to recognize that our enrollment mix is out of balance with among the highest ratios of upper division to lower division students, and one of the oldest student populations in the California State University system. (This threatens our financial stability, erodes the curricular and academic health of our University, and violates standards for healthy, sustainable university as established by the CSU; California Post-Secondary Education Commission; the California State Educational Code; as well as CSUH's own, stated 1998 goals.) We also recognized that CSUH never reached its full potential and planned enrollment. Moreover, we discovered that although our enrollment has grown modestly over the past two years, the

University has actually been losing market share as local, CSU-bound high school students increasingly choose San Francisco State University and San Jose State University -- two direct competitors -- over us.

The University's Strategic Enrollment Management Steering Committee, chaired by the Provost, has now adopted goals that call for:

- rebalancing our enrollment to achieve a healthier ratio of lower division to upper division students;
- and
- strengthening our image and ability to grow enrollment when the fiscal and policy environment once again permits it.

These objectives require an emphasis on first-time freshmen recruiting. Among the challenges we face in this effort are:

1. ) Building awareness among local audiences in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties;
2. ) communicating the exceptional value and quality of a four-year undergraduate experience at CSUH;
3. ) and, overcoming misperceptions that arise from the institution's name, identity, and image.

Unfortunately, our research has shown that awareness of CSUH in Alameda and Contra Costa counties is not only remarkably low for a regional university – but has declined over the past five years. This same research suggests that prospective students and their influencers, including parents, teachers, and counselors, do not perceive the quality of CSUH to be equivalent to competing institutions -- specifically San Francisco State and San Jose State. (Of course, we know this isn't true.)

Clearly, much of this awareness and perceptual gap is attributable to a lack of consistent, integrated marketing over the years — something we are now working hard to address. But, the research also points to our name as part of the problem. In fact, survey respondents -- most of whom were not familiar with Cal State Hayward -- told us that the Hayward place name does not positively influence their perceptions about the University. Together, these findings point to a troubling conundrum: If awareness is low and all that prospective students, friends, and supporters know about us is our name -- then our name says it all.

This research confirmed what many have long suspected -- including what some of you who participated in the focus groups and discussions that

were part of this initial investigation have told us: Hayward does not have the positive associations upon which we can build our image.

Long before I joined the University, there were discussions ongoing about the adequacy of our name in communicating our regional role, how we've grown, what we have achieved, and our vision. In fact, the University's Strategic Planning Council, in the introduction to its Spring 1990 report, stated (and I quote) "A local newspaper editorial recently suggested that Cal State Hayward might better be called 'Cal State, Bay Area.' It is a notion that the Strategic Planning Council heartily endorses, for whatever else we have come to acknowledge and affirm about Cal State Hayward, it is its responsibilities and opportunities as a regional university that have impressed us most." Some members of that council are in this room today.

Last week, Dr. Fred Harclerod, founding president of Cal State Hayward, told President Rees that more than 40 years ago he had proposed this University be named "East Bay State College" — a concept that was eclipsed by local political boosterism.

Much more recently, when I joined Cal State Hayward, I began to chair the University's Integrated Marketing Committee, a cross-section of faculty, administrators, and staff. I also became a member of the

Student Research Committee, chaired by Vice President Redmond. Over the past 18 - 20 months, as these committees conducted research and worked to develop new marketing strategies and messages, questions about the sufficiency of our name and identity in communicating the depth, breadth, quality -- and reach -- of our offering arose repeatedly. In the workshops, focus groups, and discussions that I and others conducted to discuss our institutional image, a concern that our name fails to communicate who we are, how we have grown -- and our regional role and status -- came up repeatedly. At these same meetings the suggestion that we change our name to "Cal State East Bay" -- as part of an overall strategy and campaign to build awareness and improve our image -- came up again and again.

Finally, in May 2003, the Integrated Marketing Committee recommended that the University explore the potential benefits and costs of adopting a new identity -- including a new institutional name, logo, and mascot. I reported this to senior management as well as to various University units and committees. This was the genesis of the conversations and discussions underway today.

Beyond enrollment management and marketing concerns, an even more immediate and imperative consideration has arisen: the need to

build donor recognition and support. Reflecting national trends, the CSU is moving from a state university system to a state-supported -- or, as some would say, “a state-assisted” – university system. Presently, the State general fund supports 65% of the CSU system budget. That level of support is expected to continue to decline. As a result, it will be increasingly incumbent upon each CSU campus to build the capacity to bridge growing shortfalls. That means donor support will be ever more critical for CSUH in the future.

Private giving has been key to our new our Business & Technology Center. But fundraising for this first new academic building in 30 years has been challenging. We cannot afford to wait 30 years for the next building.

According to a survey published in the January 23<sup>rd</sup> issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education, Cal State Hayward ranks seventh from the bottom among 717 College and University endowments. And, according to the CSU, Cal State Hayward ranks 22 out of 23 campuses in funds raised as a percent of operating budget. This is a capacity we must increase to ensure our survival. But, to do so will require that we make clear our essential connection to the social, economic, and cultural vibrancy of the entire East Bay.

We have learned, however, from some of the friends to whom we have turned for help in building donor recognition and developing our fundraising capacity, that our name is a barrier and stands in the way of these objectives.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my presentation, the process we have embarked upon involves inviting members of key constituencies to share their views on this matter. This process has begun with initial conversations including alumni leadership, key donors and supporters, and legislators. What we have heard so far is general agreement that our current name does not seem to communicate our vibrancy, our quality, our achievements and growth -- nor does it communicate our regional reach.

While there has not been unanimity within this group of initial interviewees about what our name should be, with few exceptions the response has been that if the University believes a name change would enhance its ability to reach long-term objectives and to realize its vision, these alumni, donors, and friends would support the change. In some instances, such as in conversations with local government representatives as well as regional, state, and national legislators, support for new name that communicates our regional reach and stewardship has been wholeheartedly endorsed.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that our investigations have only begun, and no decision has been made. I also want to emphasize that we're not talking about a quick fix or a "magic bullet." This is not about a cosmetic change. It's about removing unnecessary barriers, adding greater clarity to our message, and acknowledging the vision and a destiny of a great regional university.

If our objective is to become the public university of choice for East Bay students of all backgrounds seeking to discover and develop their personal potential and career paths -- a great regional university known for high-quality, higher education that is uniquely personal, professional, and achievable -- our name and identity must convey this promise.

Given our objectives, we want to be known as "the East Bay's University" — the University that works for the entire East Bay. The name that has been proposed repeatedly — California State University, East Bay — is intended to describe just this: a university that is the steward of its region, and which serves the higher education needs of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties with two campuses

- one in the Hayward Hills
- and the other in the Concord foothills of Mt. Diablo,
- as well as a state-of-the-art professional development center in Oakland.

While concerns have been voiced about abandoning the Hayward name, the suggestion has been made to preserve it by giving each of our two campuses a unique name: Cal State East Bay's Hayward Hills Campus *and* Cal State East Bay's Concord Hills Campus.

Whatever the outcome, our name and identity should acknowledge our central role in the life of the East Bay, what we have accomplished, and how we have grown and matured. It should describe our future and signal that we recognize the expectations of ALL of our constituents and that we are committed to them.

## FORUM QUESTIONS

This concludes my introductory comments. Based on what I have shared with you, I'd now like to ask you to respond to the following questions:

1. Should the University continue to invest -- as it does everyday -  
- in its current identity, or would it make better business, marketing,  
and strategic sense to invest, in the years ahead, in a new identity?

2. Many of us speculate that our current name may be a barrier to our objectives by failing to communicate -- perhaps even challenging -- our claim to East Bay/regional relevancy. What are your thoughts on this?

3. One name that's been suggested repeatedly is Cal State East Bay. Do you think a name such as this could help the University better communicate its offering, its regional role, its mission and regional role than our current identity and name?

4. Might a new name, such as the one that has been proposed, improve our ability to recruit students regionally and enhance donor recognition and our fundraising capacity?

5. Would you support a name change of name if it would help the University achieve its long-range goals?

## CONCLUDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you for your time, interest, and thoughtful participation. Your input has been extremely helpful.