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Student Input Sought on SAC Plans

Center Likely to Be Built in Northeast Campus

By Kathy Adams

Students packed the Glenn Maloney Room on the ground level of the Student Services Building Tuesday evening, filling every seat and lining the walls as they gathered to share their input on needs that should be filled by a proposed Student Activity Center. One of the main suggestions was the need for more student meeting space, as exemplified by the cramped meeting.

Associates of the two facility-planning and architecture firms working on the Student Activity Center project conducted an open session with student leaders and individual students Tuesday night to determine the need for a new student space and to gather suggestions of what the space should contain.



Bart A. Hall, an associate with Brailsford & Dunlavey, a facility planning firm, listens to opinions given by Student Government members on what the ideal student activity center should be.

Proposed ideas for the space included: a parking structure, a cafeteria or food court, student lounges and study areas, recreational rooms and meeting space for student organizations. The center will probably be located on the northeast side of campus, where there are currently few food options and few places for students to meet.

Leaders of various student organizations who attended the event said there is a need

on campus for more meeting space that is easy to book and inexpensive, because current meeting spaces in the SSB and Texas Union have long waiting lists.

Students at the gathering said the center should be useful and convenient for both on-campus and off-campus residents as well as for both heavily involved and introverted students.

"It should be as open as possible to students not involved, so that they feel comfortable to get involved or hang out without having to be involved," said Missy Chavez Quintela, a government junior and member of the Mexican American Culture Committee.

The firms are conducting a feasibility study for the project through December, which includes determining the demand for the center, quantifying the demand, deciding how many square feet it will take to meet the demand and determining how much the space will cost, said Bart Hall, an associate and architect for Moody/Nolan, Inc., an Ohio-based architecture firm.

The firms will use the focus group and intercept interview information to create an electronic survey that will be sent out to a random sample of several thousand UT students later in the semester, Hall said.

Hall and Howard Blaisdell, an associate with facility-planning firm Brailsford and Dunlavey, will be visiting campus twice more prior to their final project presentation. It will include a proposed layout for the Student Activity Center and a projection of how much it will cost. The final presentation will be finished sometime in January or February, Hall said.

Students will then be asked to vote on a referendum during Student Government elections in the spring. If passed, the referendum will implement a student fee to pay for the center once it is completed. Blaisdell said it is too early to determine what the price range of the facility will be.

Hall said the purpose of the new Student Activity Center would be to supplement and augment existing "student life centers," not to replace the SSB or Texas Union.

Moody/Nolan, Inc. has worked on 60 campuses and Brailsford and Dunlavey has worked on about 300 separate campuses to create "quality of life space," such as student centers, residence halls and other non-academic facilities, Hall said.

Proposed sites for the center include the north end of the stadium, the service building located on Waller Creek and an empty parking lot across from the Applied Computational and Engineering and Sciences building on Speedway and 24th streets,

said SG President Omar Ochoa in a previous interview.

Blaisdell visited several sites Tuesday but said more engineering studies are required to determine what type of structure the sites can support.

For students who want to give input on the Student Activity Center, an analyst from Brailsford and Dunlavey will be conducting intercept interviews on the West Mall today, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and again from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.