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Student Union Survey Results Presented at Town-Hall Meeting

By Derek Simons

More than one hundred students showed up at Pierson Auditorium on Thursday evening for a discussion on the proposed new student union. A referendum will be held among UMKC students April 3-5 to decide if they favor funding the project with a new student fee.

Facility planning firm Brailsford & Dunlavy (B&D) presented the results of a campus-wide survey conducted last month, which received 1,925 responses. By participating in the survey, students were eligible to win iPods and a Playstation Portable, which were awarded at the end of the meeting.

B&D project manager Bart Hall, with the help of Director of Campus Facilities Bob Simmons and members of the Student Union Committee, promoted the benefits of a new student union, encouraged students to vote, and fielded questions from the audience.

Simmons announced the commitment of \$750,000 by alumni to the project. He also said Sodexo, when it signed its food-service contract with UMKC, agreed to contribute \$1 million to the new building.

The new student union, if approved, would cost either \$40 million or \$46.3 million, depending on the amount of square footage.

Some of the programs and services students indicated in the survey they'd most like to see included in the project were a post office, shaded patios and outdoor seating areas, computer-equipped lounge areas, and banking services.

The list of "demand-based programming" included a 24-hour computer lab and a 24-hour study lounge. A bowling alley and a bookstore placed at the bottom of the list of priorities.

"How likely are you to support a new student fee to construct a new Student Union adjacent to the Miller Nichols Library?" was another of the principal questions on the survey. (See graph at right for results.)

When the results were separated between on-campus and off-campus students, it was clear the new student union is more popular with on-campus residents.

One member of the audience asked why medical students should pay a fee for the student union,

when, after their first year, they spend all their time on the Hospital Hill campus.

Student Union Committee member Nick Clark, a second-year med student, said projects such as the new Health Sciences Building and the new parking garage on the Hospital Hill campus were unlikely to be used by Volker campus students, yet they happen.

"The University has two campuses, but it's one community," Clark said.

dsimons@unews.com