

Student Forum – Fall 2014

October 8, 2014 | 5:30 – 6:30 pm | ECC B-269

Administrators on panel:

Dr. Jose Adames, President

Sondra Flemming, Vice President of Academic Affairs

Dr. Chemene Crawford, Vice President of Student Services and Enrollment Management

Pyeper Wilkins, Assoc. Vice President of Planning, Research & Institutional Effectiveness

David Browning, Vice President of Business Services

Recorder: Kerri Smith

Dr. Adames welcomed the staff and students in attendance and said this administration at El Centro College is very open and wants to hear from students. He said the leadership believes in the mission of “changing lives through higher education.” They want to hear the student’s concerns, be pro-active and address those before they become problems.

Student: He asked if there were new changes planned for leadership team.

Dr. Adames: He said that he did not anticipate making any immediate changes.

Student: He asked how students could have a better relationship with the campus police.

David Browning: He explained that communication between all parties is the key. The police officers are here for the students and staff, but if they are in the middle of something, they may not have time to talk at that moment. He said the ECC is in the process of hiring a new Police Chief to replace the one that recently retired.

Student: Several students stated that other campuses have meeting spaces and relaxation area. Why doesn’t ECC have more lounge areas? Do we have plans to add additional spaces for students?

Dr. Adames: He said the leadership would love to see that happen, but with spatial issues this is a problem at ECC’s main campus. He said that West and BJP campuses have more open areas. He added that when he’s walking around campus, he sees students using computers and other technology in different open areas, especially on the second floor. He said the team would explore different ideas and see if any spaces could be reallocated.

David Browning: He explained that ECC is land-locked and we can’t build any more buildings or add any space to the existing building. We need to use most available areas for classes. He said that Facilities has been trying to update the student center area on the first floor and make it seem more like a lounge. They have added some phone charging stations.

Student: He asked how ECC is trying to become a more green or sustainable campus by using renewable resources.

David Browning: He said ECC has the only wind farm (on the roof) in an urban area. There is a national conference being held in Dallas November 4-6, and some of the participants are coming to ECC to see the windmills. He said that ECC is a silver-rated campus for sustainability, which is partly due to the lack of a carbon footprint since many students do not drive cars, but instead take public transportation. Solar power would not work very well at the campus because all of the tall buildings near us put too much shade on our building.

Student: A member of the female basketball team asked why ECC can't become part of (NJCAA??).

Shanee Moore, Associate Dean of Student Programs: She explained the basketball program is fairly new and that for years ECC didn't have sports programs at all. She talked to David Browning about joining this group, but it requires money and staff, such as an athletic department. If the teams continue the momentum they are currently on and keep teams practicing, playing and winning, then we might be able to do that in the future.

David Browning: He said that keeping the teams the way they are now would still give the players exposure, they would be eligible for scholarships and those that don't have good grades and need to improve them could still play.

Student: He read an article in the Dallas Observer that described ECC as a "commuter campus" and he felt it was demeaning and saying our college was lower in quality.

Dr. Adames: He said we need to define "commuter campus." This type of campus is one that does not have parking lots or residential dorms. Most of our students do not drive to the campus, but instead take DART or other public transportation. He said we are by definition a commuter campus, but that isn't a bad thing. In one way it's good because we make less of a negative impact on the environment.

Student: He had a complaint about the narrow stairwells and the long wait for elevators. Is there any way to build more stairwells or make ours bigger?

David Browning: He said that hopefully the elevators are working better since the year-long process of renovations is about to wrap up. The college spent about \$850,000 to update the elevators. He explained that this building was built in the 1890's as a department store. During that time, many of the stairwells weren't inside. Most of the stairs were on the exterior of the building and just used as a fire escape. He said there isn't any room in this building currently to expand or add more stairwells.

Student: One person asked if dorms were a possibility in the future.

Dr. Adames: He said no because of the footprint of this building and not having anywhere to expand. He also explained that there wouldn't be a great need for dorms either since it's so easy to access the campus with so much public transportation in the area.

Student: She asked is there a way to help handicapped people get down to lower floors in an emergency situation and the elevators can't be used.

David Browning: He said there is a stretcher on every floor that people can be strapped into and taken down the stairs if needed. In the case of an emergency, another needing assistance should go to a stairwell and wait for someone to come around. There are people assigned to every floor to check on people.

Student: He asked if a student only taking one class at ECC could get the DART pass.

David Browning: He said no because in the contract with DART, it stipulates the student has to take at least two classes, or six hours. We can't break this contract with DART because they give us huge discounts for student passes. We only pay about \$1 million and normally the cost would be close to \$6 million.

Student: He asked how someone would start a new club on campus.

Shanee Moore, Associate Dean of Student Programs: She said that students need to go see her in the Office of Student Life with a petition signed by at least nine other students wanting the club. They also have to get one faculty or staff member to sponsor the group. Then they have to do some paperwork and write a charter.

Student: He asked if there's any way to start a career at ECC in the field of special education.

Sondra Fleming: She said there aren't too many opportunities in the field of special education, but one possibility might be working with the Next Step or Moving On programs at the BJP campus. Another option might be in the Adult Resource Center helping students with a variety of needs.

Student: He asked if we have to allow people that aren't students in the building, especially using the computers when students need them and bathing in the restrooms.

David Browning: He explained that we are a community college so the first floor is pretty much a common area. He said we don't want to turn people away and look and feel like a prison because then no one will want to attend school here. He said non-students do have the right to use the computers. He also said that this may be the only place that some of the homeless students have a place to freshen up. If anyone sees someone or something strange, they should call security or the police.

Dr. Adames: He added that this is a college first and we don't want people to just hang out for no reason.

Student: One student said he noticed a big difference in the number of police officers that are here during the day versus the night and weekends. He sees people doing things they shouldn't be, but can never find a police officer when he needs one. He said students have to call the dispatch number and wait for five minutes or more. He suggested that one officer be placed in a central area all of the time so students know where they can go and find someone at any time.

David Browning: He said the Police Chief position is open right now and is in the process of getting filled. There aren't as many officers on duty at night and during the weekends because there aren't as many classes during those times. There should be three to five offices and security guards in the buildings and a sergeant should be on duty until 10 or 11 pm. The officers patrol the entire building and escort people to the cars and the train station so that keeps them busy. He said if he put one officer in a certain place all of the time that would be one less officer to patrol the building and grounds. The college has about 100 cameras that film all of the time. He also said that hiring additional officers takes money for wages and then that's less money for other areas and departments and programs.

Student: She said that she's seen people smoking weed in the green space outside and doesn't feel this area is patrolled by officers.

David Browning: He said the officers do patrol the green space outside, but he'll address that with the officers immediately.

Student: She asked if there's any plans on updating the performance hall and adding more lighting.

David Browning: He said Facilities has something on the books to work on the performance hall. They are working through the District office and Dean Armstrong.

Student: He asked how information and news could be given out easier so all students have access to the information.

Dr. Adames: He said that students who are in clubs and in leadership roles need to share the information with other students. They need to reassure the students that this leadership team is focused on changing lives through higher education, just like the mission statement. People need to be aware that other resources are out there to help them, such as financial aid, student services and the adult resource center. We want to listen to your concerns and we care about your welfare. He is reinstating the campus newsletter and the first issue will be coming out in November. This will be a way to collect and share information to a lot of people.

