May 3, 2001

To: Board of Trustees

From: Piedad Robertson, Superintendent/President

Subject: Board of Trustees Meeting, May 7, 2001
Recommendation No. 27, Madison Site Theater Community Outreach and Approval Process

STAFF REPORT

BACKGROUND

Santa Monica College entered into a 66-year lease of the Madison Campus from the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District on September 24, 1990, changing the use of the property from elementary school classrooms to community college classrooms. As a condition of occupancy, the lease required the College to conduct public notifications and workshops regarding the change in use.

The public notifications and workshops were held, and the change in use has proceeded smoothly. In November of 1992, funds for renovations and improvements at the Madison Campus were included in a bond proposal placed before the voters of the cities of Santa Monica and Malibu (Proposition T), which was approved by a two-thirds vote.

For the first years of the lease, the School District continued to use about one-half of the building to house Olympic High School. Renovation work by the College began after 1996, following the move of Olympic High School to the former John Muir School site at Ocean Park Boulevard and Lincoln.

More than $4 million in funds have been expended, from Proposition T bond revenues, State Deferred Maintenance grants, and State ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) grants.

Improvements to the building include asbestos removal, new heating systems, elevator access to the second floor, new handicap-accessible bathrooms, internet access, and interior space remodeling.
Improvements to the exterior and grounds include a new linear park on the Arizona side (an entrance to the building to the Arizona side has been removed to increase the park area and increase the residential character of this frontage), the addition of more than a dozen mature trees and several dozen new trees, landscaping on all four sides of the campus, garden paths along the length of the parking area available for walking, grading of the parking area and new pavement, security lighting, a new outdoor mural, a new patio and entryway, and security lighting. In addition, the site is now patrolled 24 hours a day by Santa Monica College Police.

At the present time, activities at the Madison Campus include Emeritus College classes, Community Services classes, non-credit adult ESL classes, the SMC Nursing program, several offices, and the Pete & Susan Barrett Art Gallery.

EXISTING AUDITORIUM

No renovations have been made to the existing auditorium. This 500-seat classroom auditorium does not meet today’s standards for accessibility, lighting or acoustics, nor does it have dressing rooms, wings, or an overhead fly which are typically part of today’s modern auditoriums.

In 1998, the College began considering a replacement facility for this auditorium, to be funded privately and that would provide a home for an arts education program that would focus on the classical presentation of theater, voice, chamber, and dance as well as provide an opportunity for the community to interact with new emerging artists.

The College contracted with Thomas Mitze, who operates the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Center and is an acknowledged national expert on theater operations, and his wife Marnie Mitze, who is the director of the Seaver Theater at Pepperdine University in Malibu, to conduct an operational feasibility study. The study reinforced the College’s intention to use this facility as a classroom, since such use would be necessary to meet operating costs.

Based on this report, in 1998 the College hired former SMC faculty member Dale Franzen as Director of Special Projects to begin work full-time on the creation of the arts program and the fundraising for what is now known as the Madison Site Theater. At the same time, the College committed to the first phase of its informal program of community outreach.
ARTS EDUCATION & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The first Madison Site Theater event was in support of Lifelong Learning in October 1998. Held at the home of Robert Winters, UCLA professor and musicologist, the event drew an audience of Santa Monica educational, social service, cultural, and political leadership. The educational program wove threads of classical music exposition, improvisational theater provided by the Actor’s Gang, and operatic solos—and provided the template for the arts education program that was soon to develop.

Beginning in Fall 1999, the College began hosting free noon-time concerts at the Madison Campus. Each event has included the bringing of children from Santa Monica and Los Angeles area schools to the site to interact with the performers. To date, more than 2,000 children from the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District have attended Madison Site Theater performances. Additionally, members of SMC’s Emeritus College and other senior groups have attended performances.

The events have been sponsored in part by community agencies, businesses, and family foundations, including the City of Santa Monica, the Ann & Gordon Getty Foundation, the Milken Foundation, U.S. Bank, Good Earth Foundation, and Borders.

The events have included dance (Lula Washington Dancers and others), international singers and instrumentalists, Los Angeles Chorale, Los Angeles Opera, Santa Monica Baroque, cabaret, and musical theater.

During this same period, members of the College administration have provided background meetings on the proposed Madison Site Theater to all City of Santa Monica Councilmembers save one, to most of the City of Santa Monica Senior Staff, to the leadership of Mid-City Neighbors, to all the members of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, to all the Santa Monica College Board of Trustees, to many local arts and performing arts agencies, to many Social Service agencies, to the leadership of the School District PTA and Foundation, and other members of the public.

The College has also featured the Madison Site Theater project on the cover of two of its publications mailed city-wide, in press releases, and in feature articles of additional campus publications.

The project has received funding support from Emeritus College, a program of Santa Monica College; from Community Services, a program of Santa Monica College; from the U.S. Department of Commerce, through the office of U.S. Congressman Henry Waxman; from Mr. Dustin Hoffman, an alumnus of SMC and an Oscar-winning actor and producer; from members of the community; and from family foundations and supporters of the arts. To date, the project has received about $1 million in funds and has received an additional $2 million in pledges.
PROPOSED REPLACEMENT FACILITY

With funding commitments in hand and with a publicly demonstrated need and desire for this kind of arts education program, the College is now proposing a replacement of the existing auditorium. The proposed 500-seat facility will replace the current facility, and uses approximately the same footprint as the current facility (which is the center wing of the main Madison Campus building), and provides approximately the same number of seats. The proposed auditorium will incorporate the stage and back of stage areas into the main building, and the design also includes dressing rooms, wings, proscenium, and fly (overhead area for stage effects).

The facility is designed to operate as a classroom with the necessary facilities to provide for the professional presentation of theater, dance, voice, and chamber orchestra.

REQUEST FOR CHANGES TO FACILITY FROM SMMUSD

Section 9.4 of the lease from the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District for the Madison Campus requires the College to request in writing approval for alterations to the facilities at the site, which approval may not be unreasonably denied.

OUTREACH AND PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

As a College educational facility, the Madison Site Theater project will require final approval by the Santa Monica College Board of Trustees. In order to ensure full public participation, staff has developed an outreach and public notification process as described below.

Because this project provides so much benefit to local arts education, Santa Monica College regards the proposed replacement facility a “good news” story, and considers the outreach and public notification process an opportunity as well as an obligation.

The proposed auditorium is slightly larger than the auditorium at Lincoln Middle School nearby (the Lincoln auditorium has essentially no parking) and a little smaller than the auditorium at John Adams Middle School. (The Madison Campus has about 290 parking spaces, far more than required under local zoning standards for a theater with this number of seats.)

Our rich local talent will now have the opportunity to interact with our community. A number of world-class arts luminaries, including tenor and artistic director Plácido Domingo, dancer and choreographer Mikhail Baryshnikov, dancer and choreographer Lula Washington, actor Dustin Hoffman, and actor and producer Edward James Olmos have made a personal commitment to programming and arts education at the Madison Site Theater.
Public Notification. The College will provide written information about the project including notices of all meetings and workshops to all members of our community. As is its practice, the College will mail this information to all residential addresses in Santa Monica, as well as interested parties. The College will also provide three ways to stay informed, included a web site about the project beginning on July 1, an e-mail notification program, and a mailing list for priority notification of workshops and events.

Neighborhood Outreach. The College will conduct in-person outreach to the immediate neighbors of the project, to listen to and gain information about any concerns. We will also present the plans and receive input from any interested neighborhood organizations.

Community Review. The College will review building plans and designs with a wide audience of College and community groups before presenting final plans to the College Board of Trustees for approval. The College intends for the community review to be extensive, based on the College’s efforts that led to the Board of Trustees adoption of the College’s Facilities Master Plan in January 1998. Besides meting with College and community groups, the College will also provide a minimum of two community-wide workshops on this project.

Governmental Approvals. The College will obtain all legally required governmental approvals for the project and pay for all environmental reviews required by CEQA and NEPA.

Staff Resources. The College is recommending the hiring of two consultants, Dennis Zane and Eileen Hecht, to assist with the public outreach and notification recommended above. Both consultants are well-known in the community and familiar with community expectations and concerns.

Office of State Architect. The College will submit building plans to the Office of State Architect for structural safety, access compliance, and fire and life safety approvals.

RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that the members of the Santa Monica College Board of Trustees accept this Staff Report on Community Outreach and Approval Process for the Madison Site Theater.