

# CITY CURRENTS

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A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CITY COLLEGE COMMUNITY

## Chinatown/North Beach Campus lawsuits settled

The Board of Trustees of the San Francisco Community College District (City College of San Francisco) agreed at a special Board meeting December 10 to settlement offers from plaintiffs of the two lawsuits filed against the College District related to the construction of the new Chinatown/North Beach Campus. The two parties suing the College District were Neighbors For Preservation, Land Use and Community Education (PLACE), and Montgomery-Washington LP (MWLP).

According to **Alan W. Sparer** of the Sparer Law Group, who represented the College District in these two lawsuits, "This is an overwhelming victory for City College in litigation over its new Chinatown/North Beach Campus."

City College Board President **Lawrence Wong**, Esq., said, "This victory for City College demonstrates the power of the people in our community to prevail. This action eliminates the final legal obstacle in the College's 13-year effort to build a new campus on Washington Street. Excavation of the site has already begun. Construction will commence in July 2009 and be completed by 2011."

One of the lawsuits brought under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), challenged the environmental impact report (EIR) prepared by the College and criticized the decision to include a 14-story highrise as part of the Campus. "This building was necessary to house programs currently offered at over half a dozen temporary sites in Chinatown/North Beach," said Wong, adding, "We have resolved the CEQA lawsuit without compromising in any way on the



Photo by Connie Zheng, Asian Week

*City College's governing Board of Trustees voted unanimously at a special Board meeting December 10 to the settlement offers from plaintiffs in the lawsuits concerning Chinatown/North Beach Campus. Announcing the settlements were (from left) Allen W. Sparer, who represented the District in the two lawsuits; Chancellor Don Q. Griffin; Board President Lawrence Wong; Trustees Dr. Anita Grier and John Rizzo; and CCSF General Counsel Ronald Lee.*

size of the Campus or the character of the academic programs it will offer."

The substance of the CEQA settlement involves dismissal of the lawsuit in its entirety and agreement not to reinstitute proceedings in return for a payment to PLACE of \$75,000 in fees and costs. The College admits no liability, and other than this limited payment provided with the dismissal, each party will bear its own costs and attorneys fees.

The second lawsuit, brought by the owners of the business tower at Washington and Columbus (MWLP), claimed that the design of the Campus would not be compatible with buildings in the nearby Jackson Square Historic District as required under a previous settlement with neighborhood preservationists. Wong noted, "The case has been settled without any change in the Campus design. The settlement will contain good neighbor provisions, steps the College would have taken even without the threat of litigation. The Trustees are very proud of this design and believe the Campus will lend architectural distinction to the area and

enrich the lives of all the residents of the Chinatown/North Beach community. We were not going to compromise on design and we did not have to."

MWLP agreed to dismiss its lawsuit in its entirety. Each party will bear its own costs and attorneys fees, and the District admits no liability for any purpose.

The new Chinatown/North Beach Campus buildings will be facing Kearny and Washington Streets. The new campus will include dedicated classroom space, laboratories for science and computers, library/learning resource center, student support areas such as admissions, counseling, financial aid, faculty work areas and conference rooms. The smaller four story building will house the new Culinary Program and an auditorium which can be used by the community for special events.

Founded in 1935, City College of San Francisco serves more than 100,000 students annually in 10 neighborhood campuses and some 100 instructional sites throughout San Francisco.