Let’s Bond

In November the College of the Mainland Board of Trustees unanimously approved a modified version of the bond plan recommended by the Community Bond Advisory Committee and will call the election at its regularly scheduled February 2011 board meeting.

What is a bond?

A college district bond election is held so that voters can consider proposed construction and capital improvement projects. If voters approve a bond election, the college sells bonds to investors to raise the money needed to fund the projects. The college then pays the debt back long term, similar to a home mortgage. If voters do not approve the election, the college is not authorized to incur the debt.

How can bond funds be used?

Bond funds can be used to pay for new buildings, additions, and renovations to existing facilities, land acquisition, technology infrastructure and equipment for new or existing buildings. Bonds cannot be used for salaries or operating costs such as utility bills, supplies, building maintenance, fuel and insurance.

Why is a bond election needed?

Most of the buildings on the College of the Mainland campus were built 40 years ago. Aside from routine maintenance and a few additions since then, no new monies have been invested in the College's facilities since that time. Existing facilities do not meet the space requirements of the educational programs it offers today. Additionally, more classroom and support space is required to accommodate program and enrollment growth.

How will the bond package affect my property taxes?

In approving the proposal and calling for the May 2011 referendum, College of the Mainland trustees realize that selling the full allotment of bonds will increase the district’s indebtedness and, subsequently, raise taxes on its residents. This tax increase, while minimum, is due in large part to declining property values in Galveston County that produce lower tax revenues. Taxpayers can expect a tax increase of $0.065 cents/$100 valuation, or $65 per year or $5.42 per month on a $100,000 home.

When can I vote?

**Early Voting**

Monday - Friday | May 2 - May 10, 2011

**Election Day**

Saturday, May 14, 2011 | 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

All registered voters living within the College of the Mainland taxing district are eligible to vote. The COM taxing district includes these independent school districts: Dickinson, Hitchcock, La Marque, Santa Fe and Texas City.
Texas Mutual Check

Texas Mutual Senior Vice President of Public Affairs Terry Frakes (far right) presented College of the Mainland President Dr. Michael Elam (left) with the $100,000 grant during the College of the Mainland’s Board of Trustees meeting on Monday, Jan. 24. Also accepting the check are Bonnie Harrill of the Gulf Coast Safety Institute and Bill Raley, Dean of Industrial and Technical programs.

Employee Engagement Survey

The results are in...and you like us, you really likes us. But to truly understand the results of the recent employee engagement survey, the agency that conducted the survey, the Center for Applied Psychological Research at the University of Houston, will present the results by Dr. Christiane Spitzmuller and Aleksandra Luksyte, at scheduled seminars in February. More information will be forthcoming.

World affairs documents have ties to COM

A collection of documents relating to the Gulf Coast Council on Foreign Affairs, Gulf Coast World Affairs Council and Houston World Affairs Council have been acquired by the Houston History Archives, a part of University of Houston’s Center for Public History. The collection is from the private collection of Robert Handy, the first Board Chairman of the Gulf Coast Council on Foreign Affairs at College of the Mainland in Texas City, which today is the Houston World Affairs Council.

The Gulf Coast Council on Foreign Affairs was founded in 1976 at College of the Mainland’s annual eight-week Great Decisions foreign policy study-discussion program. Fourteen individuals founded the program to bring speakers on a variety of international topics to the area on a regular basis.

In 1976 Handy was the Director of Adult Continuing Education and Community Services. His department offered the Great Decisions program. Handy soon became Executive Director of the Gulf Coast Council on Foreign Affairs as part of his college responsibilities. He served as Executive Director and as the College’s Director of International Education for the next eight years.

Handy praises College of the Mainland for being as progressive an institution as it was in the 1970s. “It embraced the idea that citizen education in world affairs was important long before other community college,” he said. He added that to his knowledge it was one of but two community colleges in the nation at the time to have an active international education program.

The documents will be catalogued and described before being opened to qualified researchers, says Teresa Tomkins-Walsh, Director of the Houston History Archives.
Career and University Transfer Expo 2011

March 10 at 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. in the COM Gym
For more information contact Pam Berry-Richardson at Ext. 8520.

“Five Course Love”

“Five Course Love” runs through February 13, 2011, Thursdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2:30 p.m. For tickets, please call the College of the Mainland Community Theatre box office at Ext. 8345 or buy your tickets online at www.com.edu/theatre.

COM’s Experts Guide and Speakers Bureau

The Marketing and Communications Department is updating COM’s Experts Guide and forming a Speakers Bureau. If you would like to participate in either one of these or both of these, please send your name, educational background, area of expertise and a short bio to lpigao@com.edu.

Experts Guide

The College of the Mainland Experts Guide is a list of College faculty and staff who, because of the depth of their knowledge and experience, are considered experts in various fields. This guide is a tool for the media to use when searching for expert sources for news stories. It also represents those COM experts who have experience or an interest in speaking with journalists.

Speakers Bureau

The COM Speakers Bureau is a means of disseminating and exchanging educational, vocational, and cultural information between the people of the greater Houston-Galveston area and the faculty and staff of COM. These faculty and staff members have volunteered to speak at professional and civic organizations on a variety of subjects.
Welcome to COM

Kathy Perkins, RN, MSN
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Madi Elkins
Administrative Assistant
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February Birthdays

Cheryl Young  Administrative Assistant, Institutional Research ............2/1
Luanne Edens  Program Coordinator, High School Instr (K-12) ..............2/2
Kirk McVey  Tutor/Mentor, Academic Success ......................................2/3
Lisa Woitenka  Food Service, Child Develop/Ed .....................................2/4
Ana Argueta  Custodian ......................................................................2/7
Jimmi Selman  Examiner, Advisement/Testing Services ..........................2/9
James Cobb  Faculty, Industrial Technology ...........................................2/11
Pamela Mahoney  Faculty, Public Service Careers .................................2/11
Butch Carr  Chief of Police ....................................................................2/13
James Hackett  Faculty, Humanities .......................................................2/14
Cindy Gallaway  Admin. Assistant, Continuing Education .......................2/15
Jennifer Johnson  Human Resources Generalist ....................................2/15
Kari Drake  Admin. Assistant, Marketing & Communications ..................2/18
Duane Dippel  Faculty/Advisor, High School Instr (K-12) ........................2/18
Marnie Schutz  Director of It Application, VP College & Fin Svcs ...........2/19
Tamara Hoodye  Director of Student Support Services ......................2/20
Linda Carrier  Custodian ......................................................................2/20
Gay Reeves  Director of Nursing ............................................................2/21
William Roy  Safety Officer, VP College & Fin Svcs ............................2/21
Sandra Zavala  Administrative Assistant, Instructional Admin ................2/21
Steven Remollino  Faculty, Humanities ....................................................2/22
Beverly Mitchell  Facilities & Records Specialist, College & Fin Svcs .......2/23
Rodney Conley  Laboratory Assistant, Instructional Tech Lab ................2/25

College of the Mainland Art Gallery Presents:
Nathaniel Donnett:
“Too Light Inside, Too Dark Outside, Somewhere In Between”
Jan. 18 - Feb. 17, 2011
Artist talk and reception Tuesday, Jan. 25, at 12:30 p.m.
Hours: Monday - Thursday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. and by appointment
To join our e-mail list, please send a request to mgray@com.edu
Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/comartgallery

Getting your information publicized

Remember to visit the Marketing website at www.com.edu/marketing to submit requests for:

On-Hold Messages · to announce your event on the recorded message played while callers are on hold.

Social Networking Web Request · to have your event, activity or announcement posted on COM’s Facebook and Twitter websites.

Paid Advertisement Request Form · to develop a paid ad for newspapers, magazines or other print or online media.

Media Request Form · to have information published in the local newspapers and websites including COM’s. Remember that the newspapers do not always publish everything we send them.
Once a hiring committee has completed their part why does it take so long to complete the hiring process? I think the college loses qualified applicants because applicants seem not to be notified in a timely manner.

There are several steps involved in the hiring process in accordance with DC (Regulation) Hiring Procedures and are outlined in detail within this regulation. After the return to HR the fully completed search committee documents, including the handwritten and typed interview scoring forms, the Office of Diversity and Equity reviews, completes and approves the Affirmative Action summary form. Signatures of HR, appropriate AVP/Dean, VP and the President are obtained. HR meets weekly with me on Tuesday morning. All items requiring my signature must be complete and received by HR no later than the preceding Friday. Reference checks and background checks are completed on every candidate prior to the offer of employment. Background checks can take as long as two weeks to return from the third party vendor. Once the reference checks and background check are completed and approved, the candidate is notified and offered the position.

There have been no candidates who rejected offers of employment due to timeliness. Examples of rejections of offers have been based upon salary and one candidate specifically requested additional time to respond, but rejected based on salary and accepted another offer of employment simultaneously.

Why don’t we have two payrolls per month?

We would need to increase three full-time positions in the business office to accomplish this and dedicate two full-time positions in Human Resources. Currently we have the equivalent of one full-time position in the Human Resources department. Therefore, we would need to add four full-time positions to accomplish this task. With the decrease in our state funding and the increase that would be required in tax, our tax rate and tuition that our students would pay this is not an option at this time.

This is why almost all of the community colleges and independent school districts in Texas have a monthly payroll.

Are there any plans to install changing tables in the renovated restrooms on campus? There is especially a need in the Administration and Student Center Buildings. I see numerous young mothers trying to change their baby’s diapers in a stroller/carrier or precariously perched on the shelf in the restroom. Most businesses install them in the handicap stalls due to the additional space and to provide some privacy.

Yes, we are planning to install the tables in the Enrollment Center.

Why do employees have to turn in a Leave plan summary with their Request for leave form? What purpose does this serve?

Before supervisors can approve any leave, they must verify you have the time and this report provides necessary information to make accurate decisions.

Isn’t the College supposed to be going to timesheets in WebAdvisor? Why is it taking so long?

Yes, we will be using Datatel for the timesheets. It is a complicated process. We have to hire a consultant organization that is familiar with Datatel to complete the process. We anticipate this to be up and running by fall term.

Who read through all of the feedback forms submitted from faculty, staff and students for the VP of Enrollment Services candidates? Will the feedback be considered and will thorough background and reference checks be done before making a decision? Hopefully another search will be conducted.

I am the hiring supervisor so I read every feedback form and considered each one in my decision. I recommend Dr. Fluker to the Board for consideration.

Did the BOT approve the Executive Vice President position and is there already someone in line for this position?

This is an operational issue that doesn’t require board approval, however, the board is aware of my need for this position. There is no person in line for this position. A national search will be conducted.

With budget cuts, how is the college able to approve an internship with a salary? I believe it is rumored to be around $5,000.00 a month.

If the decision is made to participate in the University of Texas internship program, funds will be allocated from existing budgets.
With this new program to give current staff the training to move into higher-level positions, will jobs still be advertised and will outside candidates be considered?

Yes.

Where is the Community Outreach Office?

We are currently considering possible space in the Student Center that will locate all of Outreach in a single location.

What were the results of the employee surveys conducted last summer and last fall? What did employees say about the College?

The information has been summarized by the surveying agency, University of Houston. We will meet with them next week to set up a schedule to present the information to employees in the near future.

There has been some confusion among the faculty about the two different, but similar “leadership training programs.” I have already attained the credentials and teaching career that I have always wanted. I have no desire to ever be an administrator or department chair. The tone that I am feeling about these programs is that everyone should strive for these positions, and that ultimately faculty will be looked down upon if they do not. I think I speak for many faculty members that are already putting in 50-60 hour weeks, that we have plenty of work with our students, committees and departmental responsibilities. What will happen in the future if we choose not to spend an extra 20 hours a week in these programs?

Nothing. Nobody is required to participate in either of these programs. The programs will be offered on a voluntary basis and is strictly for employee enrichment and/or advancement.

Is the delay in the hiring process due to the potential upcoming budget cuts from the state? That way you don’t have to lay off people if you don’t hire them?

The delay in the hiring process is caused by my requirement to have all paperwork including background checks, reference checks, etc., completed before an offer to hire or recommendation to hire is made.

When you first got here you said there were too many chiefs but it seems you keep hiring more and more chiefs. How is this saving the college money in this budget shortfall? Wasn’t your plan to right size the college?

I have been evaluating the positions we have at COM and in fact we have reduced the number of positions. We have been able to provide the necessary leadership for the college through strategic restructuring and reorganizing various departments, combining responsibilities and expanding the scope of various positions to accomplish these tasks. We have been able to do this and save money.

Do other schools have the opportunity to ask these types of questions of their President because I think it is so cool?

I am sure there is but I don’t know of any.

You made all employees sign what our hours were going to be yet we still see people coming in late and leaving early. And why is it still a ghost town on Fridays? Does everyone take Fridays off?

No, everyone doesn’t take off Fridays. I am here almost every Friday. I intend to look into this matter and correct any inconsistencies with policy found. Thank you for making me aware of possible violators.

I have heard that only one faculty member is serving on the search committee for the new Executive VP/Chief Academic Officer. Given that this individual will be over instruction, why are faculty not better represented on the search committee?

Good point. I will consider adding another faculty member. I will ask the faculty senate president to select another faculty to serve on the committee.

I am puzzled by the job requirement of 10 years combined experience at the VP level or higher. This excludes many candidates who have worked effectively in higher education administration and are ready for more responsibility. In fact, this requirement guarantees that we will only attract candidates wishing to make a horizontal or downward career move, and it also guarantees that we will not hire any internal candidates since no one at COM would fit this description. Was that the intent?

No, that was not the intent and furthermore I disagree with your opinion.

Why are you letting people transfer to other positions without posting those positions so that everyone who would like a chance at those jobs can apply for them? It seems you are letting folks who don’t get along with their department or supervisors off the hook by letting them move to other departments. Doesn’t this perpetuate bad behavior and unfair to others who would like advancement?

Please refer to the October 2010 Employee Newsletter.

If you have a question you would like President Elam to answer, submit your question to your council president.

Faculty Council President · Leslie Richardson
Professional Council President · Tamara Hoodye
Classified Council President · Nancy Chacon

All questions are submitted to Marketing without names or identifying information.
Managing Risk

Internal auditing as an assurance and consulting service adds value to the College concerning risk. How is this important? Risk by definition is the chance of an event occurring that impacts achieving an objective as maintaining the integrity of financial data, safeguarding assets, or complying with college policies. Internal controls provide the means to manage risk. So, how is risk managed and what is the role of Internal Auditing?

Risk management is a process to identify, assess, manage, and control events to provide reasonable assurance in achieving an objective. Management owns the risk management process. Internal Auditing assists management by performing a risk assessment, which reflects the adequacy of existing departmental controls. Results of the assessment are used in establishing or improving controls to help mitigate the risks found. Risk assessment is also used in developing the Annual Audit Plan. Risks are identified through meetings with management, which are then used to plan audits and other Internal Auditing services during the fiscal year.

If you have interest in a risk assessment in your department, please contact the Internal Auditor.

How do the P-Cards and their accounting work?

The procurement card (p-card) is designed to enable you, the cardholder, to have the authority to directly make purchases without the need for a purchase order. The process involves these steps:

1. A cardholder uses their own p-card to make a purchase.
2. Each purchase is recorded by the cardholder on an electronic expense report.
3. The bank pays the merchant(s) and sends a statement to the College each billing cycle.
4. The cardholder’s supervisor, as the authorized signatory for the account(s) charged for the purchase(s), approves the expense report for all charges in the billing cycle.
5. The approved expense report is submitted to Accounts Payable where it is reconciled to the bank’s statement and is paid.

The Procurement Card Program has a Program Guide that fully describes required policies and procedures for p-card use. The Program Guide can be seen by visiting Internal Auditing at Infocentral. Thanks for your question.

If you have a question you would like Frank Scheidler to answer, please submit your question to your council president.
Registration in the new Enrollment Center