

Students reclaim watering holes



COM 319 A/B is due to come alive with student activities in the near future.

JCCC is involved in distinguished initiatives this academic year – Achieving the Dream, reduction of our carbon footprint, a new set of strategic goals, a visit from the Higher Learning Commission and foosball.

Yes, foosball. Foosball, ping-pong tables, computer games and chess boards. This fall, JCCC is engaging students on all fronts, and the remodel of 319 Commons to a student lounge and meeting area offers two more points of contact – student-to-student and student-to-college.

“Dedicating the third floor of the Commons building to students is part of a plan to make JCCC more interactive for students,” said Rick Moehring, dean, Learner Engagement.

Plans calls for an informal student lounge and study area in 319A COM; a student meeting room in 319B that can be used for small group presentations, workshops, discussions, club meetings and faculty-student mentoring; and an expansion of the Center for Student Involvement (CSI) housing student clubs and organizations. The areas will have Wi-fi accessibility, computer outlets, televisions, writeable wall

surfaces and vending machines with healthy snacks.

In its current location for one year, the CSI is hitting its stride, attracting students to clubs and organizations – everything from anime to veterans clubs.

“Students have an obvious hunger to be involved in something; that’s an important part of their college education,” said Pam Vassar, assistant dean, Student Life and Leadership Development. “We feel that combining the recreational lounge, meeting area and Center for Student Involvement will provide a nice synergy for students.”

With the new spaces, third-floor student art gallery and nearby 2.5-level Campus Ledger and ECAV offices, JCCC students are reclaiming space allotted to them when the campus first opened in 1972. With burgeoning enrollment, student hangouts were given over to classroom and offices. Ironically this fall, with enrollment at an all-time high of 20,401 and space at a premium, the college has made learner engagement, and therefore, student engagement a priority. According to Moehring, 20 percent of students say student involvement is critical to their college success.



Rick Moehring, dean, Learner Engagement; Holly Stayton, Student Life coordinator; Mary Jean Billingsley, program director, Learner Engagement; and Pam Vassar, assistant dean, Student Life and Leadership Development, stand in the current Center for Student Involvement surrounded by students.

“We can’t keep singing the sad song that this is a commuter school where students just take classes and go home,” Moehring said. “We want students to create a community here. We want them to see JCCC as ‘their school,’ not just a place to get credits and transfer as fast as possible.”

Remodel of the 5,500-square-foot 319 COM A/B (including the corridor revisions and equipment check-out room) is due to begin late fall. Pending the total revamp, new modern furniture will be moved into 319A COM, slated to become an open casual place.

Because students have a tolerance for chaos, Vassar and Moehring hope there are six to eight activities going on simultaneously in both the meeting and

lounge areas. The name and function of 319A/B will be defined by students, just as the design had their input.

Moehring sees the dedicated space as having the capacity to make fundamental changes in a JCCC student’s college experience, which isn’t just about earning credit hours, but also about reflecting one’s own life and affecting others’. Hanging out with classmates is basic to the college experience. **Im**