Cabrillo’s Creative Complex

By TRACI HUKILL  Fri, Oct 09, 2009

To the approximately 1600 people who snapped up free tickets to this weekend’s gala opening of Cabrillo’s new Visual and Performing Arts Complex in a freakish 56-minute display of enthusiasm for the arts on the first day tickets became available: Congratulations. Your efforts were not in vain. The three “sold-out” performances, a mélange of music, theater and dance, will be staged in a shiny new showpiece of a venue, the Crocker Theater, the crown jewel in a glitteringly modern complex 11 years in the making.

To everybody else: dry your tears, start making plans to attend a slew of VAPA shows this fall and set the GPS for Cabrillo on Saturday for six free hours of workshops and snooping through a new $68 million arts facility that puts Cabrillo in an elite class of California community colleges. Make that community colleges everywhere. As new vice president of student services Dennis Bailey-Fougnier remarked recently, referring to a previous employer, “At Virginia Commonwealth University, I guarantee they would give their eyeteeth for this facility—and they had 6,000 arts students.”

It’s hard not to gush. Built primarily with funds raised by local ballot measures in 1998 and 2004, the complex consists of five buildings clustered across Soquel Drive from the old Cabrillo Theatre. Begun a little too early to get in on LEED certification, the buildings nevertheless have a distinctly modern, smart feel, with lots of glass, light and natural materials. But looks aren’t everything. In organization and design, this is meant to be a fully updated 21st-century facility with a long life.

That means different things in different departments. In the airy, well-lit 2-D art studios—where even low-tech props like drawing horses have been given an ingenious makeover—digital facilities are never far away. The digital photography studio, just around the corner from the traditional wet process center with its darkrooms, houses more than two dozen 22-inch Apple monitors, causing this computer slave, at least, to swoon. The printmaking studio, besides having complete capability for both silk and intaglio processes, is next door to a digital lab. “We know traditional media and digital media are coming together,” says dean of...
There's a sense almost of embarrassment among Cabrillo officials over this complex—after all, its long-scheduled unveiling came at a time when the college had to cut 100 classes in order to make up for a $3 million funding shortfall. But it's mixed in with a healthy dose of pride, and this weekend thousands of people are about to find out why.

**THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS COMPLEX OPEN HOUSE is Saturday, Oct. 10, 10am-4pm. Free. Visit [http://www.cabrillovapa.com](http://www.cabrillovapa.com) for workshop and performance schedule. Sold-out gala performances are Friday, Oct. 9 and Saturday, Oct. 10 at 8pm and Sunday, Oct. 11 at 3pm at Crocker Theater, 6500 Soquel Dr, Aptos**

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