

GEYSERS AT 50
Small power plant grows into largest geothermal energy complex in world
BUSINESS

thinking pink

LATEST STRATEGIES IN BREAST CANCER FIGHT

New treatments, measures of support **SPECIAL SECTION**



"It is part of a vision . . . where performance and education come together for our students, faculty and community."

RUBEN ARMIÑANA, Sonoma State University president



Green Center debuts

As first student concert is held at SSU's controversial \$120 million music venue, critics cite drain on university resources, backers say it will put Sonoma County on map



KENT PORTER / The Press Democrat

INAUGURAL PERFORMANCE: The Green Music Center concert hall on the Sonoma State University campus in Rohnert Park comes alive Saturday during a presentation by members of the university's music department. More than 300 people were on hand to hear the first performance in the state-of-the-art, \$120 million hall.

By **JEREMY HAY**
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

The music center that has come to define a large part of Sonoma State University President Ruben Armiñana's 18-year tenure broke ground almost exactly a decade ago.

But not until Saturday did the Green Music Center hold the first public event with 160 students of the university's music department performing at the landmark concert hall.

Originally intended to be a premier performing arts center funded solely by private donors, it has cost taxpayers about \$45 million in California State University funds and education bond monies for construction projects. Since its groundbreaking, projected



For a photo gallery of Sunday's Green Music Center event, go to pressdemocrat.com

costs have grown more than tenfold, to about \$120 million.

Over that time, supporters, including a roster of North Coast philanthropists, have maintained that when done, the center will put SSU and Sonoma County on the nation's cultural map.

SSU officials also say Green Center fundraising efforts have spurred more gifts to a wide spectrum of other academic programs — and will continue to do so.

"It has brought a lot of donors who wouldn't have been attracted to this

university otherwise, and who actually have interests that extend beyond music," said Jeff Langley, artistic director for SSU's performing arts departments.

"This is going to be the gift that keeps on giving," he said.

Armiñana said the center will be a "symbol of excellence in public education in California and for bridging community to campus."

It will be "a world-class, superb destination for the musical arts and a gathering place for our educational offerings," he said last week.

But from its earliest days, the center became what has remained an enduring point of friction between Armiñana and a chorus of his critics on SSU's faculty.

TURN TO **GREEN**, PAGE A9

RIISING PRICE TAG

As the scope of the Green Music Center has grown since it was first proposed 13 years ago, so has the cost:

- 1997:** \$15 million
- 1998:** \$22 million
- 1999:** \$47 million
- July 2005:** \$63.1 million
- June 2006:** \$67.4 million
- Sept. 2006:** \$87.7 million
- March 2007:** \$100 million
- 2008:** \$110 million
- 2010:** \$120 million

Brown, Whitman in fiery debate

Clash over illegal immigrants, Republican's housekeeper

By **SEEMA MEHTA** and **MICHAEL J. MISHAK**
LOS ANGELES TIMES

FRESNO — Gubernatorial candidates Meg Whitman and Jerry Brown tangled Saturday over Whitman's employment of an illegal-immigrant housekeeper, exchanging blistering jabs as they met for their second televised debate.

The most direct confrontation between the two candidates came when the moderator asked Whitman about revelations earlier this week that she employed Nicandra Diaz Santillan, whom she fired in 2009 after nine years. Whitman has denied knowing Diaz Santillan was undocumented until shortly before she was dismissed.

NEXT DEBATE

Jerry Brown and Meg Whitman will meet for their third debate at 6:30 p.m. Oct. 12 at Dominican University in San Rafael. The debate will be aired on local NBC channels.

Whitman turned to face Brown and accused him of being behind Diaz Santillan's emergence.

"Jerry, you should be ashamed," Whitman said. "You and your surrogates put her deportation at risk. You put her out there. You should be ashamed for sacrificing Nicky Diaz on the altar of your political ambitions."

Brown denied involvement and countered that Whitman repeatedly has called for employers to be held responsible for their hires. He said she was failing to take responsibility for her actions.

"Don't run for governor if you can't stand up on your own two feet and say, 'Hey, I made a mistake, I'm sorry, let's go on from here,'" he said. "You have blamed her, blamed me, blamed the left, blamed the

TURN TO **DEBATE**, PAGE A8

Demos, GOP shift strategy as election nears

By **LIZ SIDOTI**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Democrats have all but written off at least three Senate seats — in North Dakota, Indiana and Arkansas — and at least six House seats in Tennessee, Louisiana, New York and elsewhere as they embark on a final-weeks advertising push to minimize congressional election losses.

Emboldened by polls showing a close race, Republicans are throwing at least \$3 million into West Virginia in hopes of winning a Senate seat that was long thought out of reach.

Control of Congress and the outlook for President Barack Obama's agenda is at stake in the Nov. 2 election. And in the one-month dash to Election Day, both parties are zeroing in on races they have the best chances of winning.

The chances of a Republican takeover remain far greater in the House than in the Senate, according to a

TURN TO **STRATEGY**, PAGE A8

Frustration intensifies over foreclosure crisis

Local, state officials move to help struggling homeowners

By **NATHAN HALVERSON**
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

The public's anger at national banks over the foreclosure crisis continues to boil over and has spurred a flurry of actions by elected officials.

Rep. Lynn Woolsey, D-Petaluma, joined other Democrats last week in calling for a federal investigation into the foreclosure process.

A bill co-authored by Rep. Mike Thompson, D-St. Helena, would allow some struggling homeowners to lower their monthly payments by refinancing loans at today's low rates.

And as the week came to a close, state Attorney General and gubernatorial candidate Jerry Brown asked JP-Morgan Chase to stop all foreclosure proceedings in California.

Their actions come amid growing frustration by homeowners who say major banks have stymied a 1-year-old federal program designed to lower monthly mortgage payments and re-

duce the number of foreclosures.

Lenders have foreclosed on more than 7,000 properties in Sonoma County since the beginning of 2008.

Woolsey said the banks might have acted illegally in some of those cases and, in a letter signed by other Democrats, is asking Attorney General Eric Holder, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke and other officials to investigate bank practices.

"We think there is something amiss," she said.

The Home Affordable Modification

TURN TO **FORECLOSURE**, PAGE A9



In response to concerns over the foreclosure process, **Rep. Lynn Woolsey** has called for a federal probe. Meanwhile, **Rep. Mike Thompson** co-authored a bill that would allow some homeowners to refinance at the current low rates.



SANTA ROSA
74 / 47
THE WEATHER, **B12**



SEGHEGIO MARIACH DIES AT 80
Rachel Ann Seghesio served as ambassador for Healdsburg winery / **B1**



Business E1 **Crossword** F3
Classified F1 **Editorial** B8
Lowell Cohn C1 **Forum** B7

Gaye LeBaron B3 **Obituaries** B4, B5
Lotto A2 **Chris Smith** B3
Movies D6 **Travel** D7

FORECLOSURE: Momentum for new laws growing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Program enacted last year was intended to help 4 million homeowners unable to make their mortgage payments but has fallen short amid accusations that lenders have failed to carry out, or even willfully obstructed, the program.

Thompson said the loan modification program has not worked overall and momentum was growing in Congress to enact new legislation.

"Everything that has happened at the federal government has been little help," he said. "This is a tough nut to crack."

On Thursday, Brown asked JPMorgan Chase to stop all foreclosure proceedings in California after it was revealed the bank had been skirting foreclosure laws in other states.

The demand came a week after Brown made a similar request to GMAC Mortgages, one of the nation's largest lenders.

"It suggests strongly that they are not doing due diligence under California law," said Jim Finefrock, director of communications for the Attorney General's Office.

In California, loan servicers are required to contact a borrower to determine whether the homeowner is eligible for a loan modification. Brown is asking JPMorgan Chase and GMAC executives to provide proof they complied with that law.

Finefrock did not know if the lenders had stopped foreclosure proceedings in California, saying talks with GMAC were ongoing.

A spokeswoman for Chase declined comment Friday.

GMAC and Chase suspended foreclosure proceedings in 23 states where bank executives are required to sign an affidavit stating they personally reviewed each case. Apparently, some executives who signed the foreclosure documents had not reviewed each case. Bank of America announced Friday it also was suspending its foreclosure proceedings in those 23 states for the same reason. California is not one of those states.

Some analysts are predicting the suspension of foreclosures in these 23 states, which resulted from homeowner lawsuits, could spread to other states and put the brakes on bank actions nationally. Around Sonoma County, many former homeowners can share horror stories about trying to save their homes from foreclosure, saying they were poorly treated by Wells Fargo, Chase, Bank of America and other large national lenders.

John and Traci Figueroa lost their Santa Rosa home in July. The couple had submitted an application to Bank of America to enroll in the federal loan modification program, which according to federal rules should have halted any

foreclosure proceeding.

A Bank of America representative told the couple to disregard a letter they received notifying them that their house would be sold at a foreclosure auction.

However, the day before the auction date another representative told them it was, in fact, going to be sold. Four days later, they were evicted from their home by an investor who bought it.

"We could pay the mortgage again. I had gotten a new job," John Figueroa said at the time. "We just needed time to pay back the payments we missed."

The failure to stem the rate of foreclosures is hindering a quicker economic recovery, many analysts say.

Foreclosures affect more than just those who default. Repossessed properties pull down home values in entire neighborhoods. They can lead to blight and house fires as squatters move into abandoned properties. And they drain the coffers of local governments that rely on home values to generate property tax revenue for social services and other programs.

The failure of bankers and politicians to resolve the problem has left taxpayers on the hook for much of the financial loss because the federal government has essentially insured most mortgages.

In fact, national banks often lose little money when foreclosing on a home because the mortgage often was insured by the government or sold to someone else. So when a loan modification fails, the financial loss is most frequently incurred by taxpayers.

In the case of the Figueras, it was taxpayers who covered the more than \$100,000 loss because their loan was owned by Fannie Mae, which was taken over by the government in 2008. The stress and anxiety of losing a house — or fighting to save it — takes an emotional toll too.

"It is quite traumatic. Because it involves the loss of their home," said the Rev. Raymond Decker, a Sebastopol pastor who has counseled several people facing foreclosure. "It has really undermined people's feeling of security."

Decker is among a growing number of people who blame the nation's largest banks for turning a deaf ear to the problem. He has written lawmakers, such as Wooley, asking that they take action.

"I think there has to be some political pressure brought to bear on the banks," Decker said. "I'm hoping they will look into the matter to see why there is such egregious administration of the federal program."

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Photos by KENT PORTER / The Press Democrat

FILING INSIDE: Concert attendees walk to the Green Music Center concert hall on the Sonoma State University campus in Rohnert Park on Saturday.

GREEN: At issue is whether project took away from academics

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Those critics agree the center almost assuredly will be the top-shelf facility that Armiñana and other supporters promise. But they say it has diverted money and attention from SSU's academic mission.

"The whole thing escalated out of control," said Steve Orlick, a professor of environmental studies and planning.

"The campus priorities have been skewed away from the academic program and toward the music building. It's been a runaway ego thing," he said.

He and others say SSU's development office, focused for 10 years on raising money for the Green Center, has short-changed other areas of the campus, particularly academics.

"That's the main issue," said history professor Bob Karslud, dean emeritus of the school of social sciences.

Even its most ardent supporters say that, given the amount of attention the music center has received, that's an understandable perception.

Langley, for example, calls the center a "miracle." But he also said: "Because of the scope of this thing, I think it has consumed the primary efforts of the development office, and that is unfortunate to a large degree."

Photography professor Stephen Galloway said that in the "long run," the music center will take SSU to a new level and "has the potential for changing the relationship between the university and the local community."

Still, he said, while development staff worked hard, and with some success, to forge ties with donors that would benefit his art and art history department, "I certainly got the impression that the office was primarily occupied right now with the music center."

Center "a main focus"

Top SSU officials acknowledge that the development office concentrates on raising money for the center.

"It's a main focus," said Patricia McNeill, an SSU vice president who heads the office.

But they say the numbers clearly refute the criticism that other areas have suffered as a result.

"The endowment, none of it, zero, not a penny goes to construction of projects. It's all associated with scholarships and programs," said Larry Furukawa-Schlereth, SSU's chief financial officer.

The endowment is a fund for which the development office raises money. It is managed by SSU's Academic Foundation and supports student scholarships and academic programs.

In the decade since the Green Center broke ground, the endowment has about doubled, from \$17 million to \$30 million.

"To suggest that the development efforts here have favored Green as opposed to scholarships and programs just isn't borne out by the data," Furukawa-Schlereth said.

In fact, said McNeill, over the past 10 years, considerably more has been raised for other programs than for the center.

According to a summary of development office records that she provided, of \$88.5 million in gifts to SSU since 2000, \$41 million has gone to the mu-



Sonoma State University music students prepare for their Saturday performance at the Green Music Center.

sic center. The remaining \$47.5 million was for other areas of the university, chiefly academic programs and schools.

The Green Center's critics say they have seen nothing to convince them of that.

"That's preposterous, I don't believe it," Orlick said. "I'd like to see a listing of everything in both categories."

McNeill said her office could not provide a detailed breakdown of gifts to SSU that were for purposes other than the Green Center because over the years they have been recorded differently on different database systems. But over the decade they have included:

- \$4.3 million for the Computer Engineering and Science Program.
- \$2.2 million for the Osher Lifelong Learning Program.
- \$300,000 for the Jewish Studies Program.
- \$2.5 million for the Native American Studies Program.
- \$800,000 for the Wine Business Institute.

Also, McNeill's summary showed \$7 million has been given to SSU over the decade for scholarships.

Still, even McNeill conceded that years of focusing on the Green Center has delayed other initiatives.

"It's time for this project to be done," she said. "I want to complete the Green Music Center so we can move on from this to the things that I really came here to do, which is to do a comprehensive campaign for the entire university."

Choral hall planned

The music center was born in 1997, envisioned as a choral hall to be funded by a \$5 million gift from Telecom Valley pioneer Donald Green.

Nine months later, Armiñana announced a further \$5 million matching grant from the Greens. And he proposed a year-round amphitheater for conferences, symphonic perfor-

mances and jazz and chamber music performances. It should, he suggested, be modeled on the famous Tanglewood music center in western Massachusetts.

By 1998, the vision was for a larger concert hall costing \$22 million. A year later, the projected cost was \$47 million and the facility was to house SSU's music department. It was to include classrooms, practice rooms, recording facilities and a recital hall, a restaurant and banquet facilities.

Today, much of the building is open. The first public event went forward Saturday in the concert hall, which still lacks permanent chairs. They have been paid for and are being made at a cost of \$2.5 million in state education bond funds. The classrooms and practice rooms are in use, and the hospitality center is up and running. The restaurant is being used for special events, although it's not open on a daily basis yet.

And music critics have pronounced the center a project of "major promise."

Former San Francisco Chronicle critic and UC Berkeley lecturer Robert Commanday in February called it "a much more important project with a greater potential and mission than even its supporters may envision."

Work still ahead

But that vision is still not fully realized.

The 250-seat recital hall remains but a shell surrounding a dirt floor, and \$6 million is needed to complete it. There is no recording studio. The concert hall also needs \$6 million more to complete its lobby, restrooms and back-stage facilities for performers.

As of this summer, Furukawa-Schlereth said, SSU needed to raise \$30 million more to finish the center.

"It's very frustrating," said

"The campus priorities have been skewed away from the academic program . . . It's been a runaway ego thing."

STEVE ORLICK

SSU professor of environmental studies and planning

"To suggest that the development efforts here have favored Green . . . just isn't borne out by the data."

LARRY FURUKAWA-SCHLERETH
SSU's chief financial officer

history professor Kathleen Noonan. "Thirty million more, it makes your head spin, especially when you're in a situation where you can't even offer the basic kinds of support to students and faculty."

She said faculty members often lack classroom materials, such as whiteboard markers and classroom wireless Internet access, and no financial aid is available to her department's graduate students.

Armiñana said swings in the economy and construction costs have contributed to the delays and climbing price. But he said he understands the frustration — and shares it.

"It has kept me awake many nights," he said.

In the end, he said, the center will be as appreciated as SSU's high-tech library, the 10-year-old Jean and Charles Schulz Information Center, which is widely considered one of the university's highlights.

Asked what place the center will have in his legacy, Armiñana said: "It is part of a vision of transformation and excellence for this university where performance and education come together for our students, faculty and community."

Students' views mixed

For now, among the school's roughly 120 music students, the center prompts a mix of opinions.

"It's invaluable really," said junior Paul Coker, 20, a music major. "This is really top of the line for us musicians."

But another third-year music major said the building, although handsome, falls short.

There are too few practice rooms and offices that could be used for practicing aren't soundproof, requiring students to use Ives Hall, where the department had been located, said the student, who asked not to be named because she didn't want to upset her teachers.

"They didn't think of us when they built it," she said.

Langley acknowledged that the student's complaint is on target.

"That's one of the things I wish had been addressed," he said. "But we originally hadn't expected the music department to be located here."

Otherwise, Langley is convinced the center gives SSU a unique standing.

"Students attending a California State University, a public university, are getting facilities that rank with anything Juilliard would have," he said, referring to the prestigious New York performing arts conservatory.

"The performing arts are always the last one to get anything in these places, I mean, What gets cut first? It's the arts," he said. "I can't feel guilty about the fact that at this university, the arts kind of scored."

Saturday night, an audience of music lovers sat through a "collage" of music genres, from operatic solos to jazz ensemble to full-symphonic sounds.

"This is our lab," said music department head Brian S. Wilson. "This is where we practice our art," he said.

Staff Writer Martin Espinoza contributed to this report. You can reach Staff Writer Jeremy Hay at 521-5212 or jeremy.hay@pressdemocrat.com.



Associated Press

Firefighters examine the wreckage of a plane that crashed Saturday in Nazca, Peru, killing all six people on board.

Plane crash kills 6 near Peru's famed Nazca Lines site

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LIMA, Peru — A small plane carrying British tourists crashed near the famed Nazca Lines in Peru on Saturday, killing all six people on board, police said.

The victims were listed as four Britons — three men and a woman — and the pilot and co-pilot, both Peruvian.

The Cessna plane apparently had engine trouble that led it to crash in a field, Nazca police chief Alfredo Coronel said. Police were working to recover the bodies.

An official who answered the phone at the British Embassy in Lima declined to comment without authorization from London.

The Nazca Lines, mysteri-

ous geoglyphs etched into the desert centuries ago by indigenous groups, are a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of Peru's leading tourist attractions.

Located about 240 miles southeast of Lima, the glyphs are only fully recognizable from the air, and 30-minute overflights are popular with travelers.

However there have been allegations of lax supervision of the several-dozen aging planes that make the flights.

In February, a Cessna 206 carrying three Chileans and four Peruvians over the lines crashed and killed everyone on board.

Another crash in April 2008 killed five French tourists, though their pilot survived.