

Grad student resigns from South Campus team

By Amy Hoak

Graduate student Alan Mammoser resigned from his position on the South Campus Program Planning Committee last week, his letter to Chancellor David Broski outlining the reasons for his discontent.

A student in the School of Urban Planning, Mammoser felt his opinions concerning the expansion plan, the historic preservation of Maxwell Street and the process by which the plan was constructed, differed from the majority of his university colleagues.

"I am opposed," Mammoser wrote in his resignation letter; "to the now official plan for South Campus and do not want to participate in the current plan's implementation. It results, I believe, from a planning process that, from the beginning, precluded the possibility of working with and integrating the pre-existing community and historical environment."

The letter continues to cover pertinent, yet debatable issues to the plan — exclusion of the merchants in the process, lack of student and faculty input and problems with the

developer; a "suburban land planning company," are documented.

"Retail seems to thrive on all of Halsted. [The contractors] didn't even front the street [in the plan.] They have lawns south of Maxwell," Mammoser said, commenting on his letter and his disenchantment with the administration's decisions. "They have a lack of understanding of the way a city thrives and why it exists."

"What we're taught in Urban Planning is to build up on the pre-existing community to respect local culture, take what's there and bring the best out of it," he continued. "I got into [the committee] to try and apply principals. Maxwell Street is such great place with a rich history."

The university, strong and seemingly unwavering in its decisions since the start of the Maxwell/UIC debate, intends to get the go-ahead for the project in March or April.

Still, they regret Mammoser's resignation; even though this committee met infrequently, the contributions he posed to the discussion offered a different standpoint, according

to Dr. Stan Delaney, director of the South Campus Project.

"Alan was a great contributor," said Delaney. "He worked hard like everyone else on the committee. He has opinions, and I respect that."

Concerning South Campus, Delaney stressed the value of compromise in the situation.

"We're trying to maintain consensus. It is a laudable goal, but not easy to administer because opinions are widely divergent.

"Somewhere in between doing nothing and doing too much is where we'll end up," said Delaney.

Yet members of the Maxwell Street Historical Preservation Coalition, who have been unsuccessful in budging the university's decision, remain suspicious.

"There is certainly a culture conflict," said Steve Balkin, member of the Coalition. "Rather than learn about [Maxwell Street], the administration would rather dismiss it and use their power to get rid of it."

"Real world things get designed in office buildings too far away. But Alan came down

to Maxwell and made a point to learn about it. That's what a good public planner should do. He's the type of person that needs to be involved with South Campus," Balkin said of the resigning graduate student.

Mammoser was not a key player in South Campus decision-making; his position on the committee was used primarily for input and discussion rather than policy-forming. His leaving the committee may not have an impact upon the university's South Campus blueprints. It is, however, an indication of student opinion on the issue, one Mammoser felt should have been considered while the plan was being composed.

"Creativity and vision might have come from students and faculty of our architecture and planning schools, had they ever been invited to be involved," Mammoser wrote in his letter.

"While I saw the possibilities of community development unfolding in a real situation, I was disappointed in the outcome," Mammoser said.

Students allowed tax breaks for tuition expenses

By Sadaf Siddiqui

Several tax benefits are available to students due the enactment of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997.

These reliefs are designed to ease some of the income tax burden of students and their families.

Three major tax benefits include, the Hope Scholarship, Lifetime Learning Credit, and the Student Loan Interest Deduction.

"Students that pay their tuition may be eligible for these tax breaks," said Alex Swanson, Associate Director of the Office of Stu-

dent Financial Aid.

A nonrefundable tax credit for students within their first two years of college, the Hope Scholarship can be used for tuition and other related fees. A student would receive 100 percent credit on the first \$1,000 and 50 percent credit on the next \$1,000, which is to be paid within the next tax year.

The Lifetime Learning Credit is also a non-refundable tax credit available to those who are pursuing lifelong learning to upgrade their job skills. This tax benefit credits tuition and related expenses. Students can receive 20 percent credit on the first \$5,000 of

tuition and other expenses through the year 2002, and the first 20 percent of \$10,000 for remaining fees.

Student Loan Interest Deduction covers the first 60 months or five years of interest payments on a loan. The amount deducted will be spread over five years accordingly: \$1,500 in 1999, \$2,000 in 2000, and \$2,500 in the year 2001 and each year following.

Passed in 1997, the Taxpayer Relief Act was in effect for 1998, according to Swanson.

Similar to a W2, the 1098 is the form that students fill out to apply for the tax credit.

"Students must qualify for tax credit," said Swanson, which usually means that students with financial need may apply.

The following web pages can be accessed for more information:

Internal Revenue Service at <http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/hot/not97-601.html>; the Families' Guide to the 1997 Tax Cuts for Education at http://easi.ed.gov/html.irs97_63.html; and the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 Financial Aid Information Page at <http://www.finaid.org/finaid/documents/hr2014-summery.html>.