

Mobile marketing help

Daily Breeze

South Bay / Harbor Area business calendar

From staff reports

Posted: 02/25/2011

Tuesday. The Small Business Development Center is offering a free workshop in conjunction with AT&T, "Mobile Marketing and Behavioral Targeting for Small Businesses," from 9 to 11:30 a.m. at El Camino College Business Training Center, 13430 Hawthorne Blvd., Hawthorne. Call 310-973-3177 to register.

Tough times are college time

Easy Reader

By Contributer | February 24th, 2011 |

Community college graduates' salaries increase from an average of \$25,600 to \$45,571 within three years of receiving their degrees

by Tom Fallo

For over six decades, El Camino College has offered a wide variety of academic and cultural opportunities to South Bay residents of all ages. Students earn associate's degrees, prepare for transfer to four-year institutions, and gain training for the workforce that sustains our South Bay community.

This responsibility guides our focus at the college, even while facing dire economic circumstances and state budget cuts.

As we plan for the future, we recognize emerging trends in the areas of technology, learning environments that reach beyond the classroom, and partnerships and collaborations with business and industry, affording us expanded opportunities for meeting the needs of the changing workplace.

El Camino College is adding to its extensive list of support programs with the launch of a new initiative designed to assist students in their efforts to achieve their goals and graduate with an associate's degree. According to a recently released report by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy, 70 percent of students seeking degrees at California's community colleges did not attain them, nor did they transfer to four-year universities within six years. Our goal is to improve these numbers.

El Camino recently received a \$3.24 million Title V (Hispanic Serving Institutions) grant intended to increase graduation rates.

Recent studies indicate that students receiving a degree or certificate from a community college benefit from an 86 percent increase in their wages, from \$25,600 to \$45,571, within three years of earning their degree. In addition, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that there is a shortage in the nation's labor force of workers with up to two years of postsecondary education.

New programs will be established at El Camino College to help strengthen student readiness for the pursuit of the associate degree, while also strengthening student learning and faculty teaching in essential gateway courses such as reading, writing, and mathematics to add to the many other specialized programs.

Students like Vivian Meza will certainly benefit from these programs. Vivian graduated from Narbonne High School in 2006 and attended El Camino College that same fall, enthusiastic to fulfill her dreams to study astronomy. During her first semester, she earned a 3.6 grade point average. But by the second semester, everything had changed and she found her grades slipping while juggling calculus and physics.

That next year she was on a rollercoaster – taking classes and dropping them – becoming more and more frustrated until she finally decided to take some time off and left ECC.

Vivian was on the management track at a restaurant and earning a great salary, but was drawn back to the classroom. She came back to El Camino College last fall. This time, she decided to try MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement), a program that provides support to students majoring in math or science so they excel academically and transfer to four-year institutions.

Since joining MESA, Vivian has passed all of her classes without dropping a single one. She is now a physics tutor – the same class she dropped years ago. Vivian plans to graduate from ECC in the spring and transfer to UCLA, UC Berkeley, or UC Santa Barbara in the fall. Graduate school will follow.

Vivian says her success came from finding support through tutoring and study groups.

At El Camino College, we believe every student is a success story.

Tom Fallo is the president of El Camino College. ER

BILLIONS TO SPEND

A new complex riddled with ills that are costly to cure

Valley College's health and science center exemplifies the poor oversight and quality control exercised by the Los Angeles Community College District in its vast construction program.

By Michael Finnegan and Gale Holland, Los Angeles Times

March 1, 2011

The opening of a new health and science center at Los Angeles Valley College should have been cause for celebration. The complex included the first new classroom building on the campus in more than three decades. There were chemistry and biology labs, a greenhouse, an aviary, even mock hospital rooms for nurse training.

But when students and professors poured through the doors, excitement quickly turned to dismay.

Billions to Spend: Complete Coverage

Ceiling panels and floor tiles were askew. Crooked cabinet doors would not shut.

Hot water ran through cold water pipes, cold water through hot. Hot, dirty water flowed at emergency eyewash stations, making them useless. Spigots at some sinks were misaligned, pointing water straight onto lab counters.

Wild temperature swings left students roasting or freezing. A deep chill killed lizards in a biology lab. An imbalance in air pressure created a wind-tunnel effect, and it took a herculean effort to open or close classroom doors.

The problems at the Allied Health and Science Center went well beyond comfort or convenience. Exit signs and fire extinguishers were missing. Hanging pipes and light fixtures were not securely attached to ceilings.

Chemistry professor Elizabeth Friedman was appalled at the builders' work.

"I wouldn't let them build an outhouse for me," she said.

The Los Angeles Community College District, which paid a contractor more than \$48 million to build the science center, had to pay other firms at least \$3.5 million more to fix and complete it. The district and the original contractor, FTR International of Irvine, are embroiled in a court fight, with each seeking to recover money from the other.

The project offers a vivid illustration of the oversight and quality control problems that have

plagued the district's \$5.7-billion voter-approved bond program to rebuild its nine campuses.

Nizar Katbi, founder and president of FTR, defended his company's performance. In an interview, he said FTR met its obligations even though architectural plans were often vague and energy-conservation features posed difficult challenges.

"Every problem brought to our attention has been addressed and taken care of," Katbi said.

Dozens of interviews and a review of hundreds of internal e-mails and other documents tell a different story. They show that inspectors, architects and project managers began finding serious construction defects early on and grew increasingly frustrated as deadlines came and went and the complex ultimately opened with many of the problems uncorrected.

Those supervising the project on the ground pleaded with higher-ups to deal firmly with FTR. Yet the top two officials overseeing the construction program did not share their urgency.

They publicly praised the contractor's work and repeatedly approved payments to FTR over the objections of Valley College officials and construction supervisors, who wanted the money held back until problems were corrected. The district had the right to withhold nearly \$5 million but released almost \$4 million, forfeiting a key source of leverage.

The conciliatory approach was charted by Larry Eisenberg, the district official in charge of the building program, and James D. Sohn, then a vice president of URS Corp. of San Francisco, the college district's construction manager.

When Katbi became embroiled in a dispute with an inspector who had documented numerous flaws, Eisenberg urged subordinates to consider transferring the inspector, records show. Later, Eisenberg argued forcefully against suing FTR.

Two years after construction began, and after inspectors and architects had cited the company for hundreds of instances of substandard work, Sohn sent Katbi a letter thanking FTR for a "job well done." FTR posted the letter on its website as a client testimonial.

Sohn declined to be interviewed.

Eisenberg said FTR was "a good company" that had struggled with a difficult project, and he defended his attempts at accommodation.

"My feeling was that there was an opportunity to work in a positive way with FTR to resolve the issues," he said.

Eisenberg admitted that in the end, "it didn't work."

Months after the complex opened, the district awarded FTR an even bigger contract at West Los Angeles College, followed by more projects at Pierce and Mission colleges — a total of \$113

million in new work.

In December 2008, the district celebrated a California Construction magazine award recognizing FTR and the Allied center at Valley College.

"I was speechless," said Don Gauthier, an associate geography professor who teaches in the complex. "These are the people who have just caused us so much agony."

A test for officials

The Allied project — a pair of attached buildings, one with classrooms, the other with faculty offices — was supposed to be a huge step forward for a campus built in the era of black-and-white TV.

Departments scattered around the Valley Glen campus would be gathered in one place to offer nursing, science and other classes central to the college's mission of training students for jobs.

As one of the first large projects in the district's building program, the 100,000-square-foot complex would test the ability of Eisenberg and Sohn to choreograph dozens of projects on campuses spread across the Los Angeles area.

FTR won the job after submitting the lowest of four bids — \$46 million.

Katbi, a Syrian immigrant, founded the company in 1984 after earning a master's degree in engineering at the University of Iowa. Since then, FTR has built school buildings, police stations and athletic facilities across Southern California.

Like other contractors working on the campus construction program, the firm has cultivated close ties to college district leaders. It contributed \$60,000 to a campaign to encourage voters to expand the program in 2008 and thousands more to help reelect three members of the district's Board of Trustees.

Construction of the Allied buildings began in April 2006 and was supposed to be finished two years later. Subcontractors performed much of the work, but as the prime contractor, FTR was responsible for all of it.

There were problems from the start. Sixteen concrete piles were sunk in the wrong locations, inspectors found. One was more than four feet from the spot designated in blueprints. To ensure the building's structural integrity, engineers insisted on extra concrete and on steel reinforcement of four piles.

As work progressed, Robert Payinda, a district construction inspector, uncovered other flaws. Beams were installed in the wrong locations. Columns were crooked. Staircases were not firmly anchored to the ground. Fireproofing was sloppy. Bolts were too close together or too far apart.

Ricardo Hernandez, an engineer who monitored the project, called Payinda "a lifesaver."

"Whenever he saw things awry," Hernandez said, "he always put his foot in front of it and said, 'Hey, this has got to stop.' "

But Payinda's frequent citations angered Katbi, who regarded him as a nitpicker. In a letter to one of the district's top construction supervisors, Katbi accused the inspector of "sabotaging the job and causing unnecessary cost and delays for the college."

In a February 2007 e-mail, an Eisenberg advisor listed ways to defuse the situation. "Option No. 2" was moving Payinda to a different project.

Eisenberg replied, "Like your #2," and copied chief of inspectors Frank Alaniz, asking: "What do you think?"

Alaniz countered that Payinda was "doing exactly what we're paying him to do on our behalf."

Payinda remained on the job. He called the contractor's complaints "bullying tactics" and later sued FTR for slander. The case is pending.

Relations deteriorate

As FTR was forced to fix mistakes, delays mounted. In April 2007, URS project manager Robert Dieken told the contractor that the defects were "extremely troublesome and an indication that your quality control process is not functioning properly." By July, the project was more than five months behind schedule.

Relations between the contractor and URS' on-site supervisors deteriorated. They wanted FTR to work faster and repair its mistakes. FTR said that the delays were not its fault and that it needed money to keep the project on course.

Early on, FTR had threatened to stop work unless the district sped up payments. Now, it agreed to pick up the pace, but only if the district increased its contract by \$2.3 million to deal with unforeseen site conditions, including asbestos contamination.

Those overseeing the construction — architects, engineers, inspectors and Valley College staff members — wanted to take a hard line. Katbi took his case to Eisenberg and Sohn, who favored a gentler approach.

The district had paid a law firm nearly \$18,000 to document FTR's alleged deficiencies, but Eisenberg joined Katbi in arguing that a lawsuit would be a waste of money.

"We understand that LACCD has an army of lawyers as you have indicated in our meeting," Katbi told Sohn in an August 2007 letter. "However, Larry and I have committed that neither one

of us is interested in the lawyers having any role on this project."

FTR started trading offers with Eisenberg and Sohn for a settlement to get the project on track.

In November 2007, the two sides agreed to a \$3-million increase in FTR's contract. The agreement set construction milestones that FTR had to reach by specified dates. Eisenberg and Sohn sold it to reluctant Valley College leaders as the best way to get the buildings finished on time.

FTR agreed to complete construction by May 30, 2008.

Inspector's 'harassment'

Days after the agreement, the company demanded a new concession: early release of several million dollars that the district had the right to withhold until the project was done.

Typically, public agencies retain 10% of all payments until a job is at least halfway to completion. At that point, they often reduce the "retention" and withhold, say, 5%. But normally, agencies release retention money only if a job is going well.

This one was not.

Where the design called for three layers of drywall for fire safety, workers had installed two. Where holes were punched in drywall for pipes, Payinda wrote, the openings were caulked improperly, which "greatly compromises the fire and life safety of the building and occupants."

"The district is not only NOT getting the building they paid for but they are paying more to get less," Payinda wrote in a memo to architect Michael Johnson, two months after the deal to increase FTR's contract.

Katbi asked project managers to stop the inspector's "harassment." He also complained that the architects who designed the complex were taking too long to respond to requests for design clarifications. The latest delays, Katbi wrote, were not FTR's fault, and the contractor needed money.

"As per our discussion, the more cash in our hand the faster the job will be built," Katbi told Sohn in a February 2008 letter that he also sent to Eisenberg.

Tom Lopez, Valley's facilities director, asked why the college should "give up any leverage."

FTR had been uncooperative and confrontational, he wrote. He doubted it would finish the job on time.

But on April 1, 2008, Eisenberg approved the early release of almost \$925,000. Six weeks later, although it was clear by then that FTR would miss the May 30 deadline, the district released

\$930,000 more.

The idea, Eisenberg said in an interview, was "to encourage different behavior and hopefully make FTR do a better job."

By then, Payinda had issued 368 citations. Concrete was cracked. Roof drains did not work. Metal studs that were supposed to be solid were hollow.

While the inspector and architects cranked out reports demanding repairs, Sohn sent Katbi the admiring letter that FTR posted on its website.

"We have had hundreds of contractors work with us over the years, and your firm stands out as among the best," Sohn wrote.

The project fell further behind. Katbi blamed the latest delays on the district's change in its choice of carpeting and its slow pace in resolving troubles with water and gas lines, among other things. "The settlement agreement does not require FTR to perform miracles," he wrote.

As the fall 2008 semester drew closer, a project manager suggested halting the release of retention money unless the job was done by the end of July.

"I completely disagree," Sohn responded. "By not paying FTR you are giving him no resources to finish and put his enthusiastic support at risk."

"Right on," Eisenberg wrote after getting a copy of Sohn's e-mail.

Payinda soon issued his final citation — his 422nd — for deviations from the design. In every faculty office, the inspector found, metal heating panels hanging from the ceilings were vulnerable to collapse, with little holding them in place.

Unless the problem was fixed, he wrote, someone might "get injured seriously should a seismic event occur."

The following week, just as classes were starting, an architect reported that in room after room, workers had installed ceiling tiles prematurely. This made it impossible to verify that the heating panels had been securely anchored.

'Frustration and disgust'

Disappointment was profound when the complex opened in August 2008. The twin buildings were unfinished, and faculty found the science labs unusable.

In an e-mail, Lopez, the campus facilities chief, described the college community's reaction as "dissatisfaction, frustration, and disgust."

Fire sprinklers were improperly installed, project managers found. A district consultant reported that an FTR subcontractor had falsified test results on the heating system, which was not working.

"Your firm is not close to finishing the project," construction manager Jim Rogers of URS told Katbi in response to the contractor's latest request for money.

At the end of December, the district released an additional \$2 million in retention money, leaving less than \$800,000 as leverage. A URS employee scrawled "Please RUSH" on the financial paperwork.

A month later, Eisenberg gushed about the project in a "Hot Project Status Report" to the Board of Trustees. "The Allied Health and Science Building at Valley College continues to win awards," he wrote, referring to recognition from a construction trade group.

After hearing repeated "horror stories," Marshall Drummond, then chancellor of the college system, toured the complex in February 2009.

He was stunned by room temperatures that veered from 60 to 92 degrees.

"I pretty much insist that we get on people and fix this mess," he told Eisenberg in an e-mail.

Eisenberg dispatched a construction manager, Victor Sanvido, to survey the project.

"What you have here," Sanvido reported back, "is an emergency situation — the building needs much work done to it and it needs to be done soon to prevent further deterioration."

In May 2009, the district hired a new contractor, Pankow Special Projects, to fix the problems that faculty and students had now been living with for nine months.

Pankow would reroute the plumbing. It would add drywall for fire safety and brace the ceiling fixtures. It would repair cabinets and doors, balance the air pressure and fix the heating and air conditioning systems.

When Pankow's contract went before the Board of Trustees, Eisenberg buried a description of the work in a \$4.4-million catch-all project labeled "multi-campus retro-commissioning upgrades."

In an interview, Eisenberg at first insisted that Pankow was hired to do newly assigned work on the buildings. He later acknowledged that a third of Pankow's contract involved fixing defects and completing work left unfinished by FTR.

"There's no doubt that the building had numerous issues when it was stated as complete, and those issues needed to be fixed," Eisenberg said.

When a contractor does "minimally acceptable work," he said, it "often makes sense to ... bring in someone else to complete the job and correct the errors that are there rather than pay the lawyers."

Contractor sues district

FTR moved on to a bigger job: a \$74-million contract to build a technology center and theater complex at West Los Angeles College in Culver City.

Under a new state law that lets public agencies merge design and construction, the district was not required to pick the lowest bidder, as it had been on the Allied complex. The law allows agencies to consider design aesthetics, a bidder's track record and other factors, along with price.

The district chose FTR over 10 other bidders for the project, which has since been scaled back to just the technology center. Eisenberg called FTR's proposal "outstanding."

Last spring, FTR sued the district over the Valley College project, saying it was owed more than \$1 million for its work.

In response, the district accused FTR of performing "defective work" and refusing to fix it. It demanded \$1.5 million to cover the cost of Pankow's repairs. The case is pending.

Nonetheless, the Board of Trustees went on to award FTR a \$9-million design-construction job at Pierce College in April and a similar \$29-million project at Mission College in July.

In an interview, Eisenberg said he had no hesitation about working with FTR again. He described Allied as a "snake-bit" project.

"FTR," he said, "is a good company."

Contractors make generous donors

A big slice of funding for Los Angeles Community College District trustee and bond campaigns comes from firms that get work on the huge construction project.

By Paul Pringle and Doug Smith, Los Angeles Times

February 27, 2011

Community college has helped Art and Michelle Gastelum get ahead. Way ahead.

The father and daughter own two of the companies that have profited from close relationships with the trustees of the Los Angeles Community College District, connections built on campaign money, a Times analysis found.

Companies working on the district's construction program account for 44% of the \$4.6 million contributed to trustees' election efforts or to campaigns to pass construction bond measures since 2001. Contractors have been especially generous in support of the three bond measures. They donated nearly two-thirds of the \$1.9 million spent to promote the biggest one, Measure J, which passed in 2008 and provided \$3.5 billion for campus construction.

The No. 1 overall contributor, Sinanian Development, is the biggest contractor in the \$5.7-billion construction program, with projects valued at \$249 million. It has donated \$89,500 to trustee and bond campaigns.

The second-largest donor, FTR International, is the No. 2 contractor, with \$241 million in district business. The company and its employees have contributed \$68,000.

The two Gastelums and their firms contributed a combined \$55,650 to trustee and bond measure campaigns, more than some large corporations. The Gastelums' companies have landed contracts with a total value of about \$40 million.

Sinanian and FTR continued to receive contracts after becoming embroiled in disputes with the district over the quality of their work. Art Gastelum's company had its contract renewed after the firm's project director for the construction program was imprisoned in a corruption case involving a community college system in Texas.

Many of the contracts awarded under the L.A. program are for professional services not subject to strict competitive bidding, such as construction management.

Art Gastelum went into that field after a career as an influential political operative and lobbyist. For 18 years, he was an aide to Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley.

Gastelum's Gateway Science & Engineering is one of nine companies paid to manage construction at individual campuses. Each firm's base fee is set at 6% of the total building costs for its campus.

Gateway was selected as project manager for Mission College over larger and more experienced firms. District Deputy Chancellor Adriana Barrera, who helped evaluate Gateway's proposal while serving as Mission College president, said political money did not influence the process.

She said she favored the firm in part because "it was a small company, we were a small college."

In 2003, a year after starting work at Mission College, Gastelum was identified as a subject of corruption investigations by Los Angeles County prosecutors and the FBI that focused in part on his role in the early stages of the Belmont Learning Complex, a school construction project that cost taxpayers more than \$400 million and took 15 years to complete. Gastelum, a partner in the original consortium hired to build the school, denied wrongdoing and was never charged.

In 2005, the Gateway project director for Mission College, Louis Cruz, left the program and began serving a prison sentence in the Texas corruption case. He had pleaded guilty two years earlier but continued to work at Mission while awaiting sentencing.

In written responses to questions from The Times, Larry Eisenberg, head of the construction program, said the "district was unaware that Mr. Cruz had a legal problem in Texas until he resigned from his position."

Eisenberg said he could not recall if he discussed the matter with Gastelum before Gateway's contract was renewed.

Gastelum said his political connections and campaign contributions had nothing to do with his success in winning and retaining the contract, which was renewed again last month. "I don't see what the problem is," he said. "Don't I have the right to support candidates of my choosing?"

Michelle Gastelum followed her father into the contracting business after a stint as a schoolteacher. Her firm, Summit Consulting and Engineering, has district contracts to coordinate the movement of workers and furniture, and to provide construction managers for the program.

In late 2008, she hosted campaign fundraisers for trustees Kelly Candaele and Nancy Pearlman at the downtown City Club. Invitees were asked to write checks of \$1,000 to \$5,000.

Candaele said by e-mail that he has "never been influenced as a board member by any campaign contributions."

Pearlman said there was "nothing inappropriate" about the affair. "People were welcome to give money to my campaign," she said. "There was no expectation that anything would come of it."

Michelle Gastelum said neither campaign money nor her father's connections helped Summit win contracts. "Nothing has been handed to me," she said.

[Database: See how much each trustee received from bond-measure contractors.](#)

Sinanian Development, based in Tarzana, has obtained contracts to construct a library and classrooms at L.A. City College and a family and consumer studies center at Mission College,

among other projects.

In 2008, as the trustees were considering another contract bid from the company, they directed district officials to look into complaints about Sinanian's work, including its failure to meet deadlines, records show.

The company pledged to meet district performance standards and was awarded the contract, for which it submitted the lowest bid, according to minutes of trustee meetings.

About this time, Sinanian pumped more than \$75,000 into one of the bond drives.

Trustee Georgia Mercer, one of those who expressed concerns about Sinanian's performance, said in an e-mail that the company's co-president, Sinan Sinanian, "assured us that his company was committed to improving." The firm has since "performed in a very adequate manner," Mercer said.

The district's fight with FTR stems from a health and science complex it built at Valley College. In a lawsuit against the district, FTR claims it is owed \$1 million. The district is demanding that the company pay \$1.5 million to cover the cost of repairing defects in the buildings.

FTR's chief executive, Nizar Katbi, said his firm was not responsible for the problems. Asked about his political donations, he said contractors were encouraged to contribute.

He recalled attending a fundraiser in Hollywood with scores of construction program vendors, trustees and other college officials.

"They asked all the contractors to come in," Katbi said. He declined to elaborate.

Sinan Sinanian likened his contributions to an investment. "Any time there is a bond measure, you just contribute and hope that it comes back to help you in one way or another," he said. "That's the process of our government."

Business groups place conditions on backing Jerry Brown's special election

LA Times

February 28, 2011

Gov. Jerry Brown has racked up some victories in his effort to win business support for an election to extend tax hikes.

But it's worth noting how lukewarm some of the support seems to be.

Last week, for example, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce gave Brown its backing for a spending plan that includes a special election on taxes this June.

It was a big win for Brown -- his strongest business endorsement yet, and from a major player.

But the L.A. chamber leaders took care to add caveats: They said they want the taxes Brown seeks -- billions in vehicle, income and sales taxes -- extended for just three years instead of the five that Brown has proposed. And they want regulatory changes and an overhaul of the public pension system as part of the deal.

Another local group, the Valley Industry & Commerce Assn., backed Brown's call for a special election but stopped short of actually supporting the tax hike extensions that he seeks.

Republican hardliners who oppose extending the tax hikes are "being obstructionist," said VICA President Stuart Waldman. Yet Waldman added that it was still "about 50-50" whether his organization would ultimately endorse the tax policies Brown is advocating.

Similarly, the Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce gave a preliminary OK to the governor's proposal earlier this month but added a series of conditions. Those included a demand that the governor abandon his plans to eliminate redevelopment agencies and enterprise zones -- key planks in Brown's budget strategy.

-- Anthony York in Sacramento

Activists outraged at dismissal of CCCD CEO Lawrence Cox

2011-03-02 / Front Page

CCCD buys out contract for undisclosed sum

By Cheryl Scott

Bulletin Staff Writer

Dr. Genethia Hudley-Hayes, special trustee for the Compton Community College District, announced on Thursday that Dr. Lawrence Cox's employment contract has been terminated. Although Cox is under contract until June, 30, 2012, February, 24, 2011 was his last day of service to the District

A new CEO is expected to be appointed by the end of March.

The announcement was met with outrage on the part of community activists who have supported the college in its effort to earn accreditation after it was revoked by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) in 2006.

"Unlike Dr. Cox, she has spent little to no time getting to know the communities involved, sought little to no community input, and apparently completely disregarded the high praise given Dr. Cox," Marie Hollis, president of the Committee to Save the Compton Community College District, said. "The campus and community reactions specific to the dismissal of Dr. Cox registered shocking disbelief and visible emotion, leaving many to ask a simple question: If it is not broke, why fix it?"

Cox became Provost/CEO (Provost of the El Camino College Compton Educational Center and CEO of the Compton Community College District) in 2008. In 2010 his position was changed to serve only as CEO for the Compton Community College District.

In a telephone interview on Monday, Cox told The Bulletin, "I think the college is a fine organization and I enjoyed the time while I was there. We upped the enrollment to 12,000 from a low of 2,000 when I first arrived. We set in motion the effort to become accredited. The college is now more attractive to students and the faculty.

"I'm pleased to have been able to serve them. I wish them well."

During Cox's tenure, the college improved its FCMAT (Fiscal Crises Management Team) scores from 2s and 3s to an average of 7, surpassing the minimum requirements of AB 318, the bill that allowed El Camino Community College to operate the Compton Center.

The Committee to Save the Compton Community College District announced on Monday its intent to call for the immediate removal of Scott-Hayes after what it called “her impromptu dismissal of Cox after being on her job for less than two months.”

“The Committee will also seek the immediate reinstatement of Lawrence Cox, given his proven accomplishments in improving the college grounds, his significant record in advancing the restoration of re-accreditation to the district, and his popular support in the community as evident by increased student enrollment,” said Hollis in a written press release.

“This is the second time competent leadership that has made significant advancement in restoring accreditation, and trusted by the community to get the job done, has been summarily removed without reason from the Compton Community College District,” Hollis said. “We need to question why the officials most effective and trusted by the community — former Special Trustee Dr. Charles Ratliff and now CEO Dr. Lawrence Cox — are dismissed seemingly without reason. It speaks to the very level of disrespect shown the community since its takeover by the state, and perhaps even the hidden motivations of those who do not want the college to ever be restored to local governance. This Committee, however, vows to remain vigilant no matter how long the battle.”

The original estimation was that the accreditation process would take five years or longer. “Under the effective leadership and direction of Dr. Cox, this time schedule has been significantly accelerated and cut in half,” said Hollis. “Dr. Cox is a seasoned community college administrator since 1985 with 25 years experience. This is Ms. Genethia Scott-Hayes’s first appointment on the postsecondary level, and she has led with a blunder.”

Hollis said that Scott-Hayes is an “unproven entity” and noted that she has a reputation for “abrasiveness in dealing with the Los Angeles Unified School District.” She also said that Scott-Hayes spends only two days a week on campus.

The Committee to Save the Compton Community College District is comprised of citizens, organizations, and politicians from the communities of Carson, Lynwood, Paramount, Long Beach and Compton. It is dedicated to the restoration of local governance and re-accreditation to the Compton Community College District. AB-318 is the first bill passed by the California legislature to allow the takeover of a community college.

Compton College was founded in 1927. After losing its accreditation in 2006, an agreement was reached between the El Camino Community College District and the Compton Community College District for El Camino College to provide accredited instructional and related support services to the newly named El Camino College Compton Center, with the primary intent directed toward recovery and full accreditation.

Through the agreement, residents of the Compton community continue to have access to university transfer and vocational education opportunities, as well as financial aid, basic skills courses and related support services in their own community

Day of reckoning on pensions

The Little Hoover Commission paints a bleak picture of what's ahead for state and local governments in California.

LA Times Editorial
February 26, 2011

The housing bubble and subsequent Wall Street collapse wreaked havoc on the nation's retirement savings, as many pension funds and 401(k) plans suffered losses of 30% or more. State and local governments are now facing huge unfunded pension liabilities, prompting policymakers to scramble for ways to close the gap without slashing payrolls and services. But a new report from the Little Hoover Commission in Sacramento makes a more troubling point: Many state and local government employees have been promised pensions that the public couldn't have afforded even had there been no crash.

The commission's analysis of the problem is hotly disputed by union leaders, who contend that the financial woes of pension funds have been overblown. The commission's recommendations are equally controversial: Among other things, it urges state lawmakers to roll back the future benefits that current public employees can accrue, raise the retirement age and require employees to cover more pension costs. Given that state courts have rejected previous attempts to alter the pensions already promised to current workers, the commission's recommendation amounts to a Hail Mary pass. Yet it's one worth throwing.

A bipartisan, independent agency that promotes efficiency in government, the Little Hoover Commission studied the public pension issue for 10 months before issuing its findings Thursday. Much of the 90-page report is devoted to making the case that, to use the commission's blunt words, "pension costs will crush government." Without a "miraculous" improvement in the funds' investments, the commission states, "few government entities — especially at the local level — will be able to absorb the blow without severe cuts to services."

The problem is partly demographic. The number of people retiring from government jobs is growing rapidly, and longer life expectancies mean that a growing number of retirees will collect benefits for more years than they worked. But the report argues that political factors have been at least as important in driving up costs, starting with the Legislature's move in 1999 to reduce the retirement age for public workers, base pensions on a higher percentage of a worker's salary and increase benefits retroactively. The increases authorized by Sacramento soon spread across the 85 public pension plans in California.

Compounding the problem, the state has increased its workforce almost 40% since the pension formula was changed and boosted the average state worker's wages by 50%. Local governments, meanwhile, raised their average salaries by 60%. Much of the growth came in the ranks of police and firefighters, who increased significantly in number and in pay.

There's nothing inherently wrong with generous pension plans. Pensions, after all, are just a form of compensation that's paid after retirement, not before. The problem, particularly for local governments, is that the plans are proving to be far costlier than officials anticipated or prepared for. By their own reckoning, the 10 largest public pension systems in California had a \$240-

billion shortfall in 2010.

When the funds don't have enough money to cover their long-term liabilities, state and local governments are compelled to increase their contributions. In Los Angeles, the report says, the city's retirement contributions are projected to double by 2015, taking up a third of the city's operating budget. It projects that governments throughout the state will have to raise their contributions by 40% to 80% over the next few years, then maintain that higher rate for three decades.

The more tax dollars governments have to devote to pensions, the more they'll have to take from other programs or from taxpayers. That means more layoffs or pay cuts for public employees, higher taxes, fewer services, or all of the above.

The situation won't be so dire if the plans earn more on their investments than expected. But with the plans typically counting on annual returns near 8%, or twice the "risk-free" level suggested by some analysts, it seems just as likely that they'll earn less than that, forcing local governments to contribute even more.

The Legislature and some local governments have sought to ameliorate the situation by reducing benefits for new hires and persuading current workers to contribute more to their pension funds. The commission's report, however, argues that these moves aren't sufficient. The savings from the lower pensions for new employees won't be realized for many years, and the increased contributions aren't nearly enough to close the funding gap.

The only real solution, the report contends, is to reduce the benefits that current employees are slated to earn in the coming years. That's hard to do. California courts have held that pensions for current employees can be increased without their approval, but not decreased unless they're given a comparable benefit in exchange. Nevertheless, the commission calls on the Legislature to give itself and local governments explicit authority to trim the benefits that current employees have not yet accrued, without touching the amounts they have already earned. It also calls for a hybrid retirement plan that combines a smaller pension with a 401(k) plan and Social Security benefits, as well as the elimination of a variety of loopholes used to inflate pensions.

The commission is right about the importance of reducing the liabilities posed by current employees. And though picking a fight with unions over unilateral reductions in pensions probably isn't the solution, the report should persuade both sides to do more at the negotiating table to prevent pension costs from swamping state and local budgets. As the commission notes, public employees in California enjoy some of the most generous pension plans in the country. Those plans won't do them much good, however, if their employer can't afford to keep them on the payroll.

El Camino's Cherry Blossom Festival set for Tuesday

The Daily Breeze

From staff reports
Posted: 03/07/2011

SOUTH BAY

El Camino's Cherry Blossom Festival set for Tuesday: El Camino College will ring in the spring season with its annual Cherry Blossom Festival on Tuesday.

The 11th annual event will run from 1 to 2 p.m. on campus, next to the planetarium and the cherry trees.

The annual Dr. Nadine Ishitani Hata Memorial Cherry Blossom Festival event is named after the college's former vice president of academic affairs, who died in 2005.

An internationally known scholar, Hata was instrumental in bringing the cherry trees to the campus 11 years ago, one of the many programs she supported during her 34-year career at El Camino College.

The winner of the 2011 scholarship will be announced at the event. Presentations such as a performance by the Taiko Drummers from the Taiko Center of Los Angeles will also be featured, along with light refreshments. The Cherry Blossom Festival is sponsored by the El Camino College Foundation and the Office of Staff and Student Diversity.

Times community college investigation unearths shameful waste

LA Times

March 6, 2011

Revelations about abuses in Los Angeles Community College District's \$5.7-billion building program show the importance of voting in March 8 trustees' races.

By Steve Lopez

"It's just sad."

That's what East Los Angeles College student George Escobar had to say as we looked in the direction of a new clock tower that was built crooked and had to be fixed at an additional cost of \$157,000.

Sad, outrageous, scandalous, shameful. You could pick any of those words, or all of them, to describe the waste and abuse documented in a [weeklong Times series about the Los Angeles Community College District's \\$5.7-billion building program.](#)

Reporters Gale Holland, Michael Finnegan and others have been turning over rocks for a year and a half, looking at how billions in tax dollars from voter-approved bond measures are being spent, and worms might be crawling up your legs as you read this.

Near the formerly crooked clock tower on the East L.A. campus, heating and cooling equipment was installed upside-down. A ramp for the disabled was too steep for wheelchairs. Bonehead moves like that drove construction costs from \$28 million to \$43 million.

"But you should talk to my friend Nancy," Escobar told me. "She is really, really, really angry."

Escobar, 24, who's studying to be a court interpreter and takes the bus to and from school to save money, called Nancy Honorato on his cellphone.

"Meet me at the Spot," he told his fellow student.

Honorato, 21, wants to be a children's social worker. When she showed up, she was carrying a copy of The Times

"I was shocked," Nancy said. "I just think it was pathetic to take all of that time to make something that didn't even pass inspection."

She was speaking of the clock tower, but she could have been talking about screw-ups on several other campuses in the Los Angeles Community College District.

Sure, there have been solidly built, badly needed projects, too. But the new health center at Valley College had bad plumbing, cracked floors, loose ceiling panels and leaky windows.

At West Los Angeles College, \$39 million was spent on buildings that couldn't be completed when money ran out.

At Valley College, a theater was renovated for \$3.4 million and then scheduled for demolition when officials decided to build a new one.

At L.A. City College, \$1.8 million was spent on an architectural design for a fitness center, but the school president decided instead to build the center on the other side of campus, so architects were paid \$1.9 million for a new design.

Throughout this debacle, costs were often doubled because the district hired workers whose job was to hire workers. The bill for that kind of nonsense was in the millions.

It was a feast. A picnic.

And the following will not surprise you:

Contractors and labor unions donated to district trustees. Contractors and labor unions got jobs.

Contractors and labor unions donated to support bond measures. Contractors and labor unions got jobs.

Like vultures, some of the most politically connected players in L.A. swooped in and got fat contracts despite past investigations into their dealings. One player who got a piece of the action pleaded guilty last December to a misdemeanor conflict-of-interest charge involving jobs in another school district — Los Angeles Unified.

As for the genius the college district hired to keep an eye on how the \$5.4 billion got spent — Larry Eisenberg — you know you're in trouble when your oversight guy approves funds for a video biography of himself, complete with childhood photos and a soundtrack.

If, like me, you find it difficult to get interested in elections for community college trustees, read this series and you might feel differently. In fact, there's an election this Tuesday, with four trustee seats up for grabs.

One of the most astounding aspects of the series is that, as my colleagues have pointed out, only one trustee, Georgia Mercer, has responded in any depth to questions. Not that she's done much other than defend the district.

Here's a story about a scandalous lack of oversight on their watch — with staff, taxpayers and students all getting stiffed, even as student fees are being increased — and the elected officials in charge of the mess don't care to comment?

Actually, Los Angeles Community College District Chancellor Daniel LaVista might have been wise to keep his mouth shut, too, because here's part of what he had to say in an official statement after the first two parts of the series:

"After ignoring the good news of the program for years, The Times spent 20 months on this investigation

and now picks at a few issues in what appears to be a sensationalist series published right before trustee elections. The timing is suspect, and the reporting is one-sided. So far, we are sorely disappointed."

He's sorely disappointed?

I'll be disappointed if he's still on the payroll by week's end.

The district's own bond counsel concluded that millions of dollars had been spent in violation of state law, and LaVista is disappointed in The Times?

At L.A. City College on Friday morning, the day The Times ran the story of the construction disaster on that campus, I bumped into music teacher Wesley Abbott, and he wasn't surprised that his school had found its way into The Times stories.

"I knew we'd make it," Abbott said, noting the comedy of errors involving a parking garage and rooftop athletic field, still under construction, that has risen in cost from \$42 million to \$51 million. "I may not be in construction," Abbott said, "but I'm not stupid."

Another music teacher chimed in:

"We're not surprised or shocked, but we're very embarrassed."

California Legislation Would Cut Cal Grants to Low-Performing Colleges

March 4, 2011, 12:48 pm

Students at California colleges with high loan-default and dropout rates would lose their state financial aid under a proposal approved by a state budget committee, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported. The proposal aims to save \$124-million per year by trimming Cal Grants, one of the country's most generous state student-aid programs. Lawmakers had originally intended to cut Cal Grants for students at for-profit colleges, but the new rules would apply to any college with a poor performance. To become law, the proposal still must be approved by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Jerry Brown.

College trustees still under the media radar

LA Observed

Kevin Roderick • March 6 2011 10:45 PM

In the wake of the Los Angeles Times' terrific series on the tragedy of errors in the L.A. Community College District's \$5.7 billion construction program, you might want some guidance on who to vote for in Tuesday's college board election. Good luck with that.

The Times doesn't cover the college trustees routinely, nor does any other major media. The Times editorial board has endorsed candidates for the L.A. City Council, the school board and even the council in the tiny city of Bell. But not for the college board, which has far more impact on more L.A. lives (and wallets) than all the officials in Bell put together. Unless the paper plans to rush in late endorsements on Monday or Tuesday, you won't get the editors' take on who should be held responsible for the college mess. Or anything else about the 17 candidates running.

News coverage of the campaign hasn't been much better, but that's no surprise. The Times' usual practice with the college board has been to send an unlucky reporter who knows little to nothing about the issues or the candidates to spend a day or two on a pre-election roundup. This time that story ran March 2, and it mostly lists names and lets the incumbents say why they should be reelected. Once again, L.A.'s most invisible elected powers escape real scrutiny. And like with Bell, which Times editors decided years ago to stop covering, people are shocked to discover that once the media looks away there are problems.

Hint: The two incumbents on the ballot are Mona Field, a trustee since 1999, and Miguel Santiago, on the board since 2008. There are two open seats on the ballot. For the college board, candidates run at-large but for a specific seat. Labor has made its endorsements, of course. The Times did throw up a neat graphic on where trustees get their campaign contributions. The Van de Kamps Coalition in Northeast LA has been reporting a lot on the trustees in recent years.

College board trivia: The board has only existed since 1969, when the first batch of elected trustees included Jerry Brown and Mike Antonovich.

Compton College worker accused of theft

The Daily Breeze

By Rob Kuznia Staff Writer

Posted: 03/07/2011

A maintenance employee with the Compton Community College District - whose academic programs are overseen by El Camino College near Torrance - has been arrested on suspicion of grand theft, college officials announced Monday.

Rey David Popo, 39, was arrested on suspicion of stealing about \$9,000 worth of materials from the district, said Lt. Ray Box of the El Camino College Police Department.

Officials allege that a scheme took place in which one or more district employees went to Home Depot, purchased items using a district account and neglected to fill out a purchase order for the items afterward.

Although any theft exceeding \$950 is a felony, this alleged crime pales in comparison to the deeply ingrained fraud and malfeasance that in 2006 caused Compton Community College to become the first - and heretofore only - junior college in California to get its accreditation revoked.

But school officials went public with the arrest largely to demonstrate their commitment to transparency. On Monday, they announced the incident in a press release.

"In the past, the college hasn't always been as forthcoming as it could have been," said Genethia Hudley-Hayes, the newly appointed trustee hired to oversee operations at the Compton district, referring to the scandals that plagued the school in the mid-2000s.

"All of a sudden, it hits the paper and people say, 'How did that happen, and what more could they be hiding?' I'm not going to be a party to that. Whatever the news is, the community has a right to know."

Popo was arrested in mid-February, and then placed on paid administrative leave pending a full investigation.

On Wednesday, another employee was placed on administrative leave after confessing to committing petty theft. That employee has not been arrested.

From 2003 to 2005, about

\$5 million was embezzled from Compton College by various people.

One of them was a former college trustee, Ignacio Pena, who went to jail after pleading guilty to embezzling about \$1 million by setting up dummy courses that vacuumed taxpayer dollars. His wife also was arrested.

In 2006, the college lost its accreditation. Later that year, El Camino College agreed to take the campus under its wing.

About the same time the college's accreditation was revoked, the state stripped Compton's board of trustees of all legal authority. The board still meets every month, but only as an advisory body. In place of the governing board, the state chancellor of community colleges appointed a single trustee with executive power.

Several people have held the position. In January, Hudley-Hayes took the reins from Peter Landsberger.

Hudley-Hayes credited the discovery of the alleged theft to Wayne Ward, the Compton district's new department head for maintenance and operations.

"He discovered there were very few checks and balances in place, and that things were pretty much walking out of there on any given Sunday, so to speak," she said.

The stolen items included copper wiring and tools and coverings used to install the wiring, Box said.

Hudley-Hayes said new checks and balances are in place to avoid similar incidents in the future. For instance, she said, purchase orders from Home Depot must now be filled out and approved before the purchase is made, not after, as was done before.

She added that none of the alleged theft involved money for voter-approved construction bonds.

Anger brews over government workers' benefits

AP Associated Press

AP – FILE - In this Feb. 19, 2011 file photo, Neporsha Hamlin, center, of Madison, Wis, protests the governor's ...

By GEOFF MULVIHILL, Associated Press Geoff Mulvihill, Associated Press – Tue Mar 8, 9:34 am ET

When Erin McFarlane looks at public workers, she sees lucrative pension benefits she doesn't ever expect to get. And it makes her mad.

"I don't think that a federal employee or government employee is worth any more than anybody else who does their job and does it well," said the Slinger, Wis., woman. She's been working a couple of bartending jobs since January, when she was laid off from her job at a Harley Davidson plant after almost a decade.

She's not alone in seeing public servants as public enemies in some ways.

It's a case of pension envy.

For McFarlane, 36, it's part of a ubiquitous discussion, at the bars where she works and on Facebook. And it's the center of some of the biggest political battles playing out in state capitals across the country as governors say their states can no longer afford the benefits that public employees have been promised.

Government workers in McFarlane's state have rallied for weeks against Gov. Scott Walker's efforts to take away many collective bargaining rights, saying that would amount to killing the middle class.

A USA Today/Gallup poll last month found show that Americans largely side with the employees, though about two in five that want government pay and benefits reined in.

Barbara Davis, a retiree from Cherry Hill, N.J., has been watching public workers in rallies in Madison, Wis., as well as Trenton. She says the protesters are wrong about tightening benefits hurting the middle class.

"I'm sorry, but what they're doing is telling off the middle class," said Davis, 76, and a co-chairwoman of the Cherry Hill Area Tea Party. "The middle-class people don't get all the goodies that they do."

At its heart, the issue is this: Some public workers get a sweet deal compared to other workers. And it's taxpayers who pay for it.

That's set off resentment in a time when economic doldrums have left practically everyone tightening their belts. Many people have found their tax bills rising even if their earnings haven't.

In Davis' case, it's the property tax that smarts. She and her husband pay about \$12,000 per year for the house she describes as a three-bedroom "tract home." That's a high tax even in New Jersey, where the average property tax bill tops \$7,000 and where the Tax Foundation has found homeowners pay three and a half times the national median.

A half century ago, industrial jobs at car and steel plants provided high salaries and rich benefits. But as manufacturing moved overseas, many formerly well-paid workers had to take lower-paying jobs. By the end of the Great Recession, the economic order was undeniably changed.

"It's the government sector worker who's the new elite, the highest-paid worker on the block," said David Gregory, who teaches labor and employment law at New York's St. John's University.

For instance, most non-uniformed public employees who have worked in New Jersey for 30 years with an ending salary of \$85,000 can look forward to retiring at 55 with an annual pension of about \$46,000. Working until age 60 and a salary of \$90,000 can bring a pension of \$57,000. And many of the New Jersey's public-sector retirees have no or low premiums for their health insurance.

For a private-sector worker who retires at 55, relying solely on a 401(k) without an employer match, it would take a \$100 contribution to a plan every week for 30 years and getting an annual return over 7 percent to get to the same level of pension benefit as the public worker retiring at that age. Those benefits would run out after 25 years for the 401(k) retiree.

To be fair, most public-sector retirees don't get such rich pensions. New Jersey's Treasury Department says the average annual pension due state workers who retired between July 2009 and June 2010 was just over \$30,000 per year; for local government employees, it was about \$20,000.

And the members of the state's two biggest public employee retirement systems are required to pay 5.5 percent of their base salaries into the pension funds.

St. John's Gregory says the rest of the benefits are deferred compensation promised to workers instead of better salaries.

National data compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics confirms that public-sector workers do better when it comes to pensions and benefits.

As of last September, professional and management workers in the private sector were making \$34.91 in hourly salary; public sector professionals made \$33.17 an hour.

The government entities spent 1.7 times as much on health care per employee-hour worked and nearly twice as much on retirement costs. Public-sector workers — who are more often represented by unions — are far more likely to have defined-benefit pensions with promises to pay for the retirees' whole lives.

Olivia Mitchell, a professor of insurance and risk management at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, says the data isn't perfect. It doesn't compare workers with the

same education or experience levels, and it covers a broad range of jobs. Also, she said, it doesn't take into account that about one-fourth of public workers aren't covered by Social Security.

There's one clear downside for the public employees: "We also know that the public-sector pensions are in deep trouble financially," Mitchell said, pointing to studies that suggest that they're underfunded by a total of \$3 trillion, largely because governments have skipped payments. "Exactly what will be done about that, nobody knows."

Unchanged, those retirement systems could eventually stop paying entirely.

"One way or another, if we don't make changes, the government will collapse," said Abel Stewart, of Toledo, Ohio.

Stewart, 36, the director of contemporary worship at a Methodist church in suburban Toledo, says he has a hard time conjuring up sympathy for the government workers he's seen protesting because of all the time he's spent working with struggling immigrants.

"These are middle class people who have a house, who have enough food, who are complaining they don't have enough," he said. "Instead of fighting for their piece of the political pie, they'd be better looking at how to live within their means."

That's not a unanimous view.

Tony Christoff, a 38-year-old stay-at-home dad in Perrysburg, Ohio, believes public workers like police officers and teachers — including his wife — should be rewarded. "They go over and above and deserve the pay they get," he said.

Jeff Nash is a Democrat elected to the county freeholder board in union-heavy Camden County, N.J., who has come to believe that public employees need to sacrifice.

"The days of government workers receiving free benefits and pensions without risk, those days are coming to an end because everyone else who pays for government services is paying more for their health insurance, like myself, and running the risk of a 401(k) as part of their retirement savings. Government is changing to match what the rest of middle-class America is enduring today."

"It's not a matter of fairness," he said. "It's a matter of evolution."

Hetty Rosenstein, the New Jersey director of the Communications Workers of America, which represent New Jersey government workers in several fields, says she gripes about her members' pensions are misplaced.

"There's pension envy because people who are working in the private sector, they're being denied pensions," she said.

Associated Press writers Carrie Antlfinger in Milwaukee and John Seewer in Toledo, Ohio, contributed to this report.

Community college official faces conflict-of-interest investigation

Former Mission College vice president Karen Hoefel was overseeing a multimillion-dollar campus construction program in which her family's company was hired as a subcontractor.

By Gale Holland and Michael Finnegan, Los Angeles Times

March 8, 2011

The Los Angeles County district attorney's office has opened an investigation into an alleged conflict of interest on the part of a former community college official whose family business was paid more than \$500,000 for working on a public construction program that she oversaw on her campus.

Deputy Dist. Atty. Max Huntsman of the Public Integrity Division said the probe was launched in response to a complaint that Karen Hoefel, former vice president for administrative services at Mission College, had an "unlawful financial interest" arising from her co-ownership of a company that worked at the Sylmar campus.

The Times reported Saturday that M. Delvin & Associates, a firm founded by Hoefel and her husband, Michael Delvin, was hired as a subcontractor to provide building inspectors for projects at Mission College in 2009.

At the time, Hoefel supervised more than \$400 million in construction and renovation projects in her role as college vice president. The campus overhaul was part of a \$5.7-billion rebuilding program in the Los Angeles Community College District.

Hoefel, 60, collected salaries from both the college and M. Delvin & Associates, records show. Her annual pay from the college was \$153,000. In a financial disclosure filed with the district, she reported earning between \$10,001 and \$100,000 from her family business in 2009.

She resigned from her college position last June after The Times raised questions about the arrangement.

Reached by phone Monday, Hoefel said she "didn't have any direct role in overseeing contractors." She referred further questions to the district, which said in a statement that although she did not directly oversee her company's work on the campus, the "mere fact that Ms. Hoefel benefited financially ... was enough to create an inappropriate conflict of interest."

The statement, posted on the district's website, said Hoefel was given a choice between resigning and having M. Delvin & Associates removed from the construction program. The statement also acknowledged that district officials "could have acted more quickly to resolve this conflict of interest."

Michael Delvin, 57, could not be reached for comment.

M. Delvin & Associates' main business at Mission College was to examine newly constructed buildings as a subcontractor for Inici Group Inc. of Portland, Ore. The firm collected at least \$522,000 in public funds from Inici for its work at the college while Hoefel was vice president, records show.

M. Delvin & Associates also was a subcontractor for two other construction companies working at the college: Gateway Science & Engineering and Masters Contracting Corp.

Records show that Hoefel exerted direct authority over both contractors. In February 2009, she approved and sent to the district's trustees a \$2.8-million contract extension for Gateway, and in March 2010 she approved a \$2-million contract increase for Masters.

Sixteen vie for college board

Contractors and the faculty union back a slate of four in the L.A. district race.

By Carla Rivera, Gale Holland and Michael Finnegan, Los Angeles Times

March 8, 2011

Tuesday's election for a majority of seats on the Los Angeles Community College District board pits four candidates backed by the colleges' faculty union and campus contractors against 12 others struggling to overcome the group's huge financial edge.

Four seats on the seven-member board are up for grabs. All trustees are elected at-large.

Incumbents Mona Field and Miguel Santiago are running for reelection as a slate with San Fernando City Councilman Steven Veres and Scott Svonkin, a senior advisor to Sheriff Lee Baca.

Together, they have raised more than \$500,000 this year, including more than \$235,000 from the Los Angeles College Guild State PAC, a branch of the faculty union. The group has benefited from a late burst of money from contractors working on the district's troubled campus construction program.

The other 12 candidates combined have collected just \$35,000 this year. Several have sought to gain traction in the campaign's closing days by calling attention to the tens of millions of dollars in wasted college construction money highlighted in a Times investigation that concluded Sunday.

The trustees oversee nine colleges in the Los Angeles area. One of their top responsibilities is oversight of the \$5.7-billion campus rebuilding program approved by voters through a series of bond measures over the last decade.

One contest is for the Office 7 seat of Santiago, a consultant to the state Assembly's Democratic majority.

A trustee since April 2008, Santiago has accepted \$13,500 in donations this year from construction program vendors, including \$2,500 from FTR International, a builder the district is fighting in court over a Valley College complex that needed major repairs when it opened in 2008.

Santiago's rival, Erick Aguirre, 46, of North Hills, is a former vice president of the North Hills West neighborhood council. Currently unemployed, he has worked as a booking agent for bands and has run a translation service. Aguirre pledged not to accept contributions from bond program vendors, saying it was unethical to do so.

Santiago said the donations had no influence on him. He said that if he is reelected he would continue working to ensure that college money is spent wisely.

Field faces a more crowded race for her Office 1 seat. Four candidates are competing to unseat the 12-year incumbent, a retired Glendale Community College political science instructor who has long been closely allied with the college faculty union.

One of her opponents, Derrick Mims, 40, is district coordinator for Assemblyman Warren Furutani (D-Gardena), a former trustee of the college district. A former aide to Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Los Angeles), Mims was also head of fundraising for Southwest College.

Also challenging Field is Oswaldo Lopez, 36, who attended East Los Angeles College and now runs the Youth Opportunity Movement program in Boyle Heights. Gwen Walker, a former chief of counseling at Mission College, is also in the race, along with Jozef Essavi, who runs a real estate and insurance business in Canoga Park.

Lopez and Mims have each criticized Field for lax oversight of the construction program. "We need more than a caretaker," Mims said.

Field, 57, said the district had already addressed issues raised by The Times.

"No one else understands the budget and has the relationship with employees that I do," Field said. "It's going to take that kind of experience and those relationships to ensure the district survives in an incredibly tough time. We don't need amateurs."

Vying for another open seat, Office 3, are Veres, the San Fernando councilman, and Joyce Burrell Garcia, 67, a mid-Wilshire resident who taught for three years at SIAS International University in Xingzheng, China.

Veres has raised nearly \$125,000 this year, with late donations coming from bond program vendors, including FTR, Sinanian Development, Cordoba Corp., ECM Group, Masters Contracting Corp. and TELACU Construction Management.

"No contribution in any way is ever going to influence a decision for me," Veres said.

Bond program contractors have also joined forces with the faculty union to try to elect another candidate running for an open seat for Office 5: Svonkin, who has collected \$223,000 this year. Sending money his way in recent weeks have been TELACU, Masters Contracting and Pacifica Services, among others.

Svonkin, a member of the San Gabriel Unified School District board, said he was unaware that many of his donors worked on the bond program. "When you raise money to run almost countywide, you talk to and look to a lot of people for help," he said. Svonkin faces a crowded field of candidates. Nicole Michelle Chase, 43, of Sylmar has been an aide to Los Angeles City Councilman Richard Alarcon. She is a development and marketing consultant for the Boys & Girls Club of the San Fernando Valley.

Also running is Octavio Pescador, 40, an academic administrator at UCLA. The district, he said, is suffering from a "crisis of legitimacy" stemming from troubles with the bond program and it needs new leadership.

Another candidate, Pamela R. Bolin, who attended Pierce College, is volunteer treasurer at the Northridge West neighborhood council. She said her college major in finance would help her sort out the district's misuse of resources.

Others in the race are San Pedro elementary school teacher Lydia Gutierrez, 53, and neighborhood council members Manuel Aldana Jr. and Mark Lee.

CCCD special trustee to appoint advisory committee

2011-03-09 / Front Page

Will represent all communities served by the Compton Community College District

By Cheryl Scott

Bulletin Staff Writer

COMPTON—Compton Community College District Special Trustee Dr. Genethia Hudley-Hayes will appoint a community advisory committee in the near future. She will give further details about the committee and other El Camino Compton Center matters in a State of the District address. The date for the address has not yet been determined.

The advisory committee is required by SB 318, the legislation that allowed El Camino Community College to operate the Center after Compton Community College lost accreditation in 2006.

“Somehow the formation of an advisory committee was apparently overlooked,” Hudley-Hayes told The Bulletin. “But it is a requirement of the legislation and we need to get it done.”

The committee will be comprised of community members from all of the cities served by the District. Representation on the committee will be determined according to guidelines in AB 318. Compton will have the largest number of representatives because the largest percentage of students at the Center are from Compton.

The committee will include representatives of all segments of the communities, as specified in AB 318.

Hudley-Hayes came under fire from community activists recently for her termination of the contract of CEO Dr. Lawrence Cox. Cox was under contract until June, 30, 2012, but his last day in the post was February, 24.

The District is buying out Cox’s contract for a sum that could be as high as \$235,000. He will receive pay from March to June 2011, from July 2011 to July 2012, his benefit package and vacation pay from March 2011 to July 2012.

No reason has been given for Cox’s termination. “We can’t discuss personnel matters,” said Hudley-Hayes. “They are always confidential. Dr. Cox has a right to his privacy and it is standard policy that the District does not publicly discuss personnel matters. I made this decision based only on the health of the college and its recovery.”

A new CEO will be appointed by April 8, Hudley-Hayes said.

She said that she will speak on the state of the District to clear up misunderstandings in the community about the Center and the accreditation process.

“We want a sharp, clear new beginning for the Compton Community College District,” she said. “I am not comfortable with the level of transparency that has existed up until now. It’s a mistake

that a public statement outlining the situation at the Center and the accreditation effort has not been explained in a public forum before.”

The Committee to Save the Compton Community College District expressed its outrage at the termination of Cox and has said that it will call for the immediate removal of Hudley- Hayes.

“The Committee will also seek the immediate reinstatement of Dr. Cox, given his proven accomplishments in improving the college grounds, his significant record in advancing the restoration of re-accreditation to the district, and his popular support in the community as evident by increased student enrollment,” said Marie Hollis, president of the Committee to Save the Compton Community College District.

Hudley-Hayes said that emotions run high over the situation at the Center. “I understand the public’s concern,” she said. “That’s one reason I am giving the State of the District address. I would like to demystify the accreditation process and let the community know exactly where we are in that process and what still needs to be done.”

Regardless of the local response to issues involving the Center, the controlling body in its accreditation is the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). The commission is exacting in its periodic evaluations of the El Camino College Compton Center, and the accreditation process is long and arduous.

The administrative staff of El Camino Community College, the Compton Community College District and the faculty at the Center are all working diligently to fulfill all requirements of accreditation for a new college, which is expected to take as long as another eight years.

Once the Center has been accredited, the El Camino Community College District will transfer the college to the Compton Community College District. At this point, there has been no determination of how and when that will take place.

“This is a one-of-a-kind situation,” said former Special Trustee Peter Landsberger. “It’s never been done before, so no one knows exactly how the transfer will be accomplished. But it has always been the goal to return the Center to the Compton District once it has been accredited.”

El Camino College cleared of charges in harassment suit

The Daily Breeze

By Rob Kuznia Staff Writer

Posted: 03/08/2011 11:09:02 PM PST

Updated: 03/09/2011 09:09:10 AM PST

A jury ruled in favor of El Camino College on Tuesday in a civil lawsuit filed by a professor who accused her superiors of harassment and discrimination.

After just 50 minutes of deliberation, the 12-member jury ruled unanimously against the professor, Carmen Hunt, who charged that her bosses had tried to force her out because of her extended leaves of absence.

She attributed the missed work to post-traumatic stress suffered after an alleged sexual assault by a former dean years ago. She also said managers of the Torrance-area community college kept illegal, secret personnel files on her.

"We at the college knew there had been no discrimination, nor any violation of rights regarding personnel files," said the college's attorney, Larry Frierson. "We're pleased that the jury confirmed that and came to the right conclusion."

It is the second time this school year that the junior college has been cleared of harassment claims filed by current or former staff members. In October, El Camino was vindicated when a jury ruled mostly in favor of the district in a sexual harassment and discrimination case filed by a former dean, Kristi Blackburn, who claimed she was the victim of a "good old boys" network.

However, the college recently settled out of court in a third harassment case. The January agreement means that former secretary Nyesha Artiaga will receive \$2.5 million. Artiaga had accused a former dean, James Schwartz, of subjecting her to more than two years of sexual harassment and allegedly raping her in his locked office.

While Schwartz did not deny they had a sexual relationship, he contended it was consensual.

As for Hunt, she is on medical leave but is expected to resume her duties as a speech professor next month.

She lodged several accusations against the district in the case that began on Feb. 28. She charged that the district had discriminated against her by neglecting to accommodate her PTSD; that her superiors, in an attempt to get rid of her, had collected secret personnel files on her, which her attorneys coined "shadow files;" that she was defamed in those files; and that a male dean had sexually harassed her by making a comment to a female dean - Blackburn - about Hunt's breasts.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Amy D. Hogue threw out the sexual harassment and defamation charges on the grounds of insufficient evidence. This left the jury to deliberate on just the claims about the disability discrimination and the personnel files.

According to court documents, Hunt collapsed on campus in 2002. Shortly after, she was diagnosed with PTSD due to the alleged assault, which she never reported. She went on a three-year leave of absence in 2002, and returned on a part-time basis in 2005.

Hunt said the PTSD precluded her from effectively carrying out her duties on campus at El Camino. She applied for a faculty-exchange program that would have allowed her to teach at a community college in Hawaii. Her superiors denied this request and others, such as an appeal to teach an online class.

Hunt's attorney, Gerard Fierro, could not be reached for comment Tuesday afternoon, and so it is unclear whether she will appeal.

The jury only needed nine concurring members to reach a verdict, but it was unanimous, Frierson said. He added that he has never had a case in which the deliberation ended so quickly.

Courts, not Capitol, may have last word in budget battle

By **John Howard** | 03/08/11 12:00 AM PST

Capitol Weekly

Two of the high-profile issues in Gov. Brown's fiscal proposals – the elimination of enterprise zones and abolishment of redevelopment agencies – are all but certain to wind up in state or federal court, and other budget pieces may prompt legal battles, too.

“Not only will we litigate, we will make sure the state does not see a penny of this money. Any sort of budget savings is illusory, and we are going to stop it,” said Marty Dakessian, an attorney with the lead law firm representing an enterprise zone coalition.

The supporters of redevelopment agencies, led by the cities, are equally adamant.

They say Brown's attempt to eliminate some 400 agencies and tap \$1.7 billion in their tax funds violates the will of voters, who in November approved Proposition 22. That measure prohibits the “shifting, taking, borrowing or restricting” of money dedicated to “community redevelopment projects,” among other purposes.

“If the budget should pass with a provision to eliminate redevelopment, we will go to court to protect our local funds from state raids...,” said Chris McKenzie, executive director of the League of California Cities. The voters' decision, he added, “will not be undermined by illegal schemes like the budget proposal to take local redevelopment funds.”

Not everyone agrees.

“None of the provisions cited speak to the authority of the governor and Legislature to eliminate the agencies altogether,” the California Professional Firefighters said in a written statement. The CPF, along with school employees and others, favor Brown's plan, saying the redevelopment agencies take money away from critical services.

The courts and the Capitol are not strangers: The courts have weighed in frequently before on cuts to Medi-Cal, social services, welfare, the minimum wage and other issues, and in recent budget cycles nearly three dozen lawsuits were filed by public employee unions challenging moves to furlough state employees without pay.

This year, the court fights are taking shape even before the budget is decided. Urgency drives the issue: If the Legislature approves a tax-and-cut budget and places it before voters in a special election, there won't be much time to resolve legal challenges before the new fiscal year takes effect on July 1.

As a pivotal vote neared on Brown's budget nears in the Legislature, negotiations intensified dramatically and legal options were weighed on both issues.

On enterprise zones, Brown says eliminating the programs will save the state more than \$900 million over two years. The zones were created over decades ago to encourage businesses to set

up shop in dicey areas, thus bringing in economic benefits to the locals. The companies' incentives include hiring credits, tax breaks and preferential treatment for state contracts.

For the backers of enterprise zones, the issue is simple: The companies, based on promises from government, assumed the risks to start businesses and now the state may pull the rug out. The zones offer needed jobs, they argue, and encourage small businesses.

“The enterprise zone proposal that is on the table and is being considered is illegal, plain and simple,” Dakessian said. “It violates the contract and due process clauses of state the state and federal constitutions.”

Legislative Analyst Mac Taylor and Jean Ross of the California Budget Project say the zones have provided little economic benefit.

Ross, whose non-profit group analyzes the impact of state fiscal policies on average citizens and low-income people, said last month that the “best available independent research finds that the state’s EZ program fails to create jobs or new businesses – key goals of the program.”

Taylor, the Legislature’s non-partisan budget adviser, noted that in 2008, about half of the zones’ hiring and sales tax credits went to businesses with more than \$100 million in assets and that of those, some 40 percent went to companies with \$1 billion or more in assets.

The redevelopment agencies also are under Brown’s knife. The agencies – typically members of local city councils – were set up to finance projects to encourage economic development, reduce blight and stimulate orderly growth. The agencies are funded through taxpayer dollars.

Brown, a former mayor of Oakland, sees the agencies as a place to cut and allow the use of that money for other purposes, such as schools, emergency services and law enforcement. The cities, in a race to use that money before the looming abolishment of the agencies, have approved hundreds of millions of dollars worth of projects up and down the state.

The two-house conference committee, dominated by majority Democrats, approved a budget that reflected the elimination of the redevelopment agencies. Both houses are expected to vote on the proposal on Thursday.

High turnout expected at March for Higher Education

By Inna Gritsak

Published: Wednesday, March 9, 2011

The State Hornet

More than 20,000 students from across the state are expected to participate in the March for Higher Education at the State Capitol Monday morning to protest against proposed budget cuts and fee increases to higher education.

The march is an annual event organized by California State Student Association (CSSA) and Student Senate for California Community Colleges.

"This march is about students coming out and really saying to the rest of the state that we're worth the investment, and that if you invest in us, we will give you a return on your investment in the future," said Olgalilia Ramirez, CSSA director of government relations.

The march will begin at 10 a.m. at the California Automobile Museum on Front Street. From there, participants will march to the Capitol Mall and on to the State Capitol. There will be a press conference on the west steps of the Capitol facing 10th Street after the march.

ASI Secretary of State Affairs Brandon Sisk, senior government major, is expecting the march to draw in more students than ever before.

"We actually did a very similar event last year and we got about 13,000 students to show up," Sisk said. "We did it the year before that and we got about 5,000 students to show up, so it's been growing each year."

Sisk has been participating in organization of the march for several years. Although the march is protesting a serious issue, he said the march itself is a fun experience.

"A couple years ago, I organized the event and it was primarily a community college event, and for me, it was really amazing to stand at the Capitol and just watch waves of people just chanting, passionate as all hell, continuing to march on to the Capitol," Sisk said. "It was like, you thought it was over and it looked like it was over, but they just kept on coming. It was actually really cool, a really cool experience."

Community college students are expected to make up a large percentage of participants in the march.

"(Community colleges) bring students like no other," Sisk said. "They have about 2.8 million students and they do a really good job at bringing students forward."

The reason for the march is to get the attention of the governor, legislators and the public.

"We want the public to understand that what affects higher education will also affect them and the future of California's economy," Ramirez said.

Ramirez said if we continue to disinvest in higher education, by 2025, California will be short one million college graduates to do the jobs that nurses, engineers, agriculture workers and teachers currently hold.

"We've seen the trends for the last 10 to 11 years where student fees have gone up," Ramirez said. "We've seen access to the Cal State universities basically denied last year. We turned away about 40,000 students and that was because there was basically no funding for those students." Ramirez said she believes higher education in California is going in a backward direction when it should be going forward.

"If we continue to move backward, the state of the economy is not going to get any better," Ramirez said.

Sisk said investing in higher education is what will actually boost California's economy.

"We say that for every dollar that you put into higher education, or into the CSU system in particular, the California economy receives \$5.43 in return," Sisk said. "That's an amazing return on investment so it just doesn't make any sense to divest from higher education."

Sacramento State students are encouraged to participate in the march because the lack of funding for higher education is what impacts them the most, Sisk said.

"I have friends in particular who have been pushed out of the system for a semester or two, which has delayed their graduation by that much, because of the tuition or fee increases, as a result of massive budget cuts over the last few years," he said.

Alexandria Rosalia Ybarra, Sac State junior communication studies major, is going to participate in the march because she said CSU budget cuts have impact her personally.

"It has affected me financial-wise," Ybarra said. "I'm not getting financial aid, a lot of classes are being cut, work-study jobs are being less, and I don't think it's good that education is getting a budget cut."

Ybarra said going to the march is one way she can contribute to the higher education cause.

"By me going, at least I can make a mini difference," she said.

Compared to other schools, Sisk said Sac State student attendance at these types of events has been low in the past few years. However, he encourages students to attend the march even if it means skipping classes that day.

"There are some students who absolutely can't get away, they've got a lab that they can't get out of or something like that," Sisk said. "But for the most part, the professors are pretty understanding about this stuff so if they just talk to their professor beforehand and say 'I'd like to go to this march,' I have a pretty good feeling their professor is going to be understanding enough to let them go."

To help alleviate transportation issues and limited parking, Sac State is providing free bus transportation to the march's starting location. Students who would like to utilize this service should meet in the Library Quad anytime between 8:30 and 9:45 a.m. on the day of the march.

Students who simply cannot skip class to attend the march can still get involved in the higher education cause by calling and writing letters to their legislators.

Although quantifying the results from the march may be difficult, Sisk said he believes the march does make a difference.

"It really does send a clear message to the legislators, they hear it loud and clear," he said. "They hear it inside the building, which is an amazing thing. It's always been the biggest rally at the Capitol every year so they're really impressed by it. I've spoken with legislators who were like, 'you're going to do it again this year and it's going to be amazing.'"

There is a reason why the march is done in March.

"It's actually great timing because they're trying to pass the budget on March 15 so the day before, we're telling them to prioritize higher education," Sisk said. "The next day, hopefully they actually make that prioritization."

Redondo teens skid off the university track

The Daily Breeze

SCHOOLS: High-achieving district seeks change with just 42 percent meeting UC and CSU eligibility rules.

By Rob Kuznia Staff Writer

Posted: 03/13/2011

By all accounts, Nick Smith is a stellar student.

The Redondo Union High School senior is on track to graduate with a 3.8 GPA, earning 60 more credits than necessary to walk the stage - with honors. And yet he didn't have the option to apply to a four-year college in the California State University or UC systems.

That's because he never learned until it was too late that he needed two years of a foreign language to qualify. In many ways, he's not unlike the majority of Redondo Union High graduates.

Like other schools in relatively affluent areas, Redondo Union has a strong academic reputation, with an unusually high number of students taking Advanced Placement classes.

But it is lagging in one surprising area: Fewer than half of the school's graduates - just 42 percent - have taken all the necessary courses to qualify for entry into four-year colleges in either of the state's major university systems.

The statistic is especially striking when compared with other South Bay high schools.

At wealthy Manhattan Beach's Mira Costa High, the corresponding college-ready rate is 84 percent - double that of Redondo's. At the two high schools in the Palos Verdes Peninsula school district, it ranges from 70 to

80 percent. In Torrance's four high schools, the rate hovers between

50 and 60 percent.

Redondo educators can't be accused of sweeping the issue under the rug. In fact, they're the ones who went public with the unflattering figure last year, thereby initiating several reform efforts.

More recently, the issue was raised in a more public fashion during the campaign for the March 8 school board election. Namely, newly elected Laura Emdee made it part of her platform, saying the low rate is evidence of a widening gap between the school's high achievers and the students in the middle.

"A lot of parents ask, 'OK, do they have everything they need to graduate high school?'" she said. "But that's not the right question. The right question is: 'What do they need to get into college?'"

The discussions in Redondo Beach come at a time when the federal government is paying closer attention to college completion rates. The United States used to lead the world in the proportion of young people with a college degree. But according to a recent survey by the College Board, the United States now ranks 12th of the 36 countries measured. The Obama administration has set a goal to regain the lead by 2020.

In Redondo, some officials attribute the disappointing college-ready rate to a default mind-set among many students to attend the two-year El Camino College after graduation. But others - such as Emdee - say a lack of awareness among families is equally to blame. During the campaign, she published a piece about the issue in PTA newsletters.

"Your child does not need a foreign language or three years of math to graduate from high school," she wrote. "However, they do need these courses to be eligible for a UC or Cal State school."

Underscoring the urgency is the fact that many community college students get lost in the system. By one count in a recent study, a full 70 percent of community college students fail to obtain degrees or transfer to four-year universities within six years, according to the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy at California State University, Sacramento.

In the past couple of years, the Redondo Beach Unified School District has launched several initiatives to boost the number.

"We have work to do and it's not easy work," said Annette Alpern, the district's assistant superintendent of instructional services, who has brought the matter to the attention of the school board. "There isn't an easy fix."

The efforts include beefed-

up programs, such as increased support in algebra and an expanded class geared toward first-generation college-goers. The school is also trying to instill a college-going culture: every Thursday, for instance, the faculty dons shirts emblazoned with college logos.

The school's principal, Mary Little, often sports a green-and-white shirt advertising her alma mater, Michigan State.

"We're doing more things like that to keep college sort of in the forefront - sort of like, 'You can do this too,'" she said.

To be eligible for entrance to the UC and California State University systems, high school students in the Golden State must take the courses that satisfy all of what are known in education-speak as the "A-G requirements." For instance, students must take four years of college-preparatory English, at least three years of math and two years of a foreign language, to name a few. The CSU system requires a minimum of a C grade in every class; the UC system requires an average GPA of 3.0.

At the private Loyola Marymount University, the A-through-G's are more of a recommendation, but spokeswoman Celeste Durant said rare is the applicant who hasn't met them.

As for Nick, the senior at Redondo Union High, he'd initially planned to attend UC Santa Barbara with a friend until he learned this year that he lacked the foreign-language credits to even apply. He'll instead be attending Santa Monica College in the fall with an eye toward majoring in business.

"They go over it with students, but students don't always follow through on stuff," he said. "There needs to be more communication between the (guidance) counselors and parents."

Among the 42 percent of students on track to meet the requirement is Kelsey Szerlip, the senior class president. But even Szerlip - a model student - came close to falling short.

For her, it came down to learning at the last minute that she needed a visual and performing arts class to qualify. Ironically, she is no stranger to the stage. Szerlip has acted in numerous community plays and, as a freshman and sophomore, took a dance class. For the better part of her high school career she was under the mistaken impression the dance class had satisfied the requirement. She finally learned otherwise last spring, while visiting with a guidance counselor as she signed up for senior classes.

"I was like, 'Oh my gosh, you gotta put me in something,'" she said. As a result, she's currently taking advanced drama.

Meanwhile, there is plenty of good news to go around at Redondo Union. Test scores have risen steadily. More impressively, more and more students at the school are taking AP courses, which generally demand college-level work. This year, about 565 students - or about a quarter of the school's enrollment - are taking at least one Advanced Placement class, with the vast majority passing the tests. That's up from 400 in 2005-06.

Educators in Redondo have established a goal to raise the proportion of A-through-G-ready students from 42 percent to 70 percent by the end of 2013.

Demographically speaking, Redondo Union is a diverse school. Roughly half of its students are white, about a quarter are Latino, 10 percent are Asian and 7 percent are black.

Of the efforts under way to raise college awareness, the most visible will be an expansion next fall of a college-readiness program for low-income, minority and other students in the middle.

Called Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), the current program consists of about 30 students in each grade who take a class with the same teacher all through high school. The primary focus of the program is to ensure that the students complete their A-through-G's. About 90 percent of the students who stick to the program succeed.

At Redondo Union, the AVID instructor is Aimiee Gauvreau.

"I'm basically like their mother," said Gauvreau, who is also an English teacher. "For the first two years I nag them, I hound them about getting good grades."

Most of the students are the first in their families to apply to colleges, and often don't have someone at home making the same demands.

Next year, the school will launch a second cohort of freshmen, meaning in four years the total number of AVID students will double.

"All our kids at Redondo, they want to do well. It's just they get caught up with the typical high school world - socializing, having fun," Gauvreau said. She added, "We have this great junior college close by, which is wonderful, but then at the same time, it's a bit of a crutch."

LACCD fails to build any confidence

Daily Breeze

Posted: 03/13/2011 07:53:43 PM PDT

Updated: 03/13/2011 10:03:48 PM PDT

For the next 40 years we could be paying many hundreds of dollars for a construction boondoggle at the Los Angeles Community College District.

The Los Angeles Times uncovered the mess: millions of dollars in bungled planning, construction blunders that have to be redone, incompetent oversight and conflict of interest that ought to be illegal.

Voters who approved measures that put \$5.7 billion in the hands of these boobs must be wishing they could take it all back. But they can't.

Sadly, the timing of this mess only makes worse the plight of well-run school systems, which are facing huge budget cuts coming from Sacramento. That is no way to reward competence.

The Los Angeles Community College District is the clear leader in the ineptitude department. Its chancellor, Daniel LaVista, at first attacked the Times' motives for reporting on the mishandling of millions of dollars in bond money. Now, he has reversed himself and promises to take advantage of this "outside perspective."

What else could he say? The district, for example, had spent \$3.4 million to renovate a theater complex at Valley College, then decided to demolish it and build a new one because, after all, there was all this money available. And that's a relatively small item in this mess.

Here's a bigger one: West Los Angeles College spent \$39 million to design and start to build four major buildings. Then it discovered, oh shucks, we don't have enough money to finish the job.

The Los Angeles District Attorney's Office is conducting an investigation into one former official of Mission College who oversaw construction there because, it turns out, a company she co-owns had a \$500,000 contract for part of the work.

On a grander scale, although barely legal, members of the college district's board of trustees happily accepted political contributions from companies that profited enormously by overseeing hiring of key construction managers and doing little else. Obviously, that ought to be illegal, but it already is plain wrong.

Yes, the district chancellor should have fired his person in charge of the project, Larry Eisenberg, and he did. He also should follow through with reforms, as he promised. But that's not near enough.

It makes no sense for the Los Angeles district to put together projects on a massive scale, then have individual college presidents toss out the costly plans so they can do things to their own

likings. Also, the district, at a minimum, should create tighter systems of oversight. Those at Long Beach City College, the San Diego Community College District and others could serve as examples.

These are times when voters need examples of high levels of competence in public officials, not the extreme opposite. Fortunately, there are good examples, and it's time for the Los Angeles Community College District, for one, to start emulating them.

Despite pleas, YCCD trustees bring down ax

By Nan Austin - naustin@modbee.com

A capacity crowd filled the Modesto Junior College auditorium Wednesday night to speak against deep cuts to programs or cheer on those who did.

After more than four hours of speeches, visibly weary Yosemite Community College District trustees took up the resolution to send layoff warnings to a dozen faculty and eliminate four administrative posts and a dean.

The twin motions passed unanimously, 7-0. Board members said they saw the pain the plan caused, but had to face the reality of \$8 million in budget cuts for MJC.

Trustee Abe Rojas said he faced discussions of budget reductions "with a heavy heart," and said his vote "will not be popular with you, but necessary."

Trustee Anne DeMartini said the recession had put the district in a very difficult situation, as it had many in the community who had lost jobs.

"They're hurting and we're going to be hurting too. Bottom line, nobody's going to win tonight," DeMartini said.

"If we could change this terrible budget crisis, we would," said board member Lynn Martin.

Speaker after speaker spoke against passing elements of the plan, or asked for more time to come up with something better. Time, however, was running out against a Tuesday deadline to send layoff warnings to faculty and managers.

Support staff, who asked that deeper cuts to faculty be considered to spare classified positions, will lose 43 positions under the plan, said Debbi Partridge, president of the Yosemite chapter of the California School Employees Association.

Speakers focused on programs being eliminated, for the most part, with outpourings of support for industrial technology, mass communications, foreign languages, architecture and engineering.

Board chairwoman Linda Flores repeatedly bowed to calls for more time for speakers, finally opening the door to every person who wished to speak with a one-minute time limit. [A man in a military uniform](#) challenged that limit, shouting into the microphone until being escorted out by two Modesto police officers.

An increasingly unruly crowd shouted down board efforts to keep speakers moving. Many speakers told of hard lives that depended on low-cost education and child care. Others spoke of personal success realized after taking classes at MJC.

Emotional pleas were given for services for disabled students and child care for the 88 toddlers at the Wawona center.

Professor Alan Layne, whose communications and graphics program was discontinued, said his was the last collegiate printing program in Northern California.

The meeting was broadcast, ironically, by the television and film program that's being eliminated, Professor Carol Lancaster Mingus said.

"My cameras are here, let's not make this the last time they're here," Lancaster Mingus said.

Staff, students and the community learned of MJC President Gaither Loewenstein's cuts Feb. 28 in an e-mail he sent to the campus.

In addition to the job losses — 13 full-time and dozens of part-time teaching positions, 37 full-time classified jobs and five management positions — he proposed ending entire programs to close an \$8 million budget gap.

Some programs will end midmajor for many students — culinary arts, communications and graphics, architecture, engineering, industrial technology, dental assisting and all foreign languages, except Spanish and sign language, according to the document.

The MJC West Campus library would close and be used as a learning resource center. Coach stipends would end, but competitive sports would continue. Loewenstein defended that decision by saying athletes transfer in higher rates and take more classes than the student body at large.

The mass communications department will be shut down, ending majors in journalism, radio, film and TV. The arts, humanities and communications division will be broken up, with remaining majors moved under other deans.

Academic Senate President Mike Adams warned the board that the methods used to select the cuts were flawed and open to legal challenge.

"I think you're going to make a very, very expensive mistake," Adams said.

His group proposed one of the few alternative approaches, including taking more time to ponder alternatives and not opening new buildings that recently have been constructed.

After the vote, English Professor Sam Pierstoff said he felt "marginalized and dismissed" by what he said were preplanned comments made by the board.

The meeting originally was scheduled to be held at the district's other campus in Columbia, but was moved to the MJC auditorium last week when it became clear many faculty, student and residents would want to speak.

CEO'S FIRING DIVIDES STAKEHOLDERS, EDUCATORS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

LOS ANGELES WAVE

By LEILONI DE GRUY, Staff Writer

Story Created: Mar 16, 2011 at 9:21 PM PDT

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COMPTON — Local residents are split over a decision by the Compton Community College District's newly-selected special trustee to prematurely terminate its CEO's contract after it had been extended an additional year in December.

On Feb. 24, Special Trustee Genethia Hudley-Hayes — who began serving in the role in January — announced that CEO Lawrence Cox's employment contract — which was not expected to end until June 30, 2012 — had come to an end and that he was immediately removed from his post. Cox's last day of service was the same day of the announcement.

After a strenuous search, Cox became provost of the El Camino College Compton Education Center and CEO of the Compton Community College District in 2008. Calling it a "redefinition" and "refocusing," Cox was stripped of his title as provost in 2010, at which point he remained solely the CEO.

"The title provost was a relationship that tied me to El Camino College," Cox told The Wave last February following the transition. "What the change has done is allowed me to increase my focus on scope and the demands of the [Compton Community College] District, more so than I was able to when I was trying to serve in both roles."

Following several comprehensive assessments of the Compton Community College District by the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, dating back to October 2004, it was discovered that the district did not meet accreditation standards and rated poorly in five operational areas that were crucial to the establishment's survival.

In August 2006, after the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges performed its own evaluation, the college's accreditation was formally withdrawn. A memorandum of understanding was then signed, which sealed a partnership between Compton Community College District and El Camino Community College District, giving El Camino oversight responsibilities of Compton Community College, its academic programs and student services.

According to Dasol Mashaka, a member of the Foundation for the Compton Community College District, who spoke to The Wave as a concerned resident, the possibility of the college being once again accredited remained hopeful under the direction of Cox. He credited the now former CEO with dramatically raising the college's FCMAT scores, increasing student enrollment, providing transparency, fostering a relationship between the surrounding community and the campus, cleaning the grounds, lifting staff morale and repairing the college's reputation.

“When Dr. Lawrence Cox arrived July 2008, the campus had potential but was suffering from slow progress toward success,” said a recent letter sent by Mashaka to California Community Colleges’ Chancellor Jack Scott. “After 2 1/2 years under President/CEO Dr. Cox, much has been achieved and momentum is continuing toward further success. On February 24, 2011, the newly appointed Special Trustee Genethia Hudley-Hayes fired Dr. Cox without consulting the elected District Board, college stakeholders or the community. This action shocked the entire district community including board members, state/county/city elected officials, and campus stakeholders. This action must be reversed or the momentum toward success dies.”

Deborah LeBlanc, president of the African-American California Community College Trustees and member of the Compton Community College District Board of Trustees, did not speak on behalf of the district, “however I am elected to the district and I have a right to represent the interests of our residents,” she told *The Wave*. “All of the major decisions affecting Compton Community College District ... are being made without the consultation of the current district board of trustees ... Dr. Cox greatly enhanced the Compton Community College District and his contract was unceremoniously terminated on Feb. 24, 2011.”

LeBlanc would not say whether she agreed or disagreed with Hudley-Hayes’ decision, but divulged that she was more discomfited by the manner in which the decision was made: without, she said, the consultation of the board and other stakeholders.

“Sometimes it’s not what is done, but the way it’s done. In this case, all of the decisions were made without consultation,” she added. “That’s basically all I can say.”

Lestine Johnson, president of the Compton Chamber of Commerce, who has been active in the battle to regain district control, said she is not convinced that Hudley-Hayes’ actions were well intended. After attending a meeting with community college district leaders last week, Johnson left with the impression that Cox was being scapegoated and blamed for the institution’s fiscal woes.

“They are blaming him for something that wasn’t even his job,” she added. “We smell a rat. I was extremely outraged and shocked. It didn’t sit right with me. Here you have a man that came in, in 2008, when our enrollment was [at its lowest] and he took it up to over 10,000 in a matter of two years. Then you have a special trustee who came in, who was there less than two months on the job, and terminated him and bought out his contract. ... It’s insulting to the community because he was so involved with them and made sure they were informed about what was going on at the campus. We are not going to take this sitting down.”

But Hudley-Hayes presented a much different outlook.

“We didn’t just terminate his employment and throw him out of the door,” she said, adding that Cox’s buyout contract includes salary, benefits, health insurance and anything else that may be involved in a settlement. “He is entitled to March, April and May of the current contract and he is entitled to July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012.”

A settlement has yet to be agreed upon, Hudley-Hayes noted, so there is no conclusive figure as to how much Cox will walk away with. Officials, however, do not expect it to exceed \$225,000.

On Wednesday, officials announced the appointment of new interim CEO Keith Curry, who has served as the El Camino College Compton Center dean of students services since 2006.

According to Hudley-Hayes, she received seven applications for the position. Curry will fill the position until June 30, 2012. No search was conducted, she added, stating that none will take place until the district seeks a permanent CEO. At this point, Curry can apply for the fixed seat.

To give The Wave a sense of what she was seeking in the interim CEO, Hudley-Hayes said last Friday, "I am looking more at the skill that is necessary to move this district forward through the accreditation process. I am not only looking at people who have been presidents of community colleges or people who have been deans or vice presidents. I am looking for a specific skill set."

That skill set, she said, includes strong and inclusive leadership; a sense of systems and strategies; a creative and exciting vision that spurs the buy-in of all stakeholders; clear knowledge of the steps needed to get to accreditation; knowledge of how to run a large organization; a background in fiscal management; and creating a partnership with El Camino and the various communities the college serves.

However disappointed with the removal of Cox, after a number of engagements with the special trustee, in which she voiced these intentions, Mashaka said Monday that he is now partially swayed and is "going to wait as far as my protest until I learn more about it."

That knowledge may expand as a result of two upcoming meetings: One on April 8, in which Hudley-Hayes will give a state of the district report; and another on April 12, where community members will engage in a question-and-answer session with district staff.



Photos by Dennis J. Freeman

Former Compton administrator Rico Smith stands next to photo of the late John "Buck" O'Neil in the Negro Leagues Baseball exhibition at Compton Center.

CUSD students learn about legacy of Negro League Baseball

By Dennis J. Freeman
Bulletin Staff Writer

COMPTON—Honoring the legacy of Negro League Baseball, its players and coaches, has been a long overdue process. It's taken longer to bring and share that legacy to the communities those players come from.

For at least one more week, Compton will have the opportunity to hand down knowledge of that legacy to a generation of young people more consumed with operating computer game systems than learning about history.

The special baseball exhibition displaying historical photos, memorabilia and artifacts continues for at least one more week at the El Camino College Compton Center before it moves on to another location. The "Discover Greatness" exhibit, an illustrated history of the Negro Baseball Leagues, is expected to be displayed on the Compton campus through March 18.

Last week, more than 150 middle school students chosen from throughout the Compton Unified School District, got an up-close and personal look at Negro League Baseball from actor and director James Keach ("Walk the Line," "Wildcats," "Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman").

Keach gave the students a brief presentation then took them on a tour of the special baseball exhibit from the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum.

Keach, married to actress Jane Seymour, is a long-time baseball buff. He's well-versed in baseball as a former player and now a coach in the sport. To Keach, baseball mirrors society in many ways.

"Baseball to me is the only game that plays out like an analogy of life," Keach said. "If you're successful three out of 10 times in baseball, you're in the Hall of Fame. It's like life; you've got to keep trying, and trying and trying. That's why I think teaching

baseball, having played baseball and understanding it, is an important concept.

"I love the sport. I think in terms of the history of baseball, if you look at the movies they displayed today, you'll see that baseball was one of the first areas to drop segregation. They said it wasn't fair. Through a game, we taught people about the importance of equality."

The "Discover Greatness" exhibit, sponsored by the Compton Athletic Foundation, is a unique display of photographs of players, memorabilia, posters and a video showcasing the history of African-American baseball from the late 1800s through the 1960s. Some of the better-known Negro League Baseball players displayed in the exhibit are Satchel Paige, Cool Papa Bell, Josh Gibson and Jackie Robinson.

Keach said the Negro Leagues were an important part of the fabric of baseball and American history.

"I think the Negro Leagues, obviously, showed that these fellas can play baseball as well as anybody else, and that they should have been included in major league baseball," said Keach. "It's like saying this is the American sport; and if Black folks and Hispanics aren't playing then it's not the American sport. It's the White sport. To combine them was really good. The Negro Leagues provided great entertainment. It was a great place for young, black athletes to be seen."

Viewing the exhibit also provided students with some financial motivation as well. After viewing the exhibit and hearing the presentation, the students participated in an essay contest that could net them scholarship money.

Five winners will be chosen and announced at a special dinner this month with scholarships totaling \$5,000 being presented. Tours can be arranged by calling the Compton Athletic Foundation 323-497-4665.

"I love the sport. I think in terms of the history of baseball, if you look at the movies they displayed today, you'll see that baseball was one of the first areas to drop segregation. They said it wasn't fair. Through a game, we taught people about the importance of equality."

—James Keach



Students from Compton Unified School District get a kick out of the photos of players in Negro League Baseball.

Seismology expert to speak at Cal State Dominguez Hills

From Staff Reports

CARSON—California State University Dominguez Hills will host Dr. Aaron Velasco in its annual Distinguished Speakers Series on Thursday, March 24. Velasco, professor and chair of geological sciences at the University of Texas at El Paso, will speak about earthquakes.

The speech will be presented at a luncheon scheduled from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Loker Student Union ballroom. It is open to the public.

Evidence suggests that more than a dozen major earthquakes over the past 10 years have triggered seemingly unrelated quakes thousands of miles away. Velasco, who has done extensive research on the subject, will discuss the science behind earthquakes and the research on tremor connections. The talk will also explore the likelihood that events like nuclear explosions could cause earthquakes, and the role seismology could have on national and international security.

"I have known Dr. Velasco for a number of years and am impressed with his research and ability to relate to a diverse audience," said Laura Robles, interim dean of the College of Natural and Behavioral Sciences. "He is well known and widely respected in his field, and I am pleased that he will be here to speak to our students, as well as community members and alumni who may attend. The college has a history of bringing noted speakers to the campus to stimulate intellectual discussion and inspire our students to continue their education."

This is the fifth event in the College of Natural and Behavioral Sciences Distinguished Speaker Series. Past speakers have included Kenneth Trevett, former CEO of Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute; Gilbert Ivey, chief administrative officer for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California; UC Irvine sociologist and immigration scholar Rubén Rumbart; and Mark Hurley, president of Shell Pipeline Company, LP.

The luncheon is free, but reservations are requested. For reservations or more information, contact 310-243-2577.



Photo courtesy Cal State Dominguez Hills

Dr. Aaron Velasco will speak about earthquake science at a luncheon as part of California State University Dominguez Hills's Distinguished Speaker Series.

Tsunami surge deals blow to struggling California town

By Jeff Barnard
Associated Press

CRESCENT CITY—Fishermen who had escaped to sea before the tsunami hit this struggling coastal town landed small loads of crab on Saturday, while crews surveyed damage and a family combed the beach for any sign of a man who was swept away a day ago as he photographed the waves.

"This harbor is the lifeblood of our community and the soul of our community," said Del Norte County Sheriff Dean Wilson as he looked across what was left of the Crescent City boat basin, which last year saw landings of crab and fish worth \$12.5 million. "The fishing industry is the identity and soul of this community, besides tourism."

The region has never recovered from the loss of the timber industry in the 1980s and 1990s, and downturns in salmon fishing, said Wilson, who fished on his father's boats as a young man.

"It's going to be hard to recover here," he said.

A series of powerful surges generated by the devastating earthquake in Japan arrived about 7:30 a.m. Friday and pounded the harbor through the day and night. Eight boats were believed sunk and dozens of others damaged; an unmanned sailboat sucked out of the harbor ran aground on the coast.

About 20 miles south, the family of a 25-year-old Oregon man combed the beach looking for signs of him. Authorities say Dustin Weber was swept away as he and two friends photographed the waves.

"He just didn't respect the ocean and didn't understand the tsunami," his father, Jon Weber, said. "The (first surge) hit about 7:30. It was the second wave that hit at 9:30 that got him."

Back north in Crescent City, crews geared up for the enormous task of assessing and fixing the damage to the port, where a sheen of oil floated in the basin. Seagulls feasted on mussels exposed by upended docks. About 80 percent of the docks that once sheltered 140 boats were gone.

"Our port is struggling," said Kevin Wilson, manager of Nor-Cal Seafood Inc. "Since the last tsunami in '06, they secured the funds to fix it, and this took away all the stuff they were gonna build off."

Crab fisherman Lee Wilson returned to find his boat, the Gold Coast, mostly unscathed. It has survived its second tsunami — the first, a 1964 swarm that killed 11 in the city, had pushed it up on the rocks of the break wall.

Classifieds

Legal Advertisements are published in the Compton Bulletin's B section, which is available at City Hall and to subscribers. To subscribe to the Bulletin, log on to our website at <http://www.thecomptonbulletin.com> and click on "subscribe."

Employment

OPEN POSITIONS For new construction at SEASONS at Compton. For listings, visit www.adventcompanies.com/employment

Professional Services

LEGAL SERVICES

CRIMINAL DEFENSE Have you or a loved one been arrested? Don't plead guilty. The law firm of Pensanti & Associates has been handling all types of criminal cases for over a decade. Ms. Pensanti has been published in the San Fernando Valley Bar Association magazine, has served as chair of the criminal section of the Bar Association and is known for "not guilty" verdicts in tough cases for reasonable fees. For confidential, no cost consultation, contact the law firm of Pensanti & Associates. Spanish speaking associates available. 800-851-6477

ARRESTED FOR DUI? Call the Law Firm of Pensanti & Associates. Spanish speaking associates available. 800-851-6477

FAMILY & COUNSELING SERVICES Prevention Begins at Home! Please join us in our FREE family-based alcohol and drug prevention program consisting of three 1.5 hr

sessions. Each interaction is designed to educate families on the dangers of substance abuse and the role family communication plays in prevention. For more information, please contact Kisha or Jamall at (310) 608-1505. A Mini Twelve Step House, Inc. program. Together, we can take back our community one family at a time!

Senior Services

ATTENTION DIABETICS with Medicare. Get a FREE Talking Meter and diabetic supplies at NO COST, plus FREE home delivery! Best of all, this meter eliminates painful finger pricking! Call 888-505-7491.

Veterinary Services

Melrose LaBrea Animal Hospital offers spay/neuter services and veterinary care for all types of small animals and reptiles. Saturday and evening appointments available. Call (323) 937-2334.

For Rent

LOVELY 2 BEDROOM GATED APARTMENT, HARDWOOD FLOORS, LOCATED AT 210 W. ALONDRA. SECTION 8 (2 BEDROOM VOUCHER ONLY) SENIORS WELCOME. (310) 490-4870.

Around Town

Senior calendar

St. Patrick's Day Dance

City Councilman Dr. Willie O. Jones will help celebrate the spirit of St. Patrick's Day by hosting a party filled with music, dancing and light refreshments. The party will be in the main banquet room of the Dollarhide Senior Center on March 17 from 1 to 3 p.m. All seniors are invited to join the fun.

Councilwoman Barbara Calhoun's Mini Spa Day

Councilwoman Barbara Calhoun will host a Mini Spa Day for seniors on March 25 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Dollarhide Senior Center. More than 250 seniors will be pampered and treated to professional services like manicures, facials and cosmetic makeovers by world renowned stylist Barbara Walden. There will also be vendor booths sponsored by the senior clubs and classes at Dollarhide. Items for sale will include hats, quilts, hand crafted ceramic pieces and Black art. The spa is limited to the first 250 who sign up. Refreshments will be served. For more information, call 310-605-5688.

Air, Land & Sea Tour of Orange County

Join a guided tour of Orange County on Wednesday, March 30. The day begins with a visit to the Lyon Air Museum, located next to John Wayne Airport. Upon your arrival, you'll be met by a museum docent as you set out on a guided tour. Exhibits include authentic aircraft, rare vehicles and related memorabilia, with emphasis on the defining event of the 20th century - World War II. Next stop is lunch at the Harbor Side Restaurant overlooking Newport Harbor. After lunch the group will board one of the Fun Zone's comfortable boats for a harbor cruise. The 45-minute cruise will feature live narration from the captain and a view of lavish waterfront homes and spectacular yachts. Cost of the trip is \$42. The bus will be departing from Curry Temple at 9 a.m. and return at 4 p.m. Sign up at the front desk.

Food distribution

The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank program will distribute a free food kit once a month. Kits will be distributed on every third Wednesday of the month. The next distribution is set for March 16 between 9 and 11 a.m. Proof of income, Social Security or pension is required.

Bingo class

A new class on bingo is offered every Thursday from 1 to 4 p.m. in the multipurpose room. Bingo boards will be \$1 per board per senior.

Art class

Art class meets weekly from 1:30 to 3 p.m. Art helps students exercise their brains and teaches organization and design. Students will learn to develop techniques like shading, blending, scrambling and more. Sign up at front desk.

Ceramics workshop

Ceramics classes are regularly scheduled every Tuesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon. Classes are for beginners through advanced and cover all aspects of the crafts.

Compton High hoopsters compete for \$40,000 scholarship

COMPTON—Eight seniors from Compton High School were selected on March 11 to compete in a free throw contest for a \$40,000 college scholarship. The participants were selected at random from among the 80 students at the school who maintain a 3.0 average or better.

The students will be the subject of "Free Throw," a documentary film to be produced by Court Crandall, an advertising creative director, screenwriter of the films "Old School" and "A Lobster Tale" and author of the children's book, "Hugville."

During the two weeks leading up to the final event on March 25, the "Free Throw" film crew will document the lives of those eight students to show their

hopes, dreams and obstacles as they prepare for the ultimate free throw competition.

Crandall came up with the idea of creating a documentary film of the students in the contest. After watching his son grow up playing basketball with a number of boys from Compton, he decided he wanted to do something to help provide these children with an opportunity they might not have otherwise.

"Free Throw" has the support of Jesse Jones, the principal of Compton High School, as well as Mayor Eric Perrodin.

The finals of the contest will be held in front of the entire student body in the gymnasium at Compton High School.

PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

*Question of the week:
Is Lindsay Lohan
a little forgetful —
or is she a criminal?*



Charles Jackson

I don't know the whole story. I think if you walk off with something you haven't paid for, that makes you a criminal. I grew up in a neighborhood, where they will remind you real quick, what's yours, and what's theirs.



Lorraine Cervantes

She's a criminal! She's a pretty young lady that can influence gentlemen. It is a gentleman's world.



BJ Douglas

She's a criminal. If she lived in Compton, she would be in jail. But we would still love her here in Compton.



Mrs. Waits

I agree with what my friend had to say. I would be in jail, if I did it.



Barbara Thompson

I don't know what she is. All I know if it was me, I would be in jail.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Saturday

Candidates Forum

The Sunny Cove Community Block Club will present a Candidates Forum Saturday morning, March 19, at Burrell-McDonald Park, 2516 West Alondra Blvd., from 10 a.m. to noon. All residents are urged to attend and hear the Candidates' platforms and responses to various questions presented to them. Questions may be e-mailed to: sunnycoveblockclub@hotmail.com

Special Prayer Service

Compton Alumni Ministries invites the community to bring prayer requests and family photos (to place at the altar) on March 19 to an intercessory prayer service for loved ones on drugs, in prisons, gangs and under other other types of personal stress. This will be an old-fashioned praise and testimony service with spoken words by Minister Regina Terrell Ratleff and Evangelist Cathy Vines. Soloist will be Minister Darylle Scott. The event will be held from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Church of the Redeemer, 900 E. Rosecrans Blvd., Los Angeles, between Central and Avalon. For more information, contact Evangelist Flora Turner-Eason at 310-256-8391.

March 23

Elite Communicators 12th Anniversary Celebration

The Compton Elite Communicators will hold an open house to celebrate its 12th anniversary as a Toastmasters club on Wednesday, March 23. The meeting will be held from noon to 1 p.m. at the work Force Center Auditorium, 700 N. Bullis Rd. Among the prepared and impromptu speeches, there will be opportunities for audience participation. To reserve a seat, call Ron Dowell at 310-605-2672 or log on to comptonelite.freetoasthost.info.

March 31

Health Presentation

Project Trust will give a talk about the effects of second-hand smoking at the Compton Library, 240 W. Compton Blvd., from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. For more information, call 213-351-7876.

April 17

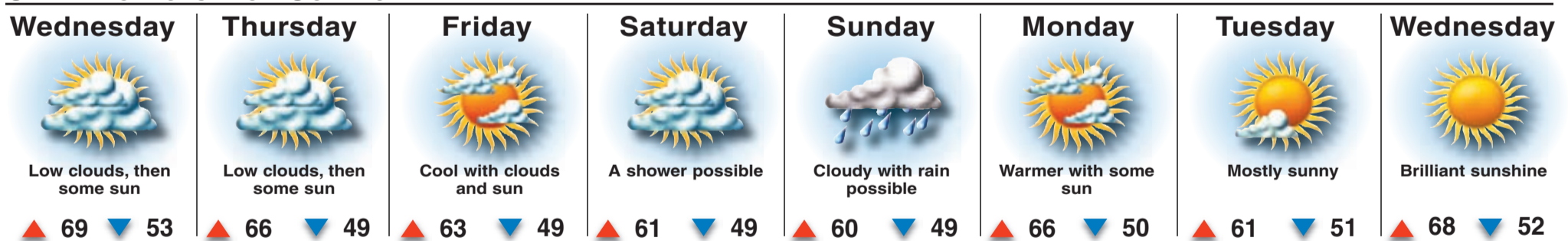
Museum Exhibition

The Museum of Contemporary Art will open "Art in the Streets," the first major U.S. museum exhibition of the history of graffiti and street art, on April 17. The exhibition will run through August 8 at The Geffen Contemporary Gallery at MOCA. It traces the development of graffiti and street art from the 1970s to the global movement it has become today, concentrating on key cities where a unique visual language or attitude has evolved. For more information, call 213-633-5322.

Weekly book club

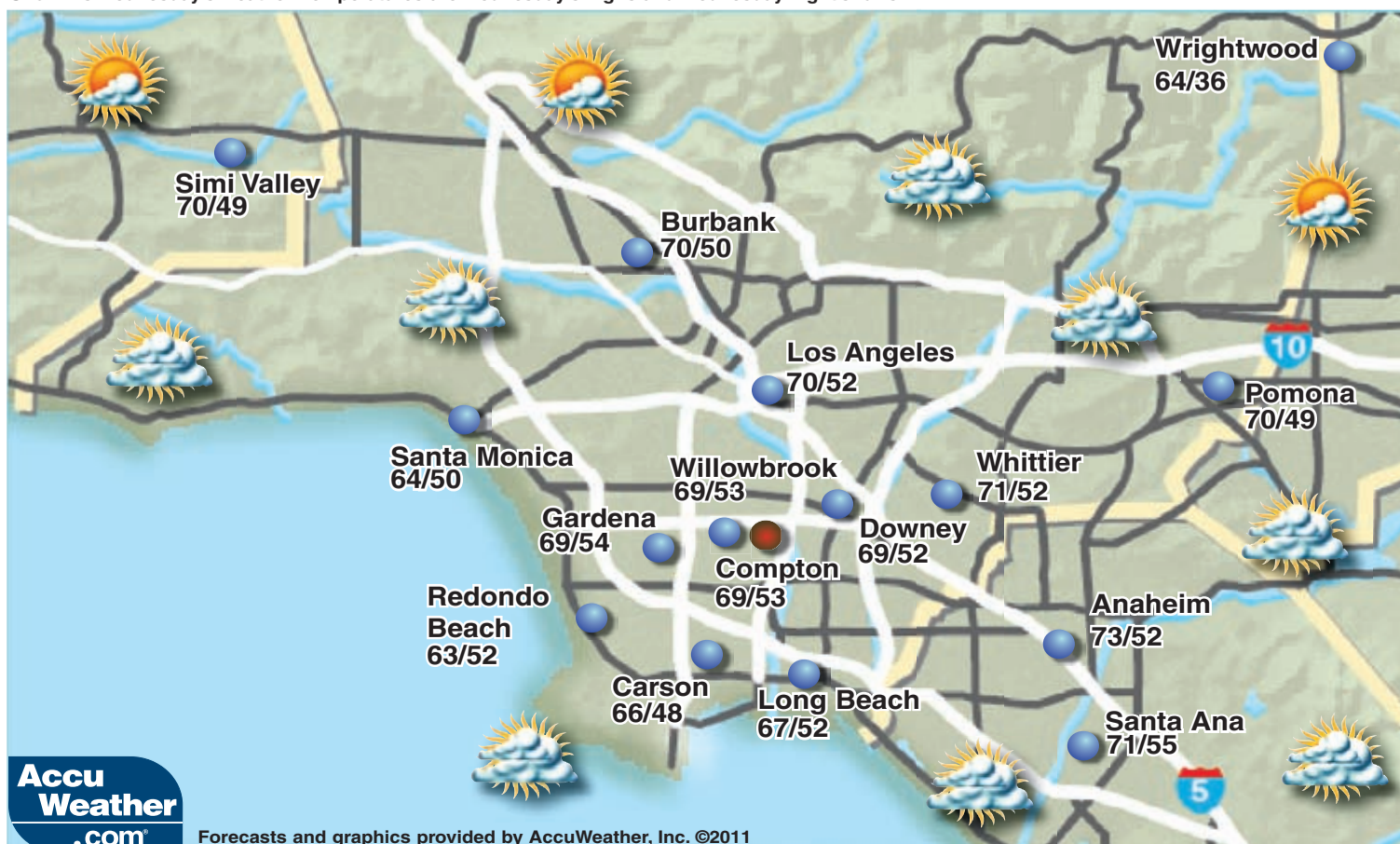
There's a new book club in town set to meet every Tuesday night from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at 325 W. Compton Blvd. Call Michelle Richardson at 310-218-8864 or 310-714-1707 for information.

8-DAY FORECAST FOR COMPTON



REGIONAL FORECAST

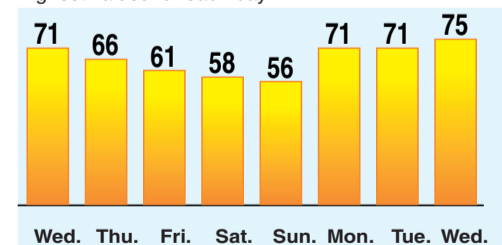
Shown is Wednesday's weather. Temperatures are Wednesday's highs and Wednesday night's lows.



Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2011

REALFEEL TEMPERATURE®

The patented AccuWeather.com RealFeel Temperature is an exclusive index that combines the effects of temperature, wind, humidity, sunshine intensity, cloudiness, precipitation, pressure and elevation on the human body - everything that affects how warm or cold a person feels. Shown are the highest values for each day.



SUN AND MOON

	Sunrise	Sunset
Wednesday	7:03 a.m.	7:01 p.m.
Thursday	7:01 a.m.	7:02 p.m.
Friday	7:00 a.m.	7:03 p.m.
Saturday	6:59 a.m.	7:03 p.m.
Sunday	6:57 a.m.	7:04 p.m.
Monday	6:56 a.m.	7:05 p.m.
Tuesday	6:55 a.m.	7:06 p.m.
	Moonrise	Moonset
Wednesday	3:55 p.m.	4:43 a.m.
Thursday	5:06 p.m.	5:22 a.m.
Friday	6:18 p.m.	5:59 a.m.
Saturday	7:30 p.m.	6:35 a.m.
Sunday	8:43 p.m.	7:13 a.m.
Monday	9:55 p.m.	7:53 a.m.
Tuesday	11:06 p.m.	8:37 a.m.

Inglewood schools on edge of insolvency

School districts across California are in dire financial straits, but perhaps none are as bad off as the Inglewood Unified School District, which is teetering on the brink of fiscal insolvency and state takeover.

The K-12 district is in real danger of not being able to make payroll by May. Compounding the crisis, the district's attempt to take out a \$20million short-term loan this month was rejected.

Now Inglewood school officials are struggling to avoid joining the likes of Oakland, Compton, Richmond and others on the short list of California school districts that have lost local control to the state over the years.

Of the 80 school districts across Los Angeles County, only Inglewood has had its budget rejected by the county Education Office, and only Inglewood was assigned a county fiscal adviser to oversee the financial decisions of the school board. Across California, just four other school districts are in the same boat.

"There's some serious stuff happening," said Chris Graeber, field representative with the union representing the Inglewood district's support staff. "The county fiscal adviser told us Inglewood is at the top of the state's watch list - it is in the worst shape of any school district in the state."

The biggest torment to the district - aside from the statewide financial duress plaguing all California districts - has been the charter movement. In the past few years, charter schools have sprung up in the area, poaching the district's students.

The budget office, meanwhile, has understated the resulting drop in projected enrollment. This throws a wrench into the budgeting process because schools are paid by the state based on student attendance.

In 10 years, the district has seen the establishment of three charter schools. The district's student head count has slid in that time from 22,300 to just shy of 13,000. What's more, up to four additional charter schools are on the way.

District officials could not be reached for comment last week. Neither Superintendent Gary McHenry, who took the reins in 2009, nor school board President Arnold Butler returned multiple calls last week from the Daily Breeze.

Under the watch of the county adviser, McHenry and the Inglewood school board have begun the process of enacting what promises to be a devastating round of layoffs, even by the current standards of the troubled economy. Last week the district sent preliminary pink slips to 390 of the district's 650 certificated employees, most of whom are teachers.

By law, school districts in California have until March 15 to notify full-time tenured teachers that their positions are in jeopardy, so as to give them ample time to apply for jobs in other districts. Often, the layoff notices are rescinded and the teachers are called back. But this time, the cuts are expected to go deep.

Oddly, the more vocal union has been the one belonging to clerks, custodians and other support staff. This group, called the California Professional Employees, Local 3425, appears poised to endure fewer layoffs than their teacher counterparts, but they, too, are in line for plenty of cuts.

The classified union has staged several protests outside the district office, but the teachers haven't organized any rallies themselves.

"Our people, more than anyone else, live here," said Graeber, the classified union's spokesman. "Most of our people walk to work. Everyone else other than the school board can move on."

Peter Somberg, president of the teachers union, said he understands the district's predicament.

"I think they are trying everything they can," he said. "I don't have any enmity towards Mr. McHenry. He didn't cause all of this."

Somberg, a kindergarten teacher who did not receive a pink slip, said his topmost concern is still the students.

"We're trying to create critical thinkers and to help kids of poverty and kids of an urban district attain the same level of critical thinking that everyone else gets," he said.

The fiscal adviser, Eric Hall, was not available for comment. But in January, the Los Angeles County Office of Education sent the district a strongly worded letter of warning.

"We are very concerned that failure to effectively address the District's fiscal solvency situation in an expeditious manner may cause the District to become fully insolvent, and require an emergency apportionment," said the letter, written by Melvin Iizuka, the county Education Office's director of business advisory services. "An emergency apportionment would require ... the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to assume control of the District through an appointed trustee or administrator."

Such a move would render the school board toothless, relegating it to an advisory body. It would also put McHenry out of a job. In their place would be the appointed trustee, who would act as a one-person school board and superintendent.

The letter, which was based on information available in October, estimated Inglewood's deficit for the ongoing year to be \$10.4 million, or about 8.1 percent of the total \$128 million budget. The county projected the deficit to swell to \$20 million next year and \$26.4 million the year after.

Izuka said the projected deficits might be smaller in a month, because the board has already made some cuts. But he also said the overall assessment of the district's fiscal health hasn't improved since January. He was cagey on the likelihood of a state takeover.

"I couldn't give you any guess in terms of odds," he said. "But there is certainly a potential for that.

The turmoil raises questions about how beneficial charter schools are to the students. Nationwide and statewide, the jury is out on whether students in charter schools outperform their peers in the traditional schools. But in Inglewood, the charter schools' scores have thus far been higher.

One of Inglewood's charter schools, the K-8 Wilder's Preparatory Academy, boasts the highest test scores in the district, with an off-the-charts Academic Performance Index of 932. That's higher than what some elementary schools achieved in the affluent Palos Verdes Peninsula school district.

(More widely known as the API, the index is the state-created benchmark assigns every school a score between 200 and 1,000 based on a series of tests taken by all students in the spring.)

Another charter, Animo Inglewood High, has a more modest API of 758, but the score easily surpasses that of the district's two comprehensive high schools, Inglewood and Morningside, which clocked in at 594 and 633, respectively.

Meanwhile, there is evidence that the protests of the classified union have paid off. Last week, the school board pulled a vote that would have reduced the length of their day from eight hours to seven. What's more, the board voted to boost the number of furlough days for administrators, from 10 to 20 days next year for top administrators (except for McHenry) and from five to 15 days for principals.

Still, Graeber said the cuts to administrators have been disproportionately shallow in comparison with those of other school employees.

"If the district truly is shrinking, that needs to be done," he said. "They need to make comparable cuts."

rob.kuznia@dailybreeze.com

El Paso Dominates Community College Rankings for Hispanics

by Mary Ann Cooper

Community colleges are attended by close to half of the undergraduate students in the United States and have become more important than ever in the nation's goal to elevate the numbers of the college-educated entering the work force.

Since 1985, more than half of all community college students have been women. In addition, the majority of Black and Hispanic undergraduate students in this country study at these colleges.

As in years past, *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education Magazine* has prepared an analysis of community colleges based on enrollment, faculty diversity and degrees granted from a Hispanic point of view. Our analysis comes from figures provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). This year, however, we've added the element of looking back at degrees granted five years ago.

Our comparison of figures for 2004 and for 2009 tells a story of consistency in some cases and inconsistency in others. Some schools that weren't even on our radar screen in 2004 were among the Top 25 or Top 50 in granting A.A. degrees to Hispanics.

As for consistency, El Paso Community College (EPCC) in Texas once again ranked first nationally in all three categories – enrollment, degrees granted and Hispanic faculty members. And five years ago, it ranked first in Hispanic enrollment.

In the category of highest percentage of Hispanic enrollment, El Paso ranked second to another Texas school, Laredo Community College, with 86 percent compared to Laredo's 96 percent.

In the categories of the percentage of degrees granted in 2004 and 2009 as well as Hispanic faculty, El Paso ranked in the top five schools of those Top 50 lists.

What accounts for El Paso's consistent success? Under the leadership of President Richard M. Rhodes, El Paso Community College boasts more than 130 academic programs and more than 350 personal enrichment/continuing education courses. In addition to services that have become the norm in community colleges, such as distance education, online courses and dual credit, EPCC has instituted Student Technology Services (a student-run technology training program) and Early College High School (where students earn an associate degree at the same time they are earning a high school diploma). EPCC, says Rhodes, has also established close ties to its community, making it "the leading provider of training for local area business and industry."

There is an important change in this year's data report that must be noted.

Data are derived from various lists compiled by NCES and its Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. NCES has created a new data-gathering system. Because of the new system, not all schools are on every data list. Schools have been given two years to comply with the new NCES data-gathering system. *The Hispanic Outlook* has combined all available data from all NCES lists to give fair representation to all institutions during this transition.

The White House Summit on Community Colleges

In fall 2010, Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, hosted the first-ever White House Summit on Community Colleges. It was further recognition that, as she put it, "Community colleges are uniquely positioned to provide the education and training that will prepare students for the jobs in the 21st century."

The summit was one of several initiatives launched by the Obama administration to fulfill the president's stated goal of regaining superiority in producing college graduates in the United States. At the summit, President Obama explained the urgency of this goal. "In just a decade, we've fallen from first to ninth in the proportion of young people with college degrees. That not only represents a huge waste of potential; in the global marketplace it represents a threat to our position as the world's leading economy."

He directly connected community colleges to meeting that national goal. "We know, for example, that in the coming years, jobs requiring at least an associate's degree are going to grow twice as fast as jobs that don't require college. We will not fill those jobs – or keep those jobs on our shores – without community colleges."

The president pointed out the strengths of the community college system this way: "These are places where young people can continue their education without taking on a lot of debt. These are places where workers can gain new skills to move up in their careers. These are places where anyone with a desire to learn and to grow can take a chance on a brighter future for themselves and their families – whether that's a single mom, or a returning soldier or an aspiring entrepreneur."

"The importance of the community college reaches far beyond the borders of America. And community colleges aren't just the key to the future of their students. They're also one of the keys to the future of our country. We are in a global competition to lead in the growth industries of the 21st century. And that leadership depends on a well-educated, highly skilled work force."



Community Colleges by Hispanic Full-Time Enrollment



HISPANIC
ENROLLMENT

RANK	INSTITUTION	STATE	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	HISPANIC ENROLLMENT			%
				TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	
1.	El Paso Community College	TX	28,168	24,196	10,034	14,162	86%
2.	East Los Angeles College	CA	35,717	22,913	9,480	13,433	64%
3.	Houston Community College	TX	54,942	15,836	6,517	9,319	29%
4.	Riverside Community College	CA	36,586	14,917	6,274	8,643	41%
5.	Southwestern College	CA	21,597	13,313	6,205	7,108	62%
6.	Santa Ana College	CA	31,073	13,107	6,766	6,341	42%
7.	Rio Hondo College	CA	22,432	12,904	6,271	6,633	58%
8.	Lone Star College System	TX	46,504	11,622	4,676	6,946	25%
9.	San Antonio College	TX	24,135	11,557	4,794	6,763	48%
10.	Central New Mexico Community College	NM	27,999	11,222	4,631	6,591	40%
11.	Mt. San Antonio College	CA	29,935	10,640	4,809	5,831	36%
12.	Valencia Community College	FL	39,008	10,531	4,315	6,216	27%
13.	San Jacinto Community College	TX	27,011	10,397	4,446	5,951	38%
14.	Pima Community College	AZ	35,880	10,170	4,386	5,784	28%
15.	Austin Community College District	TX	40,248	10,065	4,365	5,700	25%
16.	Long Beach City College	CA	27,894	9,945	4,652	5,293	36%
17.	Fresno City College	CA	25,511	9,881	4,634	5,247	39%
18.	El Camino Community College District	CA	27,237	9,449	4,369	5,080	35%
19.	Chaffey College	CA	21,399	9,317	3,666	5,651	44%
20.	Pasadena City College	CA	26,453	9,208	4,123	5,085	35%
21.	Santa Monica College	CA	32,313	9,192	4,003	5,189	28%
22.	Tarrant County College District	TX	44,355	9,125	3,803	5,322	21%
23.	Cerritos College	CA	21,776	8,971	3,812	5,159	41%
24.	Laredo Community College	TX	9,361	8,964	3,765	5,199	96%
25.	Palomar College	CA	27,442	8,360	4,246	4,114	30%
26.	Bakersfield College	CA	18,402	8,242	3,477	4,765	45%
27.	Los Angeles Trade Technical College	CA	15,968	8,122	4,542	3,580	51%
28.	Los Angeles Valley College	CA	19,951	8,087	3,387	4,700	41%
29.	Los Angeles City College	CA	19,873	7,980	3,392	4,588	40%
30.	CUNY/Borough of Manhattan Com. Coll.	NY	21,424	7,583	2,974	4,609	35%
31.	Los Angeles Mission College	CA	10,792	7,569	2,750	4,819	70%
32.	College of the Canyons	CA	21,575	7,206	4,289	2,917	33%
33.	Los Angeles Pierce College	CA	21,928	7,156	3,079	4,077	33%
34.	Del Mar College	TX	12,069	7,152	2,878	4,274	59%
35.	San Bernardino Valley College	CA	14,916	7,108	3,093	4,015	48%
36.	City Colleges of Chicago-Richard J. Daley Coll.	IL	9,991	7,087	2,927	4,160	71%
37.	Reedley College	CA	15,384	7,049	2,744	4,305	46%
38.	Northwest Vista College	TX	14,587	6,691	2,903	3,788	46%
39.	Ventura College	CA	14,395	6,540	2,760	3,780	45%
40.	Northern Virginia Community College	VA	46,619	6,390	2,852	3,538	14%
41.	City Colleges of Chicago-Wilbur Wright Coll.	IL	12,866	6,380	2,629	3,751	50%
42.	San Joaquin Delta College	CA	20,223	6,304	2,568	3,736	31%
43.	San Diego City College	CA	18,074	6,270	2,699	3,571	35%
44.	CUNY/LaGuardia Community College	NY	17,028	6,199	2,447	3,752	36%
45.	Hillsborough Community College	FL	26,964	6,115	2,514	3,601	23%
46.	CUNY/Bronx Community College	NY	10,420	6,065	2,333	3,732	58%
47.	New Mexico State University-Dona Ana	NM	9,021	5,893	2,501	3,392	65%
48.	Sacramento City College	CA	27,171	5,876	2,413	3,463	22%
49.	Oxnard College	CA	8,642	5,854	2,389	3,465	68%
50.	Imperial Valley College	CA	8,831	5,824	2,365	3,459	66%

Source: 2009 ED/NCES

Community Colleges by Hispanic Faculty



RANK	INSTITUTION	FACULTY			HISPANIC FACULTY			
		TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	%
1.	El Paso Community College, TX	1,340	680	660	726	377	349	54%
2.	San Antonio College, TX	1,426	744	682	390	195	195	27%
3.	Houston Community College, TX	3,193	1,539	1,654	320	176	144	10%
4.	Northwest Vista College, TX	818	417	401	260	133	127	32%
5.	Santa Ana College, CA	1,004	422	582	229	105	124	23%
6.	Laredo Community College, TX	304	176	128	224	129	95	74%
7.	St. Philip's College, TX	712	426	286	221	134	87	31%
8.	East Los Angeles College, CA	917	512	405	218	121	97	24%
9.	Palo Alto College, TX	535	278	257	205	101	104	38%
10.	Central New Mexico Com. Coll., NM	1,098	514	584	199	108	91	18%
11.	Lone Star College System, TX	2,845	1,228	1,617	199	86	113	7%
12.	Del Mar College, TX	700	343	357	198	92	106	28%
13.	Riverside Community College, CA	1,442	730	712	197	110	87	14%
14.	Pima Community College, AZ	1,553	693	860	176	71	105	11%
15.	Southwestern College, CA	821	392	429	176	81	95	21%
16.	Mt. San Antonio College, CA	1,279	617	662	174	88	86	14%
17.	Austin Community College District, TX	1,822	918	904	174	90	84	10%
18.	Central Texas College, TX	2,467	1,517	950	163	103	60	7%
19.	City College of San Francisco, CA	1,849	790	1,059	156	84	72	8%
20.	Valencia Community College, FL	1,491	705	786	155	65	90	10%
21.	Grossmont College, CA	851	449	402	146	75	71	17%
22.	Pasadena City College, CA	1,074	514	560	146	74	72	14%
23.	Texas State Tech. Coll. Harlingen, TX	244	153	91	146	91	55	60%
24.	Cerritos College, CA	758	363	395	145	75	70	19%
25.	Tarrant County College District, TX	1,904	900	1,004	144	78	66	8%
26.	Fresno City College, CA	985	483	502	138	51	87	14%
27.	Rio Hondo College, CA	523	263	260	135	67	68	26%
28.	Imperial Valley College, CA	343	196	147	134	78	56	39%
29.	CUNY/Hostos Community College, NY	357	177	180	125	63	62	35%
30.	Chaffey College, CA	859	390	469	119	42	77	14%
31.	CUNY/Borough of Manhattan C.C., NY	1,298	656	642	118	56	62	9%
32.	Reedley College, CA	670	325	345	117	51	66	17%
33.	New Mexico State Univ.-Dona Ana, NM	471	225	246	117	57	60	25%
34.	Palomar College, CA	1,143	577	566	116	64	52	10%
35.	San Diego City College, CA	855	409	446	112	56	56	13%
36.	San Jacinto Community College, TX	1,209	560	649	112	57	55	9%
37.	Long Beach City College, CA	975	448	527	111	48	63	11%
38.	Santa Barbara City College, CA	950	370	580	107	41	66	11%
39.	Hillsborough Community College, FL	1,271	649	622	107	55	52	8%
40.	CUNY/LaGuardia Comm. Coll., NY	984	452	532	103	49	54	10%
41.	Santa Monica College, CA	1,320	606	714	102	38	64	8%
42.	El Camino Comm. Coll. District, CA	921	432	489	96	43	53	10%
43.	San Diego Mesa College, CA	880	427	453	90	43	47	10%
44.	American River College, CA	1,098	563	535	88	49	39	8%
45.	Luna Community College, NM	154	72	82	87	45	42	56%
46.	Milwaukee Area Technical Coll., WI	1,639	839	800	86	48	38	5%
47.	San Bernardino Valley College, CA	577	254	323	85	41	44	15%
48.	Arizona Western College, AZ	425	230	195	84	46	38	20%
49.	CUNY/Bronx Community College, NY	674	382	292	82	51	31	12%
50.	Mt. San Jacinto Comm. Coll. Dis., CA	745	371	374	81	37	44	11%

Source: 2009 ED/NCES

Five-Year Comparison Degrees Granted to Hispanics

RANK	INSTITUTION	2009 TOTAL	TOTAL HISP.	2009 % HISP.	2004 TOTAL	TOTAL HISP.	2004 % HISP.	% DIFF.
1.	El Paso Community College, TX	2,104	1,792	85%	1,705	1,443	85%	same
2.	Valencia Community College, FL	5,128	1,127	22%	3,996	628	16%	6%
3.	Mt. San Antonio College, CA	2,107	868	41%	1,264	485	38%	3%
4.	Riverside Community College, CA	2,501	846	34%	2,133	598	28%	6%
5.	Texas Southmost College, TX	865	790	91%	801	750	94%	-3%
6.	East Los Angeles College, CA	1,215	769	63%	1,254	873	70%	-7%
7.	Southwestern College, CA	1,152	695	60%	1,064	586	55%	5%
8.	Santa Ana College, CA	1,292	652	50%	1,373	680	50%	same
9.	Houston Community College, TX	2,720	648	24%	1,923	470	24%	same
10.	CUNY/Borough of Manhattan C. C., NY	2,387	632	26%	2,207	532	24%	2%
11.	Pima Community College, AZ	2,232	612	27%	1,835	473	26%	1%
12.	Laredo Community College, TX	626	600	96%	794	754	95%	1%
13.	San Jacinto Community College, TX	1,815	573	32%	1,680	418	25%	7%
14.	Lone Star College System, TX	2,450	567	23%	1,841	312	17%	6%
15.	Del Mar College, TX	1,065	561	53%	790	389	49%	4%
16.	Central New Mexico Com. Coll., NM	1,373	538	39%	1,079	393	36%	3%
17.	Rio Hondo College, CA	833	529	64%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
18.	Chaffey College, CA	1,274	523	41%	1,110	418	38%	3%
19.	Fresno City College, CA	1,436	523	36%	1,468	428	29%	7%
20.	Cerritos College, CA	1,050	511	49%	1,232	588	48%	1%
21.	San Antonio College, TX	1,125	504	45%	932	394	42%	3%
22.	CUNY/LaGuardia Comm. Coll., NY	1,601	484	30%	1,361	471	35%	-5%
23.	New Mexico State Univ.-Dona Ana, NM	744	456	61%	479	283	59%	2%
24.	Hillsborough Community College, FL	2,452	438	18%	1,937	275	14%	4%
25.	Tarrant County College District, TX	2,385	431	18%	1,870	280	15%	3%
26.	Bakersfield College, CA	993	412	41%	898	325	36%	5%
27.	Northern Virginia Comm. Coll., VA	3,210	411	13%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
28.	Pasadena City College, CA	1,683	409	24%	1,844	478	26%	-2%
29.	Southwest Texas Junior College, TX	466	400	86%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
30.	Ventura College, CA	1,068	398	37%	869	305	35%	2%
31.	Fullerton College, CA	1,140	396	35%	1,104	304	28%	7%
32.	CUNY/Bronx Community College, NY	812	392	48%	819	364	44%	4%
33.	Allan Hancock College, CA	983	390	40%	1,120	349	31%	9%
34.	Imperial Valley College, CA	466	382	82%	328	285	87%	-5%
35.	Mt. San Jacinto Comm. Coll. Dist., CA	1,511	366	24%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
36.	Palomar College, CA	1,611	365	23%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
37.	Central Texas College, TX	2,425	361	15%	1,93	262	14%	1%
38.	Nassau Community College, NY	2,703	350	13%	2,817	314	11%	2%
39.	Citrus College, CA	945	342	36%	684	252	37%	-1%
40.	Oxnard College, CA	515	334	65%	510	311	61%	45%
41.	Los Angeles Valley College, CA	887	321	36%	893	298	33%	3%
42.	El Camino Comm. Coll. District, CA	1,139	320	28%	1,377	399	29%	-1%
43.	Reedley College, CA	694	316	46%	586	314	54%	-8%
44.	Suffolk County Comm. Coll., NY	2,618	316	12%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
45.	Hartnell College, CA	499	311	62%	547	296	54%	8%
46.	San Bernardino Valley College, CA	697	309	44%	700	288	41%	3%
47.	Santa Monica College, CA	1,329	309	23%	1,409	350	25%	-2%
48.	Bergen Community College, NJ	1,481	297	20%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
49.	Long Beach City College, CA	968	287	30%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
50.	Phoenix College, AZ	782	286	37%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: 2009, 2004 ED/NCES

N/A: Indicate schools that were not in the top 50 community colleges in granting degrees to Hispanics in 2004 from NCES

Jones bid for re-election to focus on community involvement, budget, jobs

THE COMPTON BULLETIN

March 22, 2011

By Chris Frost

Bulletin Staff Writer

COMPTON—Service to the community, fiscal responsibility and finding solutions to create jobs and attract business is the foundation to Willie Jones’s District Four re-election bid. Jones is facing Lillie Darden for the seat.

Jones had strong ties to education throughout his career. During his 30-year tenure at Compton Community College, he was a professor, the director of financial aid and the administrator. After retiring from the college, Jones was elected president of the college Board of Trustees.

Jones said that when he ran for his first council term, he didn’t have many resources available.

“What I had was my Christmas card list,” he said. “I mailed to those people and said I’m running for office. Could you help me?” Jones said the checks arrived in \$20, \$30 and \$50 increments. “Every time the mailman came, he brought a check,” he said.

Jones said his community involvement is the most rewarding work he does. He said he is very proud of the youth program he had at Kelly Park shortly after his election, which he said attracted 1,200 youngsters and their families.

“The focus was on nutrition, literacy, physical fitness and child safety,” Jones said. “I didn’t realize the city had funds for this event, so I solicited corporate sponsorship. There was very little expense for the city.”

Jones said this type of financing is now the model for all city events.

He said he is not afraid to stand alone in the fight for a transparent and responsible budget. The graffiti problem in the city, according to Jones, is a typical example of wasted budget dollars.

“We have contracts that offer duplicate services,” he said. “We have a department that deals with graffiti. Why do we need two other companies?”

Jones said multiyear service contracts are also a strain on taxpayers.

“The city should offer single-year contracts and review its financial position annually, before extending the same terms to companies for the next fiscal year,” he said.

He feels his legislative record should represent the voice of the people. Jones said his vote on the proposed Compton Police Department, is a reflection of his constituents.

“The City Council voted to move \$19 million slated for the new senior center, community center and parking to the General Fund, to be used for the creation of a new Compton Police Department,” Jones said. “I didn’t vote for that.”

Jones believes in more corporate partnerships with government. With jobs and industry in mind, he led a trip to China seeking corporate investment in Compton.

“That idea has blossomed into something that I could never think of,” he said. “Five companies have sent us letters of interest.”

Jones has a dream of leaving behind a legacy that will make Compton a better place for everybody.

“My dream is to have an Asian business industrial park,” he said. District Four covers the southeast quarter of the city.

The Compton City Council election will take place on April 4



Begin forwarded message:

FYI - the crime reporter from the Daily Breeze called me regarding the attached news release. The story will run tomorrow. He is clearly aware that this happened prior to the partnership.

Ann Garten
310-660-3406
elcamino.edu

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> FROM: Thom Mrozek

> Public Affairs Officer

> United States Attorney's Office

> Central District of California (Los Angeles)

> O: 213-894-6947

> M: 213-494-9261

> <<Compton CC student aid theft.041.pdf>>

> Issued on Tuesday, March 22 at 2:15 p.m. PDT

> FORMER EMPLOYEE OF COMPTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHARGED WITH
STEALING FEDERAL
> STUDENT AID MONEY

> LOS ANGELES - A former financial aid officer at Compton Community
> College has been indicted on federal charges related to a scheme that sought
> financial aid for "students" who did not attend classes at the school and
> led to losses of more than \$50,000.

> Millicent Cook, 46, of Paramount, was arrested by federal
> authorities on March 11 after being indicted on four counts of theft of

> student assistance funds.

>

> A second person named in the indictment - Gwendolyn Renae Harris,
> 39, of Long Beach, who did not work at the school - surrendered yesterday to
> federal authorities.

>

> An indictment returned by a federal grand jury on February 25
> alleges that Cook and Harris applied for Pell Grants, a form of federal
> financial aid, using the names and social security numbers of "students"
> they recruited to help them in the scheme. The recruits never attended
> classes at Compton Community College and, therefore, were not entitled to
> receive the Pell Grants. Once the Pell Grants were funded, Cook and Harris
> supplied a portion of the money to the "students" and then used the rest of
> the money for their own personal expenses.

>

> The scheme allegedly ran from early 2003 to late 2006, when it was
> discovered during an audit of the community college. Investigators currently
> estimate that the scheme caused losses of \$56,064 to the U.S. Department of
> Education.

>

> After surrendering yesterday, Harris was freed on a \$5,000 bond.
> After Cook was arrested on March 11, she was freed on a \$5,000 bond. Both
> defendants pleaded not guilty to the charges in the indictment.

>

> Cook and Harris are currently scheduled to go to trial in May.

>

> The charge of theft of student assistance funds carries a statutory
> maximum penalty of five years in federal prison.

>

> An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a
> crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

>

> This investigation was conducted by the U.S. Department of Education
> - Office of Inspector General.

>

> CONTACT: Assistant United States Attorney Ryan White

>

> (213) 894-2296

>

> Release No. 11-041

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For L.A. schools, an advanced degree in construction

latimes.com

Op-Ed

California needs to create a professionally run, independent construction authority for large public school construction programs before more billions in construction bonds are mismanaged.

By Connie Rice

March 13, 2011

I've served 10 years on the citizens committee that oversees the Los Angeles Unified School District's building program. As I leave that post, I've drawn one clear conclusion: Educators should not manage large school construction programs. Without an independent, professionally run school construction authority, taxpayers will never be protected from the kind of mismanagement chronicled in 'The Times' "Billions to Spend" series on the bungled building program of the Los Angeles Community College District, and in news articles more than a decade earlier about the Los Angeles Unified School District's Belmont fiasco.

For those who don't remember, Belmont was the school construction disaster in which L.A. Unified put a football coach in charge of building a \$160-million high school, which the state ultimately declared unusable for children. A scathing audit concluded that an "uninformed" and "unaccountable" school board had violated laws governing hazardous waste, environmental quality and public safety. The debacle earned a segment on "60 Minutes."

In the wake of Belmont, voters in 1999 elected a reform slate to the Board of Education, and the new board hired Roy Romer as superintendent to fix the district's construction mess. To preclude another Belmont, and the kind of wasteful mistakes we're seeing today at the community colleges, Romer leveraged an overcrowded-schools court victory won by my law firm and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund to create a nimble, expert-run school construction system. That lawsuit freed up \$750 million in state bond money for school construction in Los Angeles. With it, Romer hired a talented

team of retired Navy engineers led by Capt. James McConnell, and I joined the citizens oversight committee. Romer and his team transformed L.A. Unified's disastrous building program into an award-winning one.

But it took uncommon leadership by Romer and new board President Genethia Hayes to protect the new construction unit from school board micromanagement, union requests, job patronage and other political meddling. The program was insulated from the district's torpid bureaucracy with separate legal, procurement and contracting staffs. The Navy engineers set strict rules for hiring the best contractors at the best value, and even stricter rules that blocked political changes to contracts. An extensive auditing system was set up to ensure that money was spent legally and wisely. Finally, the politically neutral Citizens Oversight Committee, with full-time professional staff and able members with time to volunteer, served as watchdog. Once voters saw that competent construction managers were in charge of the school building program, they passed four consecutive school construction bonds to match the statewide bonds, providing more than \$20 billion for school construction.

Over the next nine years, this quasi-independent construction enterprise built more than 140 desperately needed schools, the vast majority on budget and on time. It completed \$3.7 billion in repairs, avoided major waste and won more than 85 private sector awards. As a result, most district schools are no longer severely overcrowded and multi-tracking and busing students from packed neighborhood schools will soon end.

Unfortunately, with \$7 billion in construction bonds left, this extraordinary "mega-construction" system is now being dismantled. Guy Mehula, the last Navy engineer to head the unit, resigned last year after district decisions compromised the program's integrity and independence. The district threatened to move his skilled staff back into the bureaucracy. It forced construction manager contracts to follow the schools' 10-month schedule, which makes no sense for building projects with varied timelines, and imposed senseless cuts to the bond-funded building program in a show of shared sacrifice during the current fiscal crisis.

The district replaced Mehula with a more compliant manager who cut his teeth with the troubled community college building program. Worse, some school board members are again requesting wasteful project changes, pushing union requests that make for less efficient construction, questioning contract awards and suggesting prohibited uses of bond funds. As one politician recently told me, "We're the elected officials, and we should have control over the bond funds."

As Belmont and now the community college debacle show, politicians and educators are the last people who should build schools or control bond funds. We don't trust politicians to manage the printing of money; that's why we have the Federal Reserve. We cannot expect politicians and educators to wisely use billions of construction dollars to build dozens of schools. It's not that they aren't well intentioned; they just don't have the required skills, and the incentives for patronage overwhelm all but the most exceptional leaders.

The state needs to create a professionally run, independent construction authority for large public school construction programs, including community colleges, before more billions in construction bonds are mismanaged by unqualified and politicized entities.

Connie Rice is a civil rights attorney in Los Angeles. She was appointed by controllers Rick Tuttle, Laura Chick and Wendy Greuel to the School Construction Bond Citizens' Oversight Committee.

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Unions as leaders

LA Times

March 28, 2011

EDITORIAL

Concessions by a coalition of L.A. city employee unions provide a template for bringing down costs across all L.A. city departments.

City officials have persuaded a coalition of public employee unions to make major concessions on their retirement benefits, saving more than \$300 million over the remaining years of the contract. The savings aren't enough to solve the city's budget problems in one stroke — far from it, in fact. But the agreement does provide a template for bringing down costs across all city departments. It also demonstrates that the same collective bargaining process that has turned pensions into fiscal time bombs can also help defuse them, and can do so more effectively than a Wisconsin-style rescission of bargaining rights. That's an especially important lesson now, with public pensions under attack across the country.

The agreement announced Thursday by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, City Council President Eric Garcetti and leaders of the Coalition of L.A. City Unions offers workers steadier wages in exchange for shouldering almost twice as much of the cost of their retirement benefits. If the coalition's roughly 19,000 workers ratify the deal, they wouldn't be subject to any more furloughs, at least until the contract expires in mid-2014. But in return, they would soon have to contribute 11% of their pay to the city's underfunded retirement accounts, compared with 6% today. The extra contribution would cover the entire cost of retiree health benefits, at least for the time being.

The significance of the deal is that it would affect current workers, not just future hires. The city's pension fund is so woefully underfunded that the council has to devote a growing share of the annual budget to retirement contributions. Without concessions from current workers, those contributions would consume 20% of the general fund by 2015, up from 8% in 2009.

Local officials can't simply compel workers to accept reduced pension benefits or cover more of the costs. Under longstanding court rulings, a public employee's pension is locked in the day he or she is hired, and cities can't reduce the payments unless they offer a comparable new benefit in return. But leaders of the L.A. City Unions agreed to amend existing contracts because they recognized the inherent tradeoff. The more money the city spent on retirement benefits, the less it had to spend on everything else. And the squeeze was only going to get worse.

That should be equally apparent to the rest of the city's unions, particularly the police and firefighters, whose pensions account for the bulk of the city's retirement costs. They should agree to contribute the same percentage of their pay into the retirement fund as members of the L.A. City Unions, whose salaries are far below the average city worker's. Such a change wouldn't solve all the problems with public employee pensions, but it would eliminate the biggest source of the city's chronic budget shortfall.

Former financial aid officer indicted in alleged con at ECC Compton Center **The Daily Breeze**

By Larry Altman Staff Writer

Posted: 03/22/2011

A former financial-aid officer at El Camino College Compton Center has been indicted in an alleged con that embezzled more than \$56,000 in federal financial aid.

Millicent Cook, 46, of Paramount was arrested March 11 after a federal grand jury returned an indictment charging her with four counts of theft of student assistance funds, U.S. Attorney's Office spokesman Thom Mrozek said.

Gwendolyn Renae Harris, 39, of Long Beach, who did not work at the school, surrendered Monday in connection with the case, Mrozek said.

Harris faces the same charges.

The indictment, returned Feb. 25, alleges that Cook and Harris applied for federal Pell Grants using the names and Social Security numbers of "students" they recruited, and bilked money from the U.S. Department of Education from 2003 to 2006.

The "students" were real people, but never attended classes at the campus, where academic programs are overseen by El Camino College near Torrance.

Once Cook and Harris received the federal financial aid money, they gave some to their recruits and took the rest for their own personal expenses, Mrozek said.

An internal audit completed when El Camino College officials began administering the Compton campus in 2006 discovered the alleged theft that year. Investigators estimated the loss at \$56,064.

Harris and Cook pleaded not guilty in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles and are each free on \$5,000 bonds.

According to the indictment, a financial-aid check obtained on March 9, 2006, was for \$1,333. Another check delivered the same day was for \$1,263.

A check obtained on April 7, 2006, for the same fake student was for \$1,012.

Trial is scheduled for May. If convicted, each could go to federal prison for five years.

The investigation was conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Inspector General.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ryan White, who is prosecuting the case, said he could not comment on the "students" involved in the case or what might happen to them.

Two weeks ago, a maintenance employee at the Compton Community College District was arrested on suspicion of grand theft. El Camino College police said Rey David Pop, 39, charged about \$9,000 worth of materials he purchased at Home Depot to a district account.

Authorities said about \$5 million was embezzled from the former Compton College by various people - including a trustee - from 2003 to 2005.

New Interim CEO Chosen For Compton Community College District

The Wave

By LEILONI DE GRUY, Staff Writer

Story Created: Mar 23, 2011

COMPTON — After relieving Lawrence Cox of his duties as Compton Community College District's CEO a month ago, newly appointed Special Trustee Genethia Hudley-Hayes announced March 16 that Keith Curry has been selected to fill the remainder of Cox's contract.

Curry, who has served as the El Camino College Compton Center dean of student services since 2006, has been appointed to replace Cox, whose employment contract was terminated prematurely on Feb. 24 by Hudley-Hayes even though it had been extended an additional year in December and was not set to expire until June 30, 2012.

Without explaining why Cox — who had been widely credited with breathing life back into the campus after it lost accreditation in 2006 and was placed under the oversight of the El Camino College District — was fired, Hudley-Hayes has been the subject of speculation that the move was made in order to halt progress and keep the campus under the auspices of El Camino.

Disputing those rumors, Hudley-Hayes told The Wave recently that her only intention was to find a replacement who could effectively move the campus forward toward accreditation.

Out of seven applicants — some within the district and others not — Curry was chosen because he “is widely known for his dedication to promoting and supporting programs to help students succeed and reach their academic goals,” Hudley-Hayes said. “His demonstrated leadership skills, ability to assess and quickly respond to student needs, and his familiarity with the Compton Center and the community are all assets he brings to this position.”

Born and raised in Compton, Curry has strong ties to the community, district officials said. Prior to joining the staff at ECC Compton Center, he volunteered as chair of the Compton Unified School District Achieving College Partnership and served on the Compton Unified School District Foundation board. Additionally, he co-authored the Compton Unified School District Gear-Up proposal during his tenure at UC Irvine.

While at UC Irvine, Curry acted as the director of the Early Academic Outreach Program. It was in this position, that he worked with incoming freshman students, providing them with the tools they would need to excel in college. He is also credited with re-establishing a partnership between UC Irvine and the Compton Unified School District.

During his tenure at ECC Compton Center, “many existing student support programs expanded and others were created under Curry's leadership, most notably the First Year Experience,” said a district statement, which was established at the campus two years ago and “encourages student

success through shared learning communities and services such as counseling, mentoring, orientation, and campus tours.”

In the program’s first year, 68 students participated. By the second year, enrollment reached over 140 students.

Curry earned his doctorate degree from UC Irvine and a bachelor’s degree from UC Santa Cruz. He is affiliated with the African-American Male Educational Network and Development Organization and the Association for California Community College Administrators.

“Our goal for this District is to once again have a college,” Curry said. “There are some people in our communities who misunderstand the partnership and the accreditation process. That is why the Special Trustee and I will be hitting the road fast and furiously with visits to area elected officials, business organizations, churches and community leaders to inform and update everyone about both of these important issues.”

At the end of the day it is all about student success, he added.

“We are here to ensure that the residents of our communities have access to a quality higher education — that is our mission and our goal today, tomorrow and into the future. We are all about students.”

Clarification: El Camino College Compton Center

The Daily Breeze

From staff reports
Posted: 03/24/2011

CLARIFICATION

The headline on an article Wednesday about an embezzlement case might have given the wrong impression about which college was involved. As the story indicated, it was a financial aid officer at El Camino College's Compton Center, not El Camino College near Torrance, who was indicted.

SF City College ex-officials balk at plea deal
03/23/11 (SF Chronicle)
Stephanie Rice, Special to The Chronicle

Three former City College of San Francisco officials accused of misusing public funds are balking at an offer that would allow them to avoid a trial and possible prison time in exchange for guilty pleas to felony charges and an agreement to pay \$95,000 in restitution to the college.

Former Chancellor Philip Day, former Administrative Services Officer Stephen Herman and former Associate Vice Chancellor James Blomquist are charged with felonies in connection with a financial scandal during a 2005 bond campaign for capital improvements at City College.

Day is charged with eight felonies for allegedly diverting \$150,000 in district money to political campaigns that would benefit community colleges, as well as other banned expenditures. He is also accused of keeping a secret "chancellor's discretionary fund" at the college's foundation that he used to pay parking tickets for alumni, for alcohol for receptions and for a \$1,877-per-year membership in City Club.

Herman is charged with seven felony counts for helping Day misuse the money, and Blomquist is charged with one felony count of taking a \$10,000 lease payment meant for the college and contributing it in 2005 to a bond campaign to benefit school facilities.

All three have pleaded not guilty.

The San Francisco district attorney's office has offered a plea bargain that would require the three defendants to plead guilty to felony charges and pay a total of \$95,000 in restitution to the district. The administrators would not serve any time behind bars as part of the deal.

But their lawyers say their clients shouldn't have to pay.

"Nothing that was done here was done for anybody's personal benefit," said Doron Weinberg, who represents Herman. "It was done for the benefit of City College, it benefited City College enormously. For Mr. Herman and Mr. Day to pay out of pocket is completely inappropriate."

The former district officials also would like the felony charges reduced to misdemeanors, Weinberg said. "We believe that given the nature of the conduct here, misdemeanors would certainly be more appropriate," he said.

Prosecutor Evan Ackiron did not respond to requests for comment.

The scandal has proven costly for the 110,000-student college since the administrators were charged in 2009. The college's foundation, established to raise money for the college, cut ties with the district last year, saying it had become too difficult to raise funds for the district because of the negative publicity.

Trustee Chris Jackson said he was frustrated that the criminal case has become such a distraction at a time when the college is struggling with an intense budget crisis.

"We're facing a potential \$39 million budget cut from the governor," Jackson said. "Mr. Weinberg and his client are not a priority."

Attorneys will be back in court on April 13 for a pretrial hearing in the case. E-mail Stephanie Rice at metro@sfchronicle.com. -----

Keith Curry appointed interim CEO of Compton Community College District

The Compton Bulletin, March 30, 2011
By Cheryl Scott, Bulletin Staff Writer



Curry

COMPTON—The Special Trustee for the Compton Community College District announced on March 16 the appointment of an interim chief executive officer for the district. Dr. Keith Curry, who has served as the El Camino College Compton Center dean of student services since 2006, has been appointed to the post.

“Dr. Curry is widely known for his dedication to promoting and supporting programs to help students succeed and reach their academic goals,” said CCCD Special Trustee Genethia Hudley-Hayes. “His demonstrated leadership skills, ability to assess and quickly respond to student needs, and his familiarity with the Compton Center and the community are all assets he brings to this position.”

A Compton native, Curry served the community by volunteering as chair of the Compton Unified School District Achieving College Partnership and serving on the Compton Unified School District Foundation board.

He also co-authored the CUSD Gear-Up proposal during his tenure at UC Irvine, where he was dean of student services.

Many of the college’s student support programs were expanded or created under Curry’s leadership. He established the First Year Experience in 2009. The program offers a supportive educational environment that encourages student success through shared learning communities, and services such as counseling, mentoring, orientation, and campus tours. The first year of the program, 68 students participated; by the second year, enrollment in the program had reached more than 140 students.

Curry previously served at the University of California Irvine as director of the Early Academic Outreach Program. In this position, he worked with incoming freshman students to help them

succeed in college. While at UC Irvine, Curry was instrumental in re-establishing a partnership between local school districts, including Compton Unified School District and the University of California, Irvine.

Curry has strong family ties to the community. His service has included volunteering as chair of the Compton Unified School District Achieving College Partnership and serving on the Compton Unified School District Foundation board. He also co-authored the Compton Unified School District Gear-Up proposal during his tenure at UC Irvine.

Curry earned his doctorate degree from the University of California at Irvine, and a bachelor's degree from the University of California at Santa Cruz.

At his appointment announcement, the mood was upbeat and full of hope for the future of the community as he spoke about his own humble beginnings and his first "job" at the district, where he served as ball boy for the college baseball team at the age of 12. "And today, I'm CEO," he said.

He also shared personal stories of his dedication to student success and of working with former gang members and at-risk teens who have earned their degrees at ECC Compton Center and transferred to both the University of California and California State University systems.

"My work has meaning because of students like Terrance, who emerged from a tough background to become an ASB officer, advocated for students, and had the determination and drive to graduate from Compton Center and transfer to UC Riverside," Curry said. "He plans to return to Compton Center possibly as a counselor and help others. That's why we are here — to provide an opportunity for all of these individuals to receive a college education."

The Compton Community College District is working with El Camino Community College to earn accreditation for the college, a prolonged and complex process that could take as long as 10 years.

"Our goal for this district is to once again have a college," said Curry. "There are some people in our communities who misunderstand the partnership and the accreditation process. That is why the special trustee and I will be hitting the road fast and furiously for visits to area elected officials, business organizations, churches and community leaders to inform and update everyone about both of these important issues.

"I look forward to this opportunity to continue serving students and my hometown," Curry said. "I am encouraged by the positive spirit of collaboration I see as we work together with our partner, El Camino College, to achieve this goal."

Curry assumed the interim CEO position on March 22. The search process for a permanent CEO, following Board Policy 2420, will get underway in the future.

California community colleges to slash enrollment, classes

By Carla Rivera, Los Angeles Times

March 31, 2011

With state budget talks halted, the 112-campus system faces an \$800-million cut in funding for the coming school year. The system may have to enroll 400,000 fewer students. Chancellor Jack Scott calls the situation a tragedy for students.

Facing a state funding cut of up to 10%, California's community colleges will enroll 400,000 fewer students next fall and slash thousands of classes to contend with budget shortfalls that threaten to reshape their mission, officials said Wednesday.

The dire prognosis was in response to the breakdown in budget talks in Sacramento and the likelihood that the state's 112 community colleges will be asked to absorb an \$800-million funding reduction for the coming school year — double the amount suggested in Gov. Jerry Brown's current budget proposal.

As it now stands, the budget plan would raise community college student fees from \$26 to \$36 per unit. The fees may go even higher if a budget compromise is not reached.

During a telephone news briefing, California Community Colleges Chancellor Jack Scott said the funding cuts, under either scenario, would be a tragedy for students and a deep blow to the state's economy.

"Students seeking to transfer to Cal State and the University of California will be denied access, those students unable to get into Cal State and UC and who desperately need to get into a community college will be denied, as well as those who are out of work and are coming to us for retraining," Scott said. "We will do the best we can, but we will not be serving the needs of students or meeting our education goals."

Under the best-case scenario, Long Beach City College will cut 222 course sections this fall, turn away 1,000 full-time students who can't get classes and lose more than 30 staff positions, President Eloy Oakley said. He and several other community college leaders joined Scott for the telephone briefing.

"Given the scenario now before us, we will reduce our enrollment back to 1999-2000 levels, which is a significant defunding, particularly at a time when demand at Long Beach City College has never been greater," Oakley said.

About 18,000 students will be unable to enroll this fall at four Sacramento-area colleges in the Los Rios Community College District — and more would be turned away if the larger funding reduction is imposed, Chancellor Brice W. Harris said.

"This is a statewide crisis, and increasingly we're going to see our bright young folks leaving the state to get an education," Harris said.

The three-college San Diego Community College District is planning to shed more than 1,000

classes and turn away 20,000 students, Chancellor Constance Carroll said. More classes and about 27,000 students would be turned away under the larger reduction.

"In San Diego, with a 10% unemployment rate, we have new jobs that require a college education, there are shortages in nursing and other careers and an unprecedented demand for students," Carroll said. "The bottom line is students will not have the opportunities they need."

Summer sessions, whose schedules must be completed soon, are likely to be decimated, even if there is a last-minute budget breakthrough, the officials said.

John Hooper, a computer science major at Los Angeles Valley College, said the unavailability of summer classes means it will take him an extra two years to complete the requirements he needs to transfer to UCLA.

He was among scores of students at several Los Angeles-area community colleges who held a "die-in" Wednesday to protest the effect of state budget cuts on their education.

The students lay in rows on the pavement and held tombstones made of black poster board with inscriptions such as "Here Lies California Education." Hooper said he has tried for three semesters without success to get into one chemistry class that he needs. His plight is shared by thousands of other students.

"You're lucky to get any class, let alone the classes you want," Hooper, 28, said after the event. "Many students feel disempowered about what to do, but we're telling them to vote, to call their legislators. Education is a way out of everything...and should never be cut."

From: Garten, Ann Marie
Sent: Thursday, March 31, 2011 12:13 PM
To: 'beverlylawcorp@aol.com'; Gen, Ray; 'kbrown@elcamino.edu'; Combs, Mary; O'Donnell, Maureen
Cc: Fallo, Thomas; Oswald, Kathy
Subject: Contra Costa Times - PERALTA District Woes

FYI

Ann M. Garten
Director, Community Relations
310-660-3406 - ph
310-660-3946 - f
www.elcamino.edu

Peralta trustees to make painful bond decision

By Matt Krupnick Contra Costa Times 03/28/2011

The Peralta Community College District will decide Tuesday how to dig itself out from a failed investment strategy that will cost taxpayers millions of dollars per year.

Peralta trustees are scheduled to vote on a solution to the problem bonds, which were meant to pay for retirement health benefits for district employees. Instead, a series of risky moves led to a spike in repayment costs that will reach about \$20 million in 2015 alone -- nearly one-fifth of the district's operating budget.

Under the most likely solution, Peralta trustees would restructure the bond payments to steadily rise over the next 20 years, reaching a peak of nearly \$20 million in 2031. The payments would then decline to about \$13 million the next year and again rise gradually through 2050.

Tuesday's restructuring would be just the first in a series of actions meant to unravel the district from the messy financial bind, said Ron Gerhard, the district's budget chief. Peralta leaders also will need to do a better job of monitoring investments, he said.

The meeting begins at 7 p.m. in the district board room, 333 East 8th St., Oakland. Go to www.peralta.edu for details.

http://www.contracostatimes.com/ci_17720017?IADID=Search-www.contracostatimes.com-www.contracostatimes.com

Peralta trustees vote to avoid hefty balloon payment

By Matt Krupnick, Contra Costa Times, 03/30/2011

OAKLAND -- Peralta Community College District trustees voted Tuesday night to move toward averting a looming \$20 million debt payment brought about by a failed investment strategy.

The board told advisers to investigate refinancing bonds meant to pay for employee retirement benefits, which would bring the balloon payment scheduled for 2015 to less than \$10 million. In exchange for the lower payments, which would begin next year, the plan will raise annual payments by millions of dollars each year over the following 16 years; Peralta would pay about \$9 million more over the next 20 years.

State budget cuts could trim up to \$17 million from the four-college district next year, and Peralta trustees were anxious about the upcoming bond payments as they try to meet student demand. More than 400,000 California students could be shut out of community colleges next year because of budget cuts, state Chancellor Jack Scott said Wednesday.

"If we did nothing, in (the 2015-16 fiscal year) we'd have to cut \$20 million from our operating budget," said Ron Gerhard, Peralta's budget chief. "That would have catastrophic consequences."

Trustees will need to approve the final decision before the bonds are refinanced.

Peralta's retirement bonds were reconfigured in 2009 to save the district money in the short term -- the district deferred principal and interest payments for several years -- but the strategy backfired because of the volatile market.

The fund, which will pay for retiree health benefits, has \$53 million less than it needs, Gerhard said.

The shaky situation raised concern among accreditors earlier this year. "The significant unknown for the district at this point has to do with their immediate and long-term financial viability," the regional accrediting agency wrote to Peralta leaders in February.

Matt Krupnick covers higher education. Contact him at 510-208-6488.

http://www.contracostatimes.com/ci_17736330?IADID=Search-www.contracostatimes.com-www.contracostatimes.com

El Camino Compton Center to celebrate Cesar Chavez Day today

Daily Breeze

From wire service reports

Posted: 03/31/2011 08:55:24 AM PDT

Updated: 03/31/2011 08:55:54 AM PDT

Cesar Chavez Day events are planned today at the El Camino College Compton Center, a Long Beach park bearing his name and Torch Middle School in Industry.

El Camino College Compton Center's Cesar Chavez Day Observance will include the 45-minute performance "Cesar Chavez Speaks," excerpts of Chavez's speeches interlaced with a fictional interpretation of the Latino civil rights movement and the state of civil and workers' rights today, written, adapted and performed by Roberto Alcaraz, an actor, singer and professor.

The observance honoring the co-founder of the United Farm Workers on the 84th anniversary of his birth will be held from 11 a.m.- 1 p.m. in the student lounge. It will also include a produce exhibit with samples, poetry readings, music and a selection of Mexican cuisine for purchase.

More information on the observance is available by calling (310) 900- 1600, ext. 2802.

Long Beach's 10th annual Cesar Chavez Day Celebration at Chavez Park will begin at 3 p.m. with the dedication of the Jenny Oropeza Community Center, named for the state senator who died in October.

"We are looking forward to honoring the great work of Senator Oropeza and everything she did to built this park when she was on the Long Beach City Council," said Councilman Robert Garcia.

The festivities will run through 7 p.m. and will include music, performances, food, information tables and activities for children and families. Admission is free. More information is available on the website of the Long Beach Community Hispanic Association, centrocha.org.

The Bassett Education Foundation's second annual Cesar Chavez Day celebration will honor Chavez and local heroes and institutions, including the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Industry Station, the Bassett Teachers Association, Classified School Employees Association and San Gabriel Valley Tribune reporter Thomas Himes, who wrote a series of articles about vehicle checkpoints and impounds.

The celebration will be held at Torch Middle School from 5-9 p.m. and is free and open to the public. More information is available by calling Laura Santos at (626) 261-9358 or by sending her an e-mail at LSantos@bassett.k12.ca.us.

State offices, including the Department of Motor Vehicles and Los Angeles Superior Courts, will be closed. Los Angeles city offices will be open, as it observes Cesar Chavez Day on the last Monday in March.

Federal offices and services, including the U.S. Postal Service, will be open. Banks, Metro bus, subway, train and trash collection services will all operate on their regular schedules.

Born March 31, 1927, in Yuma, Ariz., Chavez dropped out of school after the eighth grade to help support his family by joining them in the fields as a migrant farm worker, witnessing the many adversities migrant workers faced daily.

Chavez joined the Latino civil rights Community Service Organization in 1952, urging Latinos to register to vote.

In 1962, Chavez joined Dolores Huerta in co-founding the National Farm Workers Association, which later became the United Farm Workers.

Chavez, an advocate of nonviolence, is credited with improving work and quality-of-life conditions for immigrant farm workers in central California.

Chavez is especially remembered for spearheading a grape boycott in 1965 that went nationwide in 1968 and lasted until 1978, resulting in higher wages for farm workers and focusing national attention on their plight.

Chavez died in 1993 at age 66. Then-Gov. Gray Davis signed legislation in 2000 creating the state holiday.

President Barack Obama on Wednesday proclaimed March 31 of each year as Cesar Chavez Day, calling "upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate service, community and educational programs to honor Cesar Chavez's enduring legacy."

"Cesar Chavez saw the need for change and made a courageous choice to work to improve the lives of his fellow farm workers," Obama said in the proclamation.

"Through boycotts and fasts, he led others on a path of nonviolence conceived in careful study of the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi and Mahatma Gandhi and in the powerful example of Martin Luther King Jr. He became a community organizer and began his lifelong advocacy to protect and empower people.

"With quiet leadership and a powerful voice, Cesar founded the United Farm Workers with Dolores Huerta, launching one of our nation's most inspiring social movements. Chavez's legacy provides lessons for which all Americans can learn -- one person can change the course of a nation and improve the lives of countless individuals."

Cesar Chavez Day celebrated today at Long Beach park

Press Telegram

From wire service reports

Posted: 03/31/2011 08:45:34 AM PDT

Updated: 03/31/2011 08:52:40 AM PDT

LONG BEACH - Cesar Chavez Day events are planned today at the El Camino College Compton Center, a Long Beach park bearing his name and Torch Middle School in Industry.

El Camino College Compton Center's Cesar Chavez Day Observance will include the 45-minute performance "Cesar Chavez Speaks," excerpts of Chavez's speeches interlaced with a fictional interpretation of the Latino civil rights movement and the state of civil and workers' rights today, written, adapted and performed by Roberto Alcaraz, an actor, singer and professor.

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"With quiet leadership and a powerful voice, Cesar founded the United Farm Workers with Dolores Huerta, launching one of our nation's most inspiring social movements. Chavez's legacy provides lessons for which all Americans can learn -- one person can change the course of a nation and improve the lives of countless individuals."

The Dark Side of Choice

By Dean Dad March 31, 2011 11:49 pm EDT

An alert reader sent me a link to this article that suggests that too much choice (of courses and programs) for students can be paralyzing. Taken farther, it suggests that one way to improve graduation rates would be to run fewer programs.

I actually agree with this.

Many public colleges and universities have embraced “comprehensiveness” as part of their “access” mission. The idea is that part of “access” is access to whatever program the student wants. Whether that program is liberal arts transfer, culinary arts, or auto repair, the college is presumed to be on the hook to provide it. I’m increasingly skeptical, though not for the traditional reason.

In olden times, I’m told, there existed in the land a strange breed called “professional students.” They could be identified by their distinctive markings -- tie-dye, mostly -- and vague smell of weed. They stayed in college forever, eeking out meager livings and never confronting the real world. They accomplished this by changing majors a half-dozen times or more, thereby forestalling graduation. Some have also suggested that forestalling draft eligibility may have had something to do with it.

Several decades of tuition inflation and erosion in the minimum wage have threatened the natural habitat of the professional student, driving them nearly to extinction. So that downside of comprehensiveness has become largely moot. Now, when students stick around for a long time, it’s usually because they’re attending part-time and working close to full-time. In my own dealings with students, I can attest that I hear much more of “how can I graduate faster?” than “how can I stick around longer?” They’re much more interested in getting jobs than in staying on campus forever.

No, my objection is based on quality control, cost, and what for lack of a better term I’ll call student cluelessness.

I consider quality control and cost closely related. The more you have to water down a program, the more risk you’re taking with the quality of delivery. When a program is a little bit better than it has to be -- what I call “excellence,” or skeptics might call “waste” -- then in good times it can take risks, and in bad times it can make some sacrifices and still do right by its students. But when a program is already running dangerously lean, any cut of any magnitude will do real harm. (Even in good times, it won’t have the resources to experiment, and thereby to improve.) Too much efficiency at what you do now can actually prevent improvement, since there’s no room for the mistakes that are part of the learning curve.

There’s also an issue of blind spots. We all have them. A program with only one, or even two, full-time faculty in it is likely to have significant blind spots in its discipline. I’d be shocked if it didn’t.

All else being equal, a college of, say, 5000 students can probably do a better job of supporting twenty programs than it could of supporting fifty. Absent unique program-based funding, the larger number of programs means that each program gets fewer faculty and fewer resources. Each one runs leaner. That means each one has more blind spots than it should, less room to experiment than it should, and more adjuncts than it should.

Student cluelessness is the other objection. As programs multiply and the distinctions become finer-grained, students are less able to make intelligent decisions among them. Since each program has its own unique requirements and chains of prereqs, guessing wrong can put a student out of sequence and make completion more difficult. Yes, good individual advisement can reduce the incidences of that, but complexity inevitably breeds confusion.

At the two-year level, there's also a basic issue of the degree of specialization that should really be expected. Outside of a few very prescriptive vocational programs, like Nursing, most of the degree programs tend to be heavy on the gen ed. Everybody has so many credits of humanities, social science, math, and the like to cover, so there's only so much room for specialized coursework. Slicing that remainder of credits ever thinner seems likely to lead to diminishing returns.

Obviously, I'd rather have enough resources to be able to do everything well. That would be nifty. But in the absence of that, I'm increasingly convinced that it's better to do fewer programs and do them well then to try to keep doing everything with less.

What do you think?