

El Camino College Compton Center Transitions to Success

"Every Student is a Success Story"

Compton Community College was established in 1927 as Compton Junior College, a component of the Compton Union High School District. Today the El Camino College Compton Center is a college in transition seeking to regain its accreditation and standing among California's community colleges. The last few years have been a time of turmoil. Following allegations mismanagement and embezzlement by a trustee, this institution was left without direction and lost its accreditation. In a community that was already facing many challenges, Compton was faced with the prospect of losing its college, which has been known throughout its history for producing some of the nation's outstanding scholars and athletes. The College serves the cities of Carson, Compton, Lynwood and Paramount as well as the Willowbrook area. Given the socio-economic conditions of black and brown people in all of these communities, the loss of the college and opportunities for quality higher education could be devastating.

In 2006, following the former Compton College's accreditation being revoked, the El Camino Community College District agreed to partner with the Compton Community College District to provide academic programs and student support services. Many people in the Compton community felt that the relationship with El Camino infringed on community pride in Compton and there was a



feeling of hurt because an institution that had been such a symbolic part of the history and legacy of the Compton community was no more. What was Compton College is now El Camino College Compton Center and many longtime Compton residents take pride in the college and refuse to call it anything but "Compton College".

At the August 22, 2006 meeting of the Compton College District Board of Trustees, a state appointed Special Trustee approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with El Camino College District to solidify the partnerships between the two districts. Under this MOU, the campus became a center of El Camino College. The Office of the President/Superintendent was replaced by the Office of Provost/Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The center is officially established as the Compton Community Educational Center. Its overall goal is to assist the Compton campus with recovery and full accreditation as a two-year public college within the next eight to ten years.

Today, in spite of continuous calls for autonomy by local residents, the partnership is working. There are some definite signs of progress and it has become a win-win situation. City Pride Magazine had an opportunity to sit down with Chief Executive Officer Dr. Keith Curry and hear about some of the progress that has been made at this college. When asked about how people in the community felt about losing their college Dr. Curry stated "When working my doctorate

at UC Irvine, my research lead me to believe that the revocation of Compton College's accreditation, hurt this community. It certainly has had an impact. When individuals who have known Compton College for so long found that the accreditation has been revoked they were hurt and it takes time for that hurt to heal. We want people to know that it might not have the same name that people want it to have but we are still providing quality educational services.

That's what is important, and one of my jobs is to get the word out in the community about what we are doing and



the new programs we are offering. People in the community have not heard about all the positive new things happening at the college like the nine million dollar increase in financial aide and the new First Year Program".

Dr. Curry (pictured) is very enthusiastic about the progress at the Compton Center and is committed to making the transition a success especially for the students. "It's important for people to know that nothing has been lost and that many services have gotten better. We want people to know that because of this partnership with El Camino College the gates are open. Where would 19 and 20 year olds go if the gates were not open? At the end of the day we are providing quality education to the community. We have enhanced a lot of our services, provide better financial aid, online registration and online grades." stated Dr. Curry

The First Year Experience program is designed to help students new to college find the resources they need to succeed. Students learn how to study independently and in groups; choose a major and create a career plan; as well as access and manage electronic information, such as email, Internet, and library databases. First Year

Experience (FYE) offers:

- FYE bilingual counselor
- FYE faculty
- Field trips to UC, CSU, & private universities
- Early Group Registration
- Learning community courses
- Orientation
- Peer mentors
- "Strategies for Success in College" course

Every student is a success story at El Camino College Compton Center. Student achievements are evident through the various scholarship awards, academic activities, and athletic endeavors. The ongoing "Need Cash for College?" financial aid awareness campaign has shown positive results. In 2011, 3,244 students submitted Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms, a 12 percent increase from the year before. The campaign included workshops, "Cash for College" fairs, and outreach to high school students.

The El Camino College Compton Center Aerospace Fastener Program was introduced in fall 2008 as the first college level training program of its kind in the western United States, quickly becoming a high-demand program with an extensive waiting list.

In a recent survey conducted at El Camino College Compton center 85 percent of students and 71 percent of community members believe an education received at Compton Center is as good as or better than at other institutions. Students report a high level of satisfaction with their experience at Compton Center and they rate the courses offered, the instructors and the availability of classes as the top reasons for attending El Camino College Compton Center.

For more information visit www.Compton.edu

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