



Assembly Member Mike Gipson, Chair
Joint Legislative Audit Committee
1020 N Street, Room 107
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Member Gipson:

I am writing to you in regard to the request for the State Auditor to conduct an audit of the Compton Community College District (CCCD) and the El Camino College Compton Community Education Center (Compton Center), which will be considered by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee during its hearing on August 25, 2015. Unfortunately, due to a previously scheduled commitment, I am not able to attend the hearing. However, I have asked Vincent Stewart, our Vice Chancellor for External Relations, to attend in my place and serve as a representative of the Chancellor's Office. In anticipation of the hearing, I would like to provide some brief historical context and share with you and the committee some of my thoughts regarding the CCCD and Compton Center.

In 2004, due to rapidly deteriorating fiscal conditions at the CCCD, the state Chancellor's Office, operating under the authority of the Board of Governors, determined that it was necessary to intervene in the operation of the district. In May of that year, then Chancellor Mark Drummond appointed a special trustee to provide leadership and direction for the district and its college. At that time, the special trustee requested that the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) conduct a comprehensive "Fiscal Health Analysis." In 2006, the state legislature commissioned a FCMAT audit, which was released in November of that year. Just a few months prior to the release of the FCMAT audit, it was determined that CCCD was essentially insolvent and would require a loan from the state to cover its payroll and other expenses. In June 2006, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law AB 318 (Dymally), which provided the CCCD an emergency loan of \$30 million, a partnering district (El Camino Community College District) to offer accredited courses and degrees, required comprehensive assessments by FCMAT, and mandated the appointment of a special trustee.

This intervention by the state was unprecedented, but absolutely essential to the survival of the district and to preserving access to one of the only institutions of public higher education available to the residents of Compton and the surrounding communities. The state and the CCCD were in uncharted waters, as this was the first time in the history of the California Community Colleges that one of our institutions had lost its accreditation. However, what has been equally remarkable is the extent of the turn-around and recovery of the CCCD in recent years. Through its partnership with the El Camino Community College District, the leadership of Dr. Keith Curry (the CEO of the Compton Center) and the support of the special trustee, the progress that

has been made in the past four years is nothing short of miraculous given the depths of the district's challenges.

I would like to highlight just a few of the most recent accomplishments by Dr. Curry and the leadership team at CCCD and the Compton Center, which relies on the many talents of dedicated faculty and staff who are committed to the success of the district and its students.

- From 2011 to 2014, more than 850 Compton Center students graduated with an associate degree and more than 250 students earned certificates through Career and Technical Education programs;
- The Compton Center continues to see an increase in the number of degrees and certificates awarded; from 2013-14 the number of degrees and certificates awarded increased by nearly 20 percent;
- Over the past three years the number of University of California and California State University transfers has increased by more than 150 percent;
- The First Year Experience (FYE) program is serving more students than ever. This program for incoming students provides additional services and support, including early registration, guaranteed classes, counseling, mentoring, and education planning designed to help students succeed. For the 2013-14 academic year, FYE expanded to five learning communities and since 2009 the program has served more than 600 students;
- Since fall 2011, 37 new full-time instructors have joined the Compton Center faculty;
- A significant number of classes have been added at the Compton Center; 1,396 class sections were offered in 2013-14, an increase of 9 percent from 2012-13;
- All of the district's fiscal reports are complete and have been filed in a timely manner with the state and FCMAT's assessments reflect on-going positive progress. The district's most recent independent and external audit report indicated no findings, a remarkable accomplishment for any institution.

It is clear that the leadership of the Compton Center and CCCD, the partnership with the El Camino Community College District, and the support and monitoring of FCMAT have performed remarkably well.

When the El Camino Community College District and the CCCD entered into its partnership agreement in 2006, the primary objective was to provide quality educational programs and services for student success. Both districts are fully committed to obtaining independent accreditation for the Compton Center, in accordance with the goals set forth in AB 318 and through the partnership agreement. The first phase of the path to independent accreditation has already begun. Through its Accreditation Steering Committee, the Compton Center's eligibility application was submitted and recently approved by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). This is a strong indication of the significant progress and effective leadership at the Compton Center and CCCD.

While this process has taken longer than originally envisioned, accreditation of an independent college and a return of local board governance can best be achieved by supporting the basic tenets of the recovery enacted through AB 318, adhering to the Standards and Eligibility

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Requirements for accreditation and addressing the recommendations of FCMAT. Now is not the time to diverge from this path, but rather to redouble our efforts and reaffirm our collective commitment to successfully completing this process.

In closing, the request to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee regarding an audit of the CCCD and Compton Center comes at a defining moment in the evolution of the district and college. The Chancellor's Office will certainly abide by the decision of the committee and the requirements of a potential audit. However, I must share my concern that an audit at this time has the potential to become a distraction to the important work being done at the Compton Center, slowing progress toward independent accreditation and return to local board governance.

Thank you for your consideration of my views and permitting me an opportunity to address the positive steps that have been taken to regain the fiscal solvency, effective governance, strong administrative leadership and institutional effectiveness at CCCD. If you or your staff has any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Vice Chancellor Stewart at (916) 322-4005.

Sincerely,



Brice W. Harris

Cc: Members of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee