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Assembly California Legislature



MIKE A. GIPSON
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, SIXTY-FOURTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
CHAIR: JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT
AGING AND LONG-TERM CARE
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION
JOBS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND THE ECONOMY
REVENUE AND TAXATION

August 12, 2015

Joint Legislative Audit Committee
1020 N Street, Room 107
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Committee Members:

It has been 11 years since the Compton Community College District Board of Trustees lost its governing authority and 10 years since Compton Community College lost its accreditation. I write to respectfully request that the Committee approve an audit of El Camino College Compton Center, formerly Compton Community College (Compton CC). Specifically, the audit should focus on assessment of Compton CC's current governance structure and steps being taken to regain accreditation. The purpose of the audit is to fulfill a need for increased transparency, efficiency, and accountability as we advance toward regaining accreditation and local governing authority.

Loss of Local Governing Authority

Each year, community college districts are required to report to the California Community College Chancellor's Office on their fiscal strength. In May of 2004, the Chancellor assigned the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) to conduct an analysis of the fiscal health and management of the district's resources in response to serious concerns raised about the district's financial stability starting with an audit in 2001-02. FCMAT reported that the district had insufficient funds to cover its expenses. As a result, a Special Trustee was appointed to take over all rights, duties, and authority of the Compton Community College Board of Trustees.

Based on the legislation that has been enacted in the years that followed, it is important to note that the initial removal of governing authority was never intended to last this long. Chapter 50, Statutes of 2006 (Dymally, AB 318) references a period of five years in the expectation for returning authority. Most recently, Chapter 466, Statutes of 2014 (Ammiano, AB 2087) suggests that both the Legislature and the Governor support local governance.

Although recent progress has been made as it relates to engaging localized leadership in the governance of the college, the Special Trustee continues to provide oversight and guidance, as well as maintain the authority provided in AB 318. Effective July 1, 2015, the district board was



granted the opportunity to make motions, deliberate, provide an “advisory vote,” and participate in “closed session” meetings. In addition, FCMAT reviews reportedly demonstrate full compliance as of last year. If Compton CC continues to meet the standards and benchmarks of these annual reviews, the expectation is that governing authority will be fully restored to the district board upon review of FCMAT’s follow up assessment of the district board’s performance in the spring of 2016.

Loss of Accreditation

June 2015 marked ten years since the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) conducted an independent review of Compton CC and ultimately terminated its accreditation on the basis of substandard governance and fiscal management practices. As a result of these findings, El Camino College assumed the operation of what was formerly Compton CC.

As of March 2015, ACCJC approved an eligibility proposal to re-accredit Compton CC. Next steps toward regaining accreditation include the completion of a self-review, evidence of ability to remain in compliance with accreditation standards for 2-4 years, and ultimately the submission of a “substantive change proposal” which will allow the Compton Center to receive independent accreditation from El Camino College.

Now, more than ever, it is necessary to ensure accountability by increasing transparency in the processes moving towards regaining local governing authority and ensuring that due diligence is followed in executing next steps. To achieve this, the community has repeatedly called for a documented plan that outlines next steps and offers timelines, an explanation of costs, and explanation of outstanding responsibilities and expectations by which progress by the administration may be measured toward the restoration of accreditation and local governance authority.

At a minimum, the scope of the audit should include the following objectives:

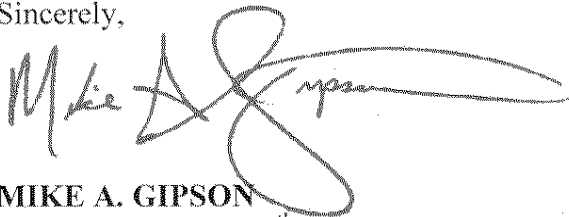
1. What is the current status of efforts to regain accreditation and local governing authority at Compton CC? Include a chain of significant events that have contributed to prolonging Compton CC’s loss of accreditation and local governing authority. In addition, identify all administrators and organizational leaders who have engaged in decision making in both processes.
2. Identify the steps necessary to restore Compton CC to full accreditation and local governing authority. Include, at a minimum, a timeline that identifies deadlines and which party is responsible for execution of each step in the process.
3. Identify any potential challenges and/or obstacles to regaining full accreditation and local governing authority.
4. Assess the extent to which Compton CC has complied with significant aspects of legislation related to both processes and followed the requirements necessary to regain accreditation and local governing authority. Include, at a minimum, the extent to which AB 318, and AB 2087 have been implemented since Compton CC entered Special Trusteeship and lost its accreditation.

5. As a result of ACCJC's approval of Compton CC's Eligibility Proposal in March 2015, Compton CC must submit a self-evaluation report in order to advance to candidacy for accreditation. What is the status of this report? Who is responsible for completing the report and what timelines have been established to ensure its completion in a timely manner?
6. Identify the additional annual costs resulting from Compton CC's loss of accreditation and local governing authority. At a minimum, identify all major categories of expenditure and a brief explanation of contracts awarded as a result of both processes. Determine whether the expenditures related to receivership and/or loss of accreditation were allowable and reasonable.
7. What areas have been identified as possible conflicts of interest and/or sources of contention between the administration, organizational management, and oversight entities which may have interfered with or prolonged the completion of the processes required to regain accreditation and local governing authority.

The Compton area community has heavily invested into the success of Compton CC in an effort to maintain the institution's status as a gateway to education and upward social mobility. Compton CC is viewed as a beacon of hope in the region and the process of restoring Compton CC as the crown jewel of the community is long overdue. Thank you for your strong consideration of this request.

If you have any questions, please contact Zephania Smith, Associate Consultant of JLAC, at 916-319-3300.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike A. Gipson". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping flourish that extends to the right.

MIKE A. GIPSON
Assemblymember, 64th District