



JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT COMMITTEE
MIKE A. GIPSON, CHAIR

Information Hearing:
Compton Community College District
Background on Accreditation and Governance

The goal of this Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) Informational Hearing is to educate the community and engage stakeholders in a dialogue about significant events related to Compton College. Interested parties are invited to raise concerns and ask questions to help inform state and local officials of the current progress toward the restoration of local governance and accreditation.

Background

The Compton Community College District (Compton CCD) Board of Trustees (Board) initially lost governing authority in 2004 and Compton Community College lost its accreditation in 2005. As of 2015, the El Camino College, Compton Center (Compton College) is under the governance of a Special Trustee and is without independent accreditation. It is important to note that local governing authority through the Compton CCD and the attainment of accreditation for Compton College are two separate issues which have intersecting processes for being reestablished.

Every year, community college districts are required to report to the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) on their fiscal strength. The 2001-02 audit of the Compton CCD made various findings that led to serious concerns about the district's financial stability. In May of 2004, having failed to receive audited 2002-03 financial information from the district, the Chancellor requested the assignment of the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) to conduct an analysis of the fiscal health and management of the district's resources. On June 9, 2004, the FCMAT team reported that as of June 30, 2004, the end of the fiscal year, the district would have insufficient cash to cover its expenses. As a result, a Special Trustee was appointed to take over all rights, duties and powers of the Board; thereby, removing local governing authority from Compton CCD.

Further, Compton College lost its accreditation in 2005. After becoming aware of the challenges at Compton CCD, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) conducted a review of the campus to determine if its governance and fiscal management was consistent with their accrediting standards. After ACCJC conducted an independent review of the campus, Compton College's accreditation was terminated. In 2006, AB 318 (Dymally) was enacted as an emergency measure to provide for the maintenance of accredited courses and fiscal solvency. This bill provided for a \$30 million bond allocation and set the stage for an agreement with El Camino College to serve as a partner district to provide accredited coursework at the Compton College campus. This agreement put Compton College under the jurisdiction of El Camino College, where it is now named the El Camino College Compton Center.

Accreditation:

In January 2015, El Camino College submitted an application to ACCJC for the accreditation of Compton College. In March 2015, ACCJC notified El Camino College that the Eligibility Proposal for Compton College was approved. Below are the steps and proposed timeline to regain accreditation at Compton College:

1. **Self-Review:** Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, to be prepared for Spring 2017 for submission to ACCJC and enter the next stage of Candidacy.
2. **Candidacy:** Once candidacy is granted, the ECC Compton Center must remain in compliance with the Standards of Accreditation for 2 years, or until June 2019. ECC Compton Center may request an extension of candidacy for a maximum of two additional years, or until June 2021.
3. **Accreditation of the Compton Center:** The ECC Compton Center can apply for Initial Accreditation, which will be granted, denied, or extended (extension allowed only if no extension was provided during candidacy process). If granted, ECC Compton Center must submit a “substantive change proposal” which will allow the Compton Center to receive independent accreditation from El Camino College.

Once this is complete, the El Camino College Compton Center will be independently accredited and will be renamed Compton Community College.

Local Governing Authority:

Based on the legislative history, it is important to note that the initial removal of governing authority was never intended to last ten years. AB 61 (Dymally), 2004, initially set a four-year cap on the loss of local governance, and even after accreditation was lost, AB 318 (Dymally), 2006, references a period of 5 years in the expectation for returning authority. In addition, with the establishment of AB 2087 (Ammiano), 2014, the California Legislature and the Governor of California have concurred that they intend to support local governance. Below is an outline of the legislative history relating to local governance:

AB 61 (Dymally) signed into law 2004 – was the initial legislation that provided for the establishment of the Special Trustee over the Compton Community College District, and authorized the Special Trustee to hold power for a maximum of four years.

“The board of governors may authorize the chancellor to suspend, for a period of up to one year, the authority of the Board of Trustees of the Compton Community College District...”

“...the chancellor may renew a suspension under this section as many times, and as often as, he or she finds it necessary during the period of operation of this section.”

“This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2008, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2008, deletes or extends that date.”

AB 318 (Dymally) signed into law 2006 – reauthorized the establishment of a Special Trustee and tied the return of local governing authority to a series of annual audits by the FCMAT. It is required that Compton College meet required standards for two consecutive years in order to have local governing authority returned:

*“The board of governors **may authorize suspension** for a period up to five years from the effective date of Assembly Bill 318 of the 2005–06 Regular Session, plus **a period lasting until the chancellor, the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, the Director of Finance, and the Secretary for Education concur with the special trustee that the district has, for two consecutive academic years, met the requirements of the comprehensive assessment conducted, and the recovery plan prepared pursuant to Section 41329.59.**”*

AB 2087 (Ammiano) signed into law 2014 – requires that the Board of Governors develop specific benchmarks for the return of governing authority and for the local Board of Trustees to be a meaningful part of decision making:

*“The regulations pursuant to which the board of governors may appoint a special trustee to manage the community college district shall include **specific benchmarks** to indicate the presence of **local capacity to resume management of the community college district** and clear standards that **require meaningful consultation by a special trustee, or his or her designee, with the community college district prior to decisionmaking.**”*

The FCMAT review from 2014 shows full compliance with all operational areas. If Compton College continues to meet the standards, FCMAT will conduct its last review in 2016, whereby Compton College will have finally complied with the requirements of the FCMAT annual review.

Definitions:

- 1. Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC):** Is a division of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and accredits community colleges and other associate degree granting institutions in the Western region of the U.S. The ACCJC is one of seven regional accrediting commissions. ACCJC is authorized to operate by the U.S. Department of Education through the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008.
- 2. Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT):** The mission of FCMAT is to help California’s local educational agencies fulfill their financial and management responsibilities by providing fiscal advice, management assistance, training and other related school business services. FCMAT initially focused its work on K-12 school districts until AB 1366 (Lieber), 2005, provided expanded authority that allowed FCMAT to review community college districts as directed by the California Community College Board of Governors.