

PIERCE COLLEGE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

March 10, 2009

Dr. Barbara Beno
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
10 Commercial Blvd. Suite 204
Novato, CA 94949

Dear Dr. Beno:

Please find enclosed the Follow-Up Report from Pierce College. This report contains the college's response to the Commission recommendation identified in the ACCJC action letter dated June 30, 2008.

Pierce has prepared this report with the coordination of our college administrative and faculty leadership, the Los Angeles Community College District, and our Board of Trustees. This report represents Pierce's ongoing progress in satisfying all accreditation standards and our continuous institutional improvement toward meeting the needs of our students.

Sincerely,


Robert Garber
President

cc: Nabil Abu-Ghazaleh, ALO
Gary Colombo, Vice Chancellor, Institutional Effectiveness
Mark Drummond, Chancellor

ROBERT GARBER, PRESIDENT

6201 Winnetka Avenue / Woodland Hills / California / 91371 / 818-719-6408

Los Angeles Community College District

Pierce COLLEGE

**LOS ANGELES PIERCE COLLEGE
ACCREDITATION FOLLOW-UP REPORT**

March 15, 2009

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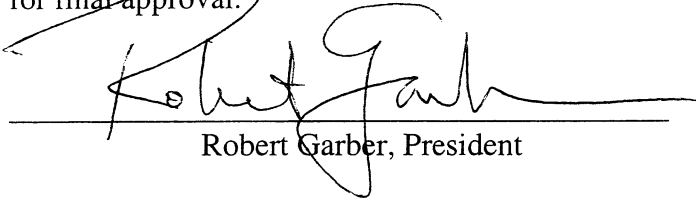
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Statement on Report Preparation

The follow-up report response was developed collaboratively between Pierce College and the Los Angeles Community College District Office.

Commission Recommendation 1 is related to the unfunded retiree health benefit liability. The negotiations that have taken place over the past two years between the Board of Trustees and the unions representing college employees to address this issue were undertaken on behalf of all nine colleges in the district. As a result of this centralized process, the LACCD chose to draft a single consistent response to Commission Recommendation 1 for the colleges to consider.

The response was reviewed and approved by the college's Educational Planning Committee, a subcommittee of the Academic Senate. The response was also approved by the college senior staff composed of the president and vice presidents of academic affairs, student services, and administrative services before submission to the Board of Trustees for final approval.



Robert Garber, President

2/26/09

Date

Commission Recommendation 1:

The Commission is seeking evidence that the District has developed, implemented, and adhered to a plan which will address the unfunded retiree health benefit liability to assure out-year obligations are met without significant negative impact on the financial health of the institution. (Standard III.D.1.c)

The LACCD has taken significant steps to address the issue of its unfunded liability for retiree health care. The GASB-mandated accounting standards require public employers to determine and report their actuarial obligation for “other post-employment benefits (OPEB)” -- primarily retiree health insurance -- and to develop a plan for addressing those obligations.

The LACCD’s initial actuarial study in 2005 calculated its retiree health benefit liability as \$623.2 million (1.1). The large figure was not surprising for a district that has provided pay-as-you-go retiree health care coverage since its inception in 1969, but the district’s unions and management recognized that the liability could be reduced by prudent pre-funding of a portion of the unfunded obligation through an irrevocable trust.

In Fall 2006 the district’s six unions and the Board of Trustees approved a negotiated agreement to begin partial prefunding by *annually* directing 1.92% of the previous fiscal year’s fulltime employee payroll into an irrevocable trust. The district’s fulltime employees gave up almost one-third of the 5.92% Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) provided to community colleges in 2006-07 by the State of California. In effect, LACCD employees agreed that, on an ongoing basis, they would accept salaries almost 2% lower than they would otherwise have been in order to secure retiree health care for themselves and future fulltime employees of the district. The money saved through this sacrifice of salary would create an ongoing annual stream of revenue into the district’s OPEB trust. In addition, LACCD management and unions agreed that an amount equivalent to the district’s annual Medicare D refund would also be diverted from the district’s operating budget into the OPEB trust.

The district and its unions conducted a thorough review of options for the irrevocable trust and determined that they wanted CalPERS to manage it. Because the law at the time restricted access to CalPERS trusts to agencies that participated in the PEMHCA health plans, the district and its unions worked actively to change the law to allow the LACCD (and other non-PEMHCA agencies) to pre-fund its OPEB obligation through a CalPERS-managed trust. The district had a second actuarial study completed in accordance with CalPERS guidelines (1.2). In fall 2007 Governor Schwarzenegger signed AB 554 (Hernandez), and in spring 2008, the LACCD moved its accumulated funds from the Los Angeles County Treasurer to a CalPERS-managed irrevocable trust. As of Fall 2008, the balance in the trust was \$11,518,103.

During 2007, Governor Schwarzenegger’s Commission on Public Employee Post-Employment Benefits held hearings across California and issued a report with recommendations on how the problem of unfunded OPEB benefits could best be addressed (1.3). Former LACCD Chancellor Rocky Young and LA College Faculty

Guild President Carl Friedlander made a joint presentation to the Commission on the LACCD pre-funding plan at a hearing at UCLA in September 2007. The Commission included the LACCD plan as a case study and a model of a “hybrid” solution that fully prefunds the obligation for young and future employees while prefunding a portion of the obligation (and continuing pay-as-you-go) for those closer to retirement. At a press conference presenting the Commission’s report on January 7, 2008, Commission Chair Gerald Parsky made the following comments:

“As part of our mission, we surveyed approaches taken by various municipalities to fund their pension and retiree health care obligations. We present these findings in the “case studies” section of the report.

Looking at these case studies, I think you will see that many of our state’s local governments have been taking this issue very seriously and have implemented some very effective and innovative approaches to funding their liabilities.

Specifically, I encourage you to take a close look at Santa Clara County, Los Angeles Community College District, Modesto City Schools District and Central Valley Health Trust. Each of these entities has implemented what we regard as some of the best practices.”

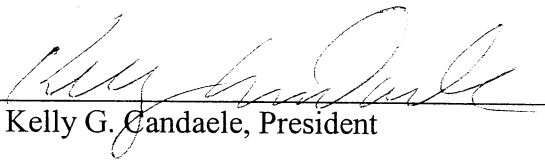
With our prefunding plan, our annual costs are actually \$41,228,000, and our anticipated funding for 2008 is \$38,193,000, which is 93% of the annual costs. (The 2008 figure is higher than anticipated in subsequent years because it includes a two-year accumulation of prefunding in addition to that year’s pay-as-you-go costs.) The second year, we project our funding to be at approximately 80%. The district’s very successful Joint Labor-Management Benefits Committee continues to work diligently to find ways to control the cost of health care for both active and retired employees while continuing to monitor the national debate on the future of American health care. The district is also working to identify other revenue sources by studying the feasibility of issuing an OPEB obligation bond and exploring the possibility of directing toward OPEB a portion of the revenue expected from new public-private partnerships and the sale and/or lease of some district assets.

Evidence

- 1.1 LACCD Actuarial Valuation, July 1, 2005, Retiree Health Insurance Program
- 1.2 Actuarial Valuation Study, Post-Retiree Health Benefits, April 23, 2008
- 1.3 Funding Pensions & Retiree Health Care for Public Employees, a report of the Public Employees Post-Employment Benefits Commission (see p. 169-173)

Review of Progress Report by the Board of Trustees

The Los Angeles Pierce College Progress Report has been reviewed and approved by the members of the Los Angeles Community College District Board of Trustees on February 25, 2009



Kelly G. Candaele, President

Date