

Ventura County Community College District

Summary

The 2005-2006 Ventura County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) initiated an investigation into the various budgetary aspects of the Ventura County Community College District (VCCCD). Due to declining enrollment, class reductions, and budgetary problems, the VCCCD encountered significant negative publicity. Additional concerns included operational and decision-making processes, ratio of full-time to part-time instructors, community interfaces, and overall funding.

In 2005 VCCCD contracted with KH Consulting Group to evaluate all aspects of the operation of the VCCCD, including Moorpark, Oxnard, and Ventura campuses and the District office. The report from KH Consulting Group entitled *Market Assessment and Organizational Performance Review* (Assessment) identified many of the same concerns as the Grand Jury.

During the investigation, Grand Jury members looked at the consequences of the 2002 Bond Measure S (Measure S). The purpose of the Measure S \$356.3 million was to fund new or renovated classroom buildings and related facilities at the three college sites and the Camarillo District Office. The Grand Jury also learned that the funding was approved by the voters despite the lack of a Master Plan with construction priorities.

The Grand Jury recommends that the VCCCD should continue its efforts with the State to improve the budget model. In addition, the VCCCD would benefit in making its operations more transparent by improving its interface with staff, media, and the public.

The Grand Jury investigation and the Assessment both revealed that the VCCCD did not properly plan its capital improvement program funded by Measure S.

Background

In August 2005, the Grand Jury initiated an investigation into the operational and decision-making processes of the VCCCD. There has been a decline in student enrollment and a reduction of classes. Increasing construction costs due to inflation affected proposed new facilities at all three colleges (Moorpark, Oxnard, and Ventura).

Measure S was passed in 2002, providing \$356.3 million to fund capital projects at the three colleges and Camarillo District Office. Questions concerning the use of Measure S funds and the progress of the Measure S projects surfaced.

The VCCCD oversees administrative functions and provides services to the community colleges in support of their mission.

The VCCCD is governed by a locally elected Board of Trustees (Board). The Board adopts policies and administrative regulations to conduct the business of the VCCCD and the community colleges. The Chancellor carries out these approved policies.

Methodology

The Grand Jury reviewed various reports, newspaper articles, information on the VCCCD web site, Measure S sample ballot, and the final Assessment presented by the KH Consulting Group on February 7, 2006. Also, the Grand Jury conducted interviews with various college faculty, staff, and administrators.

Findings

Budget

- F-01.** State support for the community colleges primarily depends on State funding. The major source of VCCCD revenue is from the State, based on Full Time Equivalent Student (FTES).
- F-02.** In terms of tax funding, the VCCCD ranks 64th out of the 72 community college districts in California, at \$3,836 per FTES.
- F-03.** State level of revenue allocated to each community college varies. Before Proposition 13 (the 1978 property tax initiative) was passed, districts could assess a local property tax for support of community colleges. Local district revenues (now provided by the State) are based on the property tax rate before Proposition 13.
- F-04.** The State legislature is still in the process of discussions relating to equalization among the districts that might increase funding to VCCCD.
- F-05.** The tuition of \$26 per unit for California residents is set by the State. This was increased from \$18 per unit in September 2004.
- F-06.** The VCCCD 2005-2006 enrollment figures show four consecutive semesters of decline at all three colleges.
- F-07.** The VCCCD acknowledges a relationship between the County economy and the overall student enrollment. If there is high employment, enrollment is down, and vice versa.
- F-08.** The cycle of a continuing decrease in enrollment leads to less revenue. By necessity classes and programs are eliminated. This in turn reduces the selection of classes available to students, resulting in additional reduction in enrollment.

Programs and Staffing

- F-09.** State law requires that community colleges have 75% of their classes taught by full-time instructors; VCCCD is at the 54% level.
- F-10.** Part-time instructors are paid at a lower pay scale than full-time instructors.
- F-11.** Part-time instructors receive reduced or no benefits.
- F-12.** The shortfall of full-time instructors reduces the ability of students to meet with faculty since part-time instructors are not funded or required to keep office hours.
- F-13.** Some core classes such as math, English, and social science are not offered at all three colleges because of faculty shortages and budgetary constraints.

- F-14.** Each college has its own Academic Master Plan, which includes programs for college transfer and vocational training.

Administration and Operations

- F-15.** There are significantly differing opinions and complaints among college employees as to how decisions are made by VCCCD and the justifications for those decisions.
- F-16.** The public, in general, is not aware of the background or reasoning behind many VCCCD decisions regarding the three colleges and District Office.
- F-17.** The VCCCD has a multi-layered hierarchical organizational structure.
- F-18.** The VCCCD administrative procedures are complicated and complex. There are multiple approvals required on many decisions, including staffing decisions.
- F-19.** The VCCCD is not consistent in its operational policies.

Bond Measure S Projects

- F-20.** Bond Measure S was approved by the Ventura County voters in March 2002, for \$356.3 million to fund new or renovated classroom buildings and related facilities located at the three community colleges and the Camarillo District Office.
- F-21.** Information for voters regarding Measure S was distributed in the sample ballot for the March 5, 2002 election. This information indicated that capital projects to be funded with bond proceeds would include the renovation of athletic facilities at Ventura College for health and safety reasons and to upgrade facilities for physical education instruction. This information did not mention facilities for competitive athletic programs.
- F-22.** Measure S was placed on the ballot without a Facilities Master Plan prioritizing or directing use of the bond funds.
- F-23.** The voter statement for Measure S indicated that the funds might be used for creating a Santa Clara Valley Advanced Technology Education Center (in Santa Paula), but failed to provide funds for purchasing land on which to build the facility or to conduct an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).
- F-24.** Measure S did not intend to provide for a fourth full-service college in Santa Paula.
- F-25.** The Santa Paula satellite campus has decreasing student enrollment.
- F-26.** Measure S was passed before the present Chancellor and bond consultant were hired.
- F-27.** Funds authorized by Measure S failed to include any allowances for inflation.
- F-28.** Construction costs for the projects have more than doubled since Measure S was passed.
- F-29.** Inflation has required the Board of Trustees to reprioritize the projects.

- F-30.** Each college has its own Facilities Master Plan. Measure S funds facilities that enhance each college's master plan.
- F-31.** A Citizens Oversight Committee monitors the District spending of bond funds. They report to the VCCCD Board.
- F-32.** Constructing athletic facility projects at Ventura College was scheduled early, partially because no Facilities Master Plan and no EIR were required for those projects.

Market Assessment and Organizational Performance Review

- F-33.** In 2005 the VCCCD hired the KH Consulting Group at a cost of \$200,000 to complete a market assessment and organizational performance review of the three colleges and the Camarillo District Office.
- F-34.** This Assessment evaluated marketing, community interfaces, organization, student programs and services, technology and facilities, foundations, finance, and produced a report which recommended many areas to be changed.
- F-35.** This Assessment is available on the VCCCD web site [Ref-01].

Conclusions

- C-01.** The VCCCD establishes a budget for the year, but often has to readjust it each semester based on student enrollment-generated revenue. Classes may be adjusted or cancelled due to these budget changes. (F-01 thru F-08)
- C-02.** VCCCD is not in compliance with the State requirement of 75% of classes being taught by full-time instructors. (F-09)
- C-03.** Part-time instructors are less expensive than full-time instructors to VCCCD because they have lower salaries and have reduced or no benefits. (F-10, F-11)
- C-04.** Part-time instructors might not provide the same student accessibility as full-time instructors due to lack of funding. (F-12)
- C-05.** Some core classes are not offered because of faculty shortages. (F-13, F-18)
- C-06.** There is an excess of bureaucratic control and cumbersome layering of senior management throughout the VCCCD. (F-18, F-19)
- C-07.** College staff find it difficult to respond in a timely manner to opportunities or needs. (F-18, F-19)
- C-08.** VCCCD is weak in efforts to keep staff, faculty, and the public informed and involved in its plans and decision making practices. (F-15, F-16)
- C-09.** Adequate plans were not prepared for Measure S prior to placing it on the ballot, specifically, no Facilities Master Plan was in place before Measure S was put on the ballot. (F-22, F-23, F-27, F-28)
- C-10.** Some of the projects endorsed by the voters when they approved Measure S will not be built with bond funds because inflation has eroded the money available. (F-27 thru F-29)

- C-11. Athletic facilities at Ventura College were constructed in the early phase of Measure S, rather than instructional facilities, because plans were completed and an EIR was not required. (F-21, F-32)
- C-12. The Market Assessment and Organizational Performance Review was well done, and the Grand Jury concurs with its recommendations. (F-33 thru F-35)

Recommendations

- R-01. The VCCCD should continue its efforts with the State to improve the budget model. (C-01)
- R-02. The VCCCD should make its operations more transparent by improving its interface with the staff, media, and the public. (C-01, C-08)
- R-03. The VCCCD should develop more rapid and efficient request and approval processes with fewer bureaucratic layers. (C-06, C-07)
- R-04. The VCCCD should develop a more open and inclusive process in developing policies with the intended result of more consistency and stability. (C-06, C-07)
- R-05. The Grand Jury recommends that the VCCCD seriously consider all of the recommendations in the Assessment. These recommendations should be prioritized and implemented at the earliest possible time. (C-12)

Responses

Responses Required From:

Ventura County Community College District Office (R-01 through R-05)

Bibliography

References

- Ref-01. The Market Assessment and Organizational Performance Review by KH Consulting Group February 7, 2006; available on the VCCCD web site at http://www.vccd.net/td/td_kh.htm.

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