

**SANTA MONICA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT  
SPECIAL MEETING, JULY 25, 2005**

**III. Board Review and Discussion:** It is recommended the Board of Trustees review and discuss City of Santa Monica Staff Report released on July 20, 2005 and adopt the following response to be communicated to Santa Monica City Council at its July 26, 2005 meeting:

**Text of Letter to City Council:**

As set forth below, we urge the City Council to reject the staff recommendation concerning our Bundy Campus. The staff recommendation was never discussed with the College and, in fact, raises a number of recommendations that were not discussed when leadership from our respective bodies met on April 22 and again on July 1, 2005. To avoid significant hardship to our students, we urge the City Council to approve the following substitute proposal:

1. From August 20, 2005, to August 19, 2006, Santa Monica College shall have vehicle and pedestrian access from its Bundy Campus directly to Airport Avenue on the following conditions:
  - a. The College shall pay for all roadway improvements necessary to provide access. During construction of roadway improvements, access shall be provided through one of the gates used by BAE Systems.
  - b. The College shall pay \$1,000,000 to the City as the College's mitigation share for planned improvements along Airport Avenue.
  - c. The City shall restrict left turns onto Airport Avenue from vehicles exiting the Bundy Campus during such hours of College use as the City deems appropriate. Public transportation vehicles shall be exempt from such left turn restrictions. The College shall monitor and enforce such left turn restrictions.
  - d. The College shall relocate its existing Airport shuttle in time so as to not delay the start of construction of the Airport Park.
2. The City and College shall continue to meet to discuss cooperative measures to reduce traffic from College operations.
3. Upon adoption by the Board of Trustees of the master plan for the Bundy Campus, the College and City shall meet to discuss an extension of the access agreement.

Santa Monica College is a public institution. We provide much needed educational access and opportunities to transform lives. We fight poverty, crime, and hopelessness by providing a path to a better future. We educate future teachers, nurses, scientists, leaders, and society's workforce. We are elected directly by the citizens to fulfill this educational mission.

We are a two-year college, a public community college. One-third of our students take a single class. One-third of our students take two classes. One-third of our students are full-time.

One-third of our students are the first in their family to attend college. One-fourth of our students receive financial aid. One of our largest categories of financial aid is for single mothers with children.

For our first 30 years, we were the only community college west of Vermont Avenue. We are now one of only two community colleges west of Vermont Avenue.

We are a State leader in providing access and opportunity. In the 1940s, we became the national model for access to programs by combining our junior college with our technical institute. In the 1980s, we achieved educational equality for community college students statewide. Two years ago, we provided the leadership to achieve funding equality for community college students statewide.

We are widely acknowledged as operating one of the ten best community colleges in the nation. We are of significant local benefit. One-third of the voters in Santa Monica report that they or someone in their family have attended SMC within the last five years.

One of the most significant changes in Santa Monica since the 1980s has been the transition of our local economy from manufacturing to commercial. This has been matched on a national scale with the introduction of the computer into almost every human enterprise, with vastly increased specializations, and along with it, an emerging need for interdisciplinary studies.

Commercial pressures in Santa Monica, including retail, hospitality, and professional offices, have increased significantly since the 1980s, including the addition of 8,200,000 square feet of office space from 1980 through 2000. This growth came immediately on the heels of a decade-long construction boom in the 1970s of apartment buildings. Santa Monica today is among the most densely populated urban centers in America. In an ongoing survey of Santa Monica voters being conducted by the College, 95% of respondents believe traffic and parking problems in Santa Monica to be severe or moderate.

Pressures continue. Citywide, about 3,000 new housing units have been completed or are planned for the near future. In downtown Santa Monica, new parking garages with over 1,800 parking spaces are under construction. Another 2,000 new spaces are actively being planned.

Santa Monica College has operated a vigorous growth management program since the late 1980s. We are a minor player in overall planning issues citywide; as a consequence, there has been little attention paid to our efforts. Except for Pico Boulevard near the main campus, student impact on traffic corridors in Santa Monica is unremarkable. In the

survey cited above, with about 2,800 respondents to date, only 7% believe Santa Monica College to be among the primary causes of local traffic and parking problems.

The College's enrollment management policy has successfully reduced vehicle trips to the main campus.

The policy provides for largely self-contained satellite campuses, a student parking shuttle site, online instruction, and improved weekly and annual class scheduling. These programs account for about 30% of College workload (in other words, about 30% of student credit hours are provided through these programs). Santa Monica College is a State leader in all of these programs.

Public transit, rideshare, bicycling, and walking account for another 20% of College workload. Santa Monica College is the largest institutional user of public transit in Santa Monica.

At issue is an effort on the part of City of Santa Monica staff to make significant, and unnecessarily disruptive, changes to the orderly operation of the College's traffic management programs listed above.

In connection with determining the arrangements to move the vehicular access roadway that connects SMC's Bundy Campus site to Airport Avenue from its current location to a new location 300 feet to the west, City staff has proposed to tie this project to a proposed development of overall parking and traffic management strategies for the College.

First, despite having more than a year to propose this to the College at numerous times and under numerous circumstances, including the direct meetings of Council Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem with Board Chair and Vice-Chair on two separate occasions, this proposal arrives with one day's notice, no consultation, and only thirty days prior to the start of the Fall 2005 program at the Bundy campus.

Second, discussions with City staff this past week in connection with this proposal show a staff seriously at odds with College limitations, student needs, and community opinion.

- City staff proposes to immediately move the shuttle, in operation for 18 years at its present location, in the next four weeks to the south beach parking lot, despite the fact that this adds about five miles to the student's commute; places this traffic on City of Santa Monica streets; is at a site that is perceived as unsafe; and operates with a City requirement that beach parking lots and beaches are closed at sunset due to public safety concerns.
- City staff proposes to deny the College an ability to provide additional parking on the main campus, despite the fact that 78% of about 2,800 Santa Monica voters surveyed to date and expressing an opinion support increased parking on the main campus. City staff insists that all parking replacements be accomplished in some other manner than by replacing parking.

- City staff proposes to require parking fees at all campuses, even at the SMC sites at the Santa Monica Airport. 84% of respondents expressing an opinion do not favor increasing parking fees for students. The City of Santa Monica currently provides free parking for all of its employees and free parking during the day for downtown shoppers and moviegoers. Santa Monica College charges for parking at all campuses, including for employees, except at the Airport, and is willing to charge for parking at the Airport at such time as the Airport puts into place its own parking controls.
- City staff describes the SMC instructional sites as “hub and satellite.” This is incorrect. Programs are largely self-contained at each site.
- City staff proposes to provide pedestrian access “through the SMC 2005 fall semester” and then recommends an agreement to extend only to October 15, 2005. The fall semester ends December 20. Such a partial agreement would be detrimental to students.

The Board of Trustees encourages its staff to participate in discussions with both the City of Santa Monica and the City of Los Angeles to develop overall parking and traffic management strategies. Past efforts have successfully negotiated the introduction and expansion of neighborhood preferential parking, on campus parking structures, the shuttle system, the first satellite College campus, and the replacement parking structures.

However, cooperative strategies will not be successful if they arise outside of consultation and cause serious financial harm to the College.

At issue also is the opening of the now locked gates that provide access to SMC’s Bundy Campus site to Airport Avenue. These gates have been open for decades, and remained open after the College bought the site in 2001 and during the time BAE Systems operated at the site under lease from the College. As soon as BAE ended its lease, the City locked the gates without any notice to the College.

As the representatives of the community charged with fulfilling the mission of the only public college in Santa Monica, we ask a simple question: Why did the City of Santa Monica take away access from a public educational institution that was made available for many years to a private defense contractor?

We have diligently attempted to resolve this controversy through mutual discussions. The City of Santa Monica has asked us what our long-range plans for the site are, and at our July 6, 2005 meeting we provided the following direction with the intent to operate the site at a level consistent with the current shuttle lot operation and at a level consistent with the past use of the site by BAE Systems. This plan came about as a result of addressing neighbor concerns, City Manager concerns, and Airport staff concerns.

*Parking Supply:* Current, 609; Long-Range, 668; Prior Use, 654.

*Square Footage:* Current, 94,000; Long-Range, 94,000; Prior Use, 200,000.

*Net New Daily Trips (excludes prior daily trips from BAE but includes current SMC shuttle use):* Current Plan, which removes shuttle, uses the four-story building, and uses

excess parking supply, 2,041; Long-Range, which uses both buildings and no use of excess parking supply, 2,768. The total number of daily trips under the Current Plan is about equal to the total number of daily trips that existed in 2003, with the combined operation of BAE Systems and the SMC shuttle.

*Net New AM Peak Hour Trips:* Current Plan, 121; Long-Range, 142.

*Net New PM Peak Hour Trips:* Current Plan, 20; Long-Range, Net, 5.

*Net New 23<sup>rd</sup> North of Airport AM Peak Hour Trips:* Current Plan, 15; Long-Range, 17.

*Net New 23<sup>rd</sup> North of Airport PM Peak Hour Trips:* Current Plan, 2; Long-Range, <1.

Notwithstanding this proposal, which in its essence maintains the status quo, City staff's response is to impose a whole new set of conditions on the College. The City can identify no public purpose that is advanced by this course of action. It is not sound government and it is not sound public policy. Councilmember Bloom, in an informal discussion on July 23, 2005, told the college president that access to the Bundy Campus should be Bundy and there is no reason to have access to Airport Avenue. Yet the next day City staff unlocked the gates to the Bundy Campus from Airport Avenue with College permission so that Antique Market patrons using Airport property would have access to additional parking available across the street at the Bundy Campus.

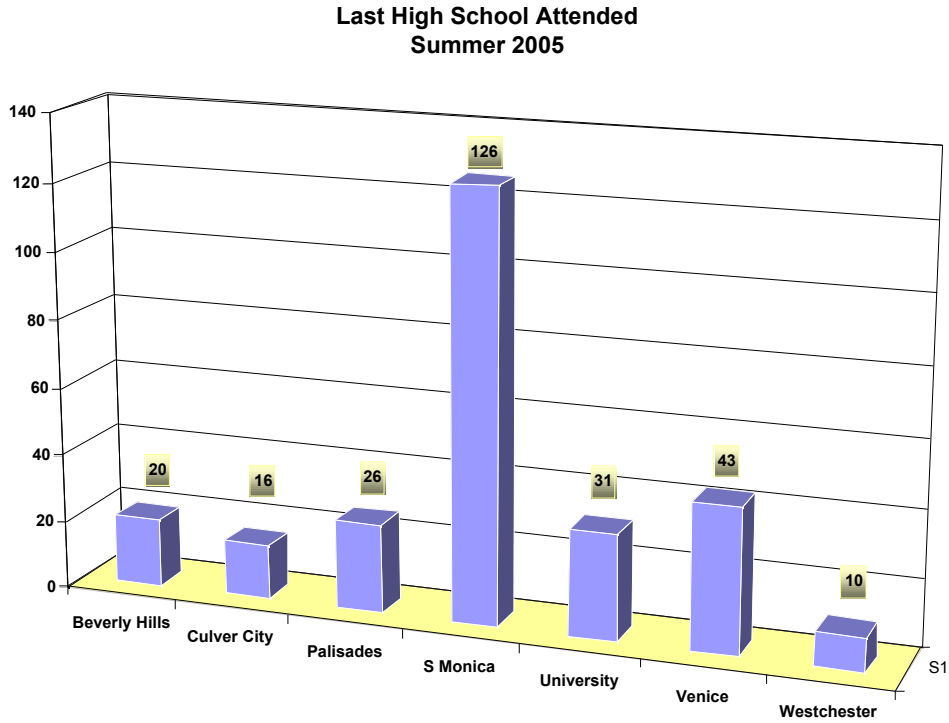
We make this offer to avoid canceling many of the general education Fall classes scheduled at the Bundy Campus and to avoid relocating the others from the Bundy Campus to the main campus. Without vehicle access to the Bundy Campus from Airport Avenue, we will be forced to take these actions. We believe it makes more sense to shorten rather than lengthen the commutes of our students.

Our hope is that City staff will structure its actions and dealings with the College on the premise that public education is a public benefit. That benefit is not limited to the rich or certain groups of people, or even to residents of Santa Monica. SMC has a rich tradition of opening its halls of learning to all people. This has improved the quality of life for tens of thousands of Santa Monica residents and for many others. The City should not fault SMC for its open door policies. The City of Santa Monica encourages non-Santa Monica residents to use the public resources of the city for shopping centers, office buildings, tourism, beach going, the pier, special events, and even aviation. We are sure that City staff sees many benefits to the City from all of these things. Why not recognize the importance and benefit of a local college that 99% of Santa Monica registered voters regard as valuable and that one out of three registered Santa Monica voters has a positive personal contact with?

SMC is an extraordinarily popular and respected institution in our community that provides invaluable educational opportunities. In recognition of this, we ask the City Council to direct your staff to implement the substitute proposal presented in this letter without delay, thereby allowing SMC to plan its Fall schedule in an orderly fashion without disrupting the lives of our students and faculty.

## High School Attended

This chart represents the last recorded feeder high school attended by students enrolled at the SMC Bundy Campus during the summer 2005 session.<sup>1</sup> 181 students indicated that they were currently enrolled in a high school.



<sup>1</sup> Students currently attending high school are included in this total.

## **BUNDY CAMPUS MASTER PLAN SURVEY OF SANTA MONICA RESIDENTS**

A door-to-door survey of registered Santa Monica voters is ongoing. This short survey will assist the College in various planning efforts.

The survey began April 20. Here are some highlights of voter responses through July 22. 2,776 Santa Monica voters have completed the survey to date.

- About one-third of respondents report that they or members of their family attended SMC within the last five years.
- 89% of respondents expressing an opinion regard SMC as “very valuable” and another 10% regard SMC as “somewhat valuable” to their community.
- 77% of respondents expressing an opinion believe the College fulfills its educational mission “very well” and another 21% believe it fulfills its educational mission “satisfactorily.”
- 95% of respondents believe traffic and parking problems in Santa Monica to be “severe” or “moderate.”
- The top five primary causes of local traffic and parking problems are believed to be excess local development (41% of respondents), regional traffic growth (36%), inadequate parking for residential population (30%), poor planning of streets and traffic lights (26%), and an inadequate transit system (24%). Respondents were able to provide multiple answers.
- Only 7% of respondents believe Santa Monica College to be a primary cause of local traffic and parking problems.
- The top four steps respondents believe Santa Monica College can take to manage traffic and parking problems associated with students and staff are improve bus access (95% yes of those expressing an opinion), encourage students and staff to come by transit (94% yes), encourage students and staff to bicycle to campus (92% yes), and increase parking available on campus (78% yes).
- 70% of respondents expressing an opinion support developing satellite campuses to take pressure off the main campus.
- Respondents do not favor increasing parking fees (84% against for those expressing an opinion) and are split with regard to reducing fees (50.2% yes).
- Respondents expressing an opinion overwhelmingly reject reducing student enrollment (89% no).
- 94% of respondents expressing an opinion support expanding the shuttle.

The survey includes respondents in the 90401, 90402, 90403, 90404, and 90405 zip codes. The survey will continue through the summer.