

BOARD OF TRUSTEES Santa Monica Community College District	INFORMATION March 1, 2022
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MAJOR ITEMS OF BUSINESS

INFORMATION ITEM NO. 19

SUBJECT: **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION - PROPOSED BOND MEASURE**

SUBMITTED BY: Superintendent/President

SUMMARY: The discussion will be for the purpose of taking input from the Board of Trustees. Based on Board of Trustees input, SMC will work with legal counsel to develop the Board of Trustees resolution, the full text of the revenue measure, and the 75-word ballot question. SMC and its bond consultant, TBWBH Propositions & Measures, will begin additional public outreach, including a web page, an online public feedback survey, a direct mail public feedback survey, and invitations to campus and community stakeholders for campus tours.

The deadline for the Board of Trustees to adopt a resolution calling for an election is 88 days before the election date, which in this case is no later than August 6, 2022. SMC staff believe that a resolution for Board consideration at its meeting on June 7, 2022 is prudent.

DISCUSSION OF COLLEGE FACILITIES PLANNING UPDATE AND MEANS OF FINANCING

If you are planning for a year,
sow rice.
If you are planning for a decade,
plant trees.
If you are planning for a lifetime,
educate a person.

This proverb introduced the Santa Monica and Malibu communities to SMC’s 1992 bond campaign—the first such campaign on behalf of the college since becoming its own district.

The campaign’s success proved exceptionally fortuitous as the bond funds provided SMC with a financial safety net during the years of rebuilding after the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

The facilities gained from this bond—and the four bonds since—have helped SMC secure its place as the #1 transfer school for 31 years to the University of California and the #1 transfer school to the University of California for African American students and for Latin(x) students.

For SMC, the most critical work today is achieving equitable outcomes for our students. Our Board of Trustees have prioritized and institutionalized this effort in multiple ways, including through “guided pathways” and innovative diversity initiatives. This work aligns with the California Community College “Vision for Success” and a new State funding formula uses this framework as one of its key metrics for apportionment. Having facilities that support these efforts will help ensure that SMC can serve students and the community at the levels to which we aspire.

SMC is now at the place of preparing for a bond measure to be placed on the November 8, 2022, election calendar. The proposed \$375 million measure would fund such projects as:

- Replacement of temporary classrooms—built in the 1950s, 1970s, and 1990s, these facilities are past their useful life.
- Replacement of a shop-lab building designed to train students for obsolete industrial jobs in the 1950s and 1960s with modern classrooms where students can learn today’s career skills. The State has identified this building as needing replacement and has placed it in line to receive partial State funding.
- Upgrading the Veterans Success Center.
- Expanding the overcrowded respiratory therapy program and adding facilities to support new pathway programs in Health and in Home Health.
- Constructing a Santa Monica College Police Department sub-station.
- Providing a local match to State and private funds for constructing Student Housing for full-time students who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The replacement buildings will support SMC’s guided pathways initiatives, will accommodate hybrid learning, and will meet new standards in particulate air filtration. Central to guided pathways is the full engagement of the classroom teacher in concert with support staff in promoting student success. Building design, including faculty offices designed for student engagement, specialized project and seminar rooms, group study rooms, and small kitchen facilities will increase student-teacher interaction and promote student success.

PLANNING

In 2019, the Board of Trustees commissioned the DLR Group to update the main campus master plan. Progress on the work was presented to the Board in February 2020. And then, in March 2020, the world confronted the COVID-19 pandemic. The disruption, now two years along, has resulted in significant shifts in educational delivery and educational access at Santa Monica College. On one hand, many elements of online teaching and online delivery of services have proven to be beneficial. However, the forced transition has also led to unequal student outcomes, reduced enrollment, and an educational environment less attractive to international and other tuition-paying students.

The DLR Group, conducting its own facility inspections in parallel with earlier State evaluations, had concluded that all the temporary buildings should be replaced, along with the former trades and technology building (Drescher Hall) and the Student Activities building.

Towards this effort, the DLR Group had recommended a one-to-one rebuilding of facilities taken off-line. SMC plans to lower the replacement ratio to no more than 0.65 to one, reflecting national trends for community colleges post-pandemic.

HYFLEX CLASSROOMS

New technology, including microphones and cameras, allow for the possibility of mixing in-person students with remote students, giving students the flexibility to attend lectures using the modality with which they are most comfortable. The idea is that not all students learn most effectively in the same way. Student parents, for example, may prefer to take classes from home., at least on some days. The same is true for some disabled students. And some students may just like having the ability to watch recorded versions of class at their convenience. The hybrid option also addresses the ongoing disruption due to COVID-19.

Cameras mounted in the back of the classrooms are capable of panning around the classroom and zooming in on specific locations. The cameras, which can be controlled by the instructor, can capture things like notes on a whiteboard and PowerPoint presentations in high definition. Classrooms can also have new dual projectors that let instructors simultaneously share their screen with students on Zoom and project the screen to the classroom. The new Math and Science Complex under construction is being equipped with HyFlex capability, and SMC is piloting converting some existing classrooms to use the technology. Bond funds will provide SMC with the means to convert older buildings as well.

POLL RESULTS

A survey recently completed by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research with 501 likely voters in the Santa Monica Community College District indicated that they would likely vote “yes” on a bond measure in the amount of \$375 million to improve local access to affordable higher education; provide affordable housing for homeless students; replace aging classroom buildings supporting university transfer, nursing, veterans, technology, math, and science; and improve student health and safety by repairing, constructing, modernizing, and equipping facilities, with citizens’ oversight, and public spending disclosure.

The initial vote question yielded 58% in support of the bond, with 32% opposed. After voters learned more about the uses of the proposed bond, support rose to 61%. Passage requires a 55% majority vote. The survey suggests at least three reasons to feel confident about the District’s opportunity to pass a bond in 2022:

First, SMC retains its high level of esteem from voters and its close connection to the community. 78% of Santa Monica residents say it makes the city “a better place to live.” 74% of District voters say it “opens the doors of college for working families.” 73% consider it “one of the best community colleges in California.” 72% say it is “a leader in student transfers” to the UC and CSU systems. 71% say it “is a good neighbor.” 65% say they are “very” or “somewhat” familiar with SMC’s “programs and activities.” Overall, SMC earns a 63% positive job rating from voters with just 14% who rate it negatively. 56% of respondents indicated that they or someone in their immediate family have attended Santa Monica College.

Second, surveys in advance of the successful 2004, 2008, and 2016 bond measures found initial support slightly below the eventual Yes vote proportion. That is, experience suggests that bond support is likely to grow from the levels found in the poll.

Finally, the survey also suggests that support will grow as voters learn more about how the bond will strengthen what voters already value about SMC: that it is an affordable doorway to college for Santa Monica and Malibu families, and that it offers high-quality skills and career training for jobs in emerging fields.

HOUSING

The 2021-22 state budget included \$2 billion in non-Proposition 98 funding for student housing grants, including for community colleges. SMC has applied for a planning grant to determine if a student housing project is feasible and financially viable. In applying for the grant, SMC proposed studying a 275-bed student housing facility of approximately 88,000 gross square feet on the City of Los Angeles portion of SMC’s Bundy Campus.

SMC’s interest in the project is to help the campus meet its established equity goals by making the cost of higher education more affordable for students. By providing on-campus housing, specifically targeted for low-income students, the campus is directly serving a need within the community. Students within the City of Santa Monica and surrounding cities face challenges such as higher than state average monthly rents, limited stock of affordable housing, and inequities for low-income housing. This project will directly respond to the community and student need for an increased supply of low-income housing and reduce students’ total cost of attendance at the college.

SMC conducted two focus group studies in late 2021 as part of its planning activities and learned that both shorter-term residents and longer-term residents were overwhelmingly supportive of SMC using bond funds to build housing facilities for full-time homeless students and students at risk of homelessness. Subsequently, in the January 2022 survey, 72% of the respondents agreed that such a use should be a high priority.

There are multiple means to fund low-income student housing. SMC will vigorously vie for and pursue all available options. By including student housing as an eligible use in the proposed bond measure, SMC is provided flexibility and the means to achieve the best use of its property and the best outcomes for its students.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

SMC first articulated its design and development principles in its 1998 Facilities Master Plan and again in the 2010 Facilities Master Plan. The expression of these principles is evident in today's main campus and satellite facilities. An important component of these principles is constructing a campus that is a community resource: responding with sensitivity to neighbors, recognizing the community of users, creating more visible and accessible public amenities, and integrating the college into the community. The campus should reflect a balance of built and open spaces, with a hierarchy of open space and pathways. Open space and landscaping can be used as organizing elements, with attention to respecting the landscaping heritage and enhancing plant diversity. Implicit in these prescriptions is elevating the user experience using visual variations, shade, lighting, and fragrance. Movement and sound can be achieved through air flow and water features. Physical interaction can be enhanced by seating arrangements and outdoor structures. These guiding principles would be articulated in any new building and landscaping designs, as would the practice of maximizing environmentally sustainable buildings and systems.

POTENTIAL JOINT USE PROJECTS

SMC is a strong advocate for and practitioner of joint uses and partnerships through its capital projects program. Past efforts have included the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, the City of Malibu, the City of Santa Monica, and the County of Los Angeles. Here are several potential projects for Board of Trustees consideration. Board discussion may identify other projects.

- Malibu Community Educational Uses—SMC could assist in funding enhancements to its instructional presence in Malibu in partnership with the City of Malibu and/or with the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. One such project could be a theater/performing arts facility for educational and public use.
- Streetscape improvements to Pearl Street—SMC could assist the City of Santa Monica and the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District in pedestrian improvements to Pearl Street, including street lighting and street furniture.