

Keep Local Control of Peralta! No “Special Trustee!”

We are the presidents of the academic senates of Peralta Community College District, and we write this letter to ask for your help. On September 20-21-- just a month from now-- we are concerned that the State Chancellor of California Community Colleges will urge the California Community College Board of Governors to assign a “special trustee” to our district. Such an action will effectively render the elected officials *for whom you and your neighbors voted* powerless, turning our district into something more reflective of a dictatorship than a democracy.

Democracy has always been at the heart of operations at Peralta Community College District. It is in the relationship between faculty and students, administrators and faculty, and perhaps most visibly in our general elections, where our Board of Trustees is elected by the vote of the citizens of the six cities we serve. The appointment of a special trustee would upend democracy and local control and make our district subject to the whims of an unaccountable outside administrator.

At its May meeting, the Board of Governors hailed Peralta for its success in addressing the fiscal and accreditation-related concerns that had led Peralta to bring in FCMAT, CBT, and a state fiscal monitor. The BoG also noted “board governance” issues, difficult relations between district management and the PCCD BoT. Assuming it accepts its own assessment of Peralta’s fiscal position, the BoG might cite the latter concern in any takeover effort. But whatever challenges district management faces in working with the board are part of the larger democratic challenge of public education. And if district administration can’t figure out how to work productively with the duly elected representatives of our neighborhoods, it simply has to work harder--or step down and make way for a team ready to engage, collaborate, and compromise, exactly what democracy demands of us all.

Our board is composed of seven *elected members* who are duty-bound to listen to *everyone* in the Peralta community: residents, students, classified professionals, teachers, librarians, nurses, counselors, and administrators. In essence, a takeover says that the community’s will is irrelevant, that consultants and political appointees get to call the shots. The potential assignment of a “special trustee” would not only be a slap in the face to our district and local democracy, but also to the people who truly make Peralta *work*. And there’s no doubt that under a state takeover, it will be our students who will suffer the most.

Please use Outlook’s like notification to let us know you support democracy and local control, and look for petitions and sample letters to local and state elected leaders in the days to come.

Signed,

Donald Saotome Moore

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President District Academic Senate,