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## **Independent panel to review troubled construction program at L.A. Community College District**

**L.A. Community College District Chancellor Daniel LaVista appoints a commission to review the district's rebuilding projects and recommend changes to ethics rules and construction oversight.**

By Gale Holland, Los Angeles Times

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An independent review panel was appointed Wednesday to recommend an overhaul of ethics rules and construction oversight for the Los Angeles Community College District's troubled rebuilding program.

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The 10-member commission — which includes former executives from construction programs at Caltech, UCLA and other institutions and agencies — will focus on successes in the district's \$5.7-billion campus construction program but will also examine problems identified in a recent Los Angeles Times series, Chancellor Daniel LaVista told the district board of trustees.

"There were issues that The Times identified that were not only alarming," LaVista said. "If the truth were told, they were embarrassing."

Los Angeles City Engineer Gary Lee Moore; Fred Harris, assistant vice chancellor in charge of finance and facilities planning for the California Community Colleges office; and Jim Cowell, the former deputy chief facilities executive for new construction at the Los Angeles Unified School District who now oversees capital construction at Caltech, were among those LaVista appointed to the panel.

The Times reported that tens of millions of dollars were wasted through poor planning, botched construction and frivolous spending.

LaVista said he has asked the panel, which includes labor and business representatives, to examine costs, checks and balances, and construction management, a role now filled by

teams of private contractors headed by URS Corp. of San Francisco. He said the review will differ from other committee reports and audits of the program because of the commission's short-term charge — three to four months — and independent makeup.

Laura Gutierrez, an activist who has fought the college district over leasing much of a planned campus at the old Van De Kamp bakery site to city job programs, questioned the panel's independence, noting that LaVista had said its members would report to him and not the board.

"The chancellor's going to filter it," she said. "It's another layer of bureaucracy."

Trustee Miguel Santiago said the commission should "have teeth."

"We're looking for an aggressive and focused approach," Santiago said, adding that the goal is to "restore confidence" in the college district's stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

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