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Los Angeles Community College District Personnel Commission

Its Inconsistent Practices and Inadequate Policies Adversely Affect District Employees and Job Candidates, Leading to Concerns About the Fairness of Its Decisions

Background

With nine colleges located throughout Los Angeles County and almost 230,000 students, the Los Angeles Community College District (District) is the largest community college district in the nation. To serve these students and administer the colleges, the District has almost 6,600 employees, over a third of which are *classified employees*—employees who work in nonacademic positions. With help from 15 staff, the District’s Personnel Commission (Commission) is responsible for personnel-related matters including establishing and administering a merit-based system for hiring, promoting, and classifying these employees.

Key Recommendations

To ensure consistency in personnel-related matters, the Commission should do the following:

- Define key qualification-related application terms for assessing applicants’ minimum qualifications and provide disqualification notices to applicants that describe reasons for disqualification.
- Establish a method to determine candidates’ overall examination scores, require raters to use the process, and require raters to justify their scores.
- Compensate employees monthly for performing higher-level work.
- Amend its rules to create a formal process for addressing all complaints and protecting whistleblowers.

Key Findings

- The Commission made inconsistent and unjustified qualification decisions in the examination process, which raised concerns about the impartiality of its decisions.
 - » We found inconsistencies in how staff evaluated some applicants for minimum qualifications and the Commission used ambiguous terms to describe minimum qualifications.
 - » The Commission does not disclose its reasons for disqualifying applicants nor does it advise applicants that they can request the reason for their disqualification.
 - » Its guidelines for scoring examinations allow raters to score candidates’ performances inconsistently—nearly one-third of candidates we reviewed received inconsistent scores. Raters assign their own weights to criteria and many provided minimal or no justification to support their ratings.
- The Commission typically does not pay employees who are assigned higher-level work outside of their assigned job duties until their assignment is concluded. As a result, some employees who perform such work are not paid promptly—in most of the cases we reviewed, employees were not paid until five to 11 months after they began the higher-level work.
- The Commission does not track all complaints it receives from employees nor does it address all complaints. Further, its current rules do not adequately protect whistleblowers from potential retaliation.

The Raters Provided Minimal or No Justification to Support Their Ratings for 19 of the 25 Candidates We Reviewed

