

PALL HIGH INFORMATION

Dear 8th Grade Families,

There is an important meeting tonight at Pal High from 6:30pm to 8:30pm in Gilbert Hall. The meeting will focus on two important issues for all stakeholders enjoying Pal in the Fall. The opportunity of a new dual schedule and implementation of one or two California Career Pathway Grants should be explored. One is in partnership with Santa Monica College, and the other with Da Vinci Career Inc. All stakeholders should attend and share their ideas and any questions they might have.

Thursday, May 7th Stakeholder Town Hall Meeting
2015-16 Funding Priorities and California Career Pathway Grant Partnerships
6:30 to 8:30pm in Gilbert Hall.

We apologize for the late notice, but we have just learned of the meeting.

Sincerely,
The Counseling Office

The following is information copied from a May 6, 2015 email from Pal High to current families:

Dear PCHS Community,

Pal has an opportunity to capture a piece of the \$20 million California Career Pathways Trust (CCPT) Grant in Round Two. In order to do this, we have discussed signing with Santa Monica College and Da Vinci Schools in two separate grant proposals. The CCPT is a grant program designed to expand education programs that create stronger partnerships between secondary schools, colleges, and employers to better prepare students for college and careers that are aligned to high-skill, high-wage, and high-growth jobs. The CCPT grant also provides funding to increase college completion rates, especially for low-income students and traditionally underserved populations. These goals are directly aligned with PCHS' Educational Goal 4: "PCHS will increase 21st century career readiness and opportunities for students." We believe that Pal's students would benefit greatly from both sorts of partnerships and through the grants associated with the Career Pathways project.

PAL'S THREE GRANT APPLICATIONS:

1. Round 1 LA H&TECH grant, administered by Pasadena City College, to establish pathways in design, visual-media arts and film. The \$15 million grant was awarded in 2014 and is already underway. As part of this grant, Pal High is collaborating with Santa Monica College and others and has begun several local partnerships. The website sums up that grant nicely: <http://www.pasadenacitycollege.edu/education/la-h&tech/>.
2. Round 2 proposed grant with Santa Monica College specifically focused entirely on an EDUCATION pathway. Pal would get \$20,000 as a participant in this grant, focused on expanding links to careers in education. Pal signed an agreement with the Los Angeles County Future Education Consortium with Santa Monica College serving as the lead agency/local agency.
3. Round 2 proposed new grant with Da Vinci, with Pal developing pathways in Design and Media Communications, with Pal getting \$400,000 as a participant in this grant. Pal signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in connection with the second round of CCPT funding the Da Vinci Career Pathways Partnership with Santa Monica College, and the other with Da Vinci Career Inc. This MOU is discussed below.

BENEFITS OF THE GRANTS

Pal students would be able to take classes at Pal that would award them college credit. In this way, the courses are much like AP courses, but they are really a broader range of subjects for students who may otherwise not qualify to take AP courses. These classes can be taught by Pal faculty who meet the requisite criteria, or by Santa Monica Community College professors. These credits would be transferable to the University of California as well as the California State University systems. They might be transferable at other institutions as well.

In addition, Pal students would be able to take courses to prepare them for a career upon graduation. Pal could offer a broader range of courses to help prepare our students for jobs when they graduate.

Another benefit is that the grant is addressing the high college drop out rate, especially for students typically underrepresented in higher education. By giving these students additional educational opportunities to earn college credits while in high school, as well as providing the potential for work experience and contacts, these students will be more likely to graduate in four years (rather than five or more), thereby reducing their debt load and reducing the chance that they will have to drop out of college for financial reasons. The grant program was, in part, developed to support the economy by assisting students in developing relevant career choices through developing a college pathway. This will assist in ensuring students can better as graduates will enter the work force in positions where they will earn living wages and the ability to pay for their education.

In short, these two proposals have much to offer Pal, and little if any downside. Accordingly, we believe that moving forward is in Pal's best interest.

COLLEGE CLASSES WITH EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION EMPHASIS

Under the proposal, Santa Monica College and its strategic partners in the public and private sectors would address workforce development needs, and how to provide appropriate courses at Pal to prepare our students for high-growth jobs. The model that CCPT has developed centers on Pal faculty who work with Santa Monica College professors, other educators, and business leaders in our area to develop real solutions to the problems that face our graduates.

COLLEGE CLASSES IN GRAPHICS AND MEDIA

Da Vinci Schools' grant is designed to offer mentoring and support to several additional charter schools in Southern California as each school designs and implements its own career pathway. Pal specifically focuses on design and design-related career pathways in Graphic Design and Media Communications for Pal students who would self-select into these smaller academy-type pathways within the school. The Da Vinci Schools' instructional model emphasizes rigorous, interdisciplinary academics, challenging technical education (e.g., computer-aided design), and authentic workplace experience with work as model for what works, but it will tie to each secondary partner to collaborate with their respective businesses and postsecondary partners to determine what works best for their school curriculum.

ACTION AND COMMUNICATION TO DATE

There have been multiple communications regarding the grants. A few people have asked questions. Before getting to the specifics, we'd like to suggest some things that everyone can do to become better informed of the facts and transparent communications surrounding these two grant applications.

First, you can listen to the audio recording of the Board's February 25, 2015 meeting where this issue was discussed. We have excerpted the relevant part of the meeting tape. Many of the issues that have been raised were addressed in that discussion. You can also read the February 25, 2015 [minutes](#) or [press](#).

Second, you can join us for a discussion with the people directly responsible for applying for the grant: Dr. Magan, Kim Theiss, Mary Bush, and Matt Wunder. They will be available at 11:45 am in the faculty cafeteria on Friday, May 8.

Third, you can attend the special Board meeting on May 8 at 3:30, where this issue will be discussed. Anyone who attends may make a public comment on the subject directly to the Board if they so choose.

Fourth, you can read the "Questions and Answers" document that was circulated about the grant on March 9, 2015. We've attached a link to it [below](#).

Finally, you can read Matt Wunder's letter to the Board dated March 2015, in which he addressed a number of concerns that had been raised, including questions about an alleged conflict of interest. It is available [here](#) to the letter text.

We hope that by reading (or listening to) these materials, you will gain some insight as to what the grant is, and why we believe it is good for Pal.

With all of that in mind, we'd like to address some of the specific concerns that have been raised. There have been concerns that if Pal offers one or both grants, it will have to change its dual schedule, or the Pal faculty will not be able to teach the courses that they already teach or want to teach. There have also been concerns that rather than the awarded money, in the long run we will actually have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to participate. A question was raised about Da Vinci's high wages and the ability to pay for their education.

ARE COLLEGE CLASSES NEW AT PAL?

One question is whether new college courses are new at Pal. The answer is that we have had a relationship with West Los Angeles College for many years by which dual courses are taught at Pal as well as at our students. In addition, Santa Monica College is offering a media class at Pal being taught by Lisa Saxon. The CCPT grant with Santa Monica College would expand this already successful program and give our students more opportunities.

GRANTS AND THE BELL SCHEDULE

Along these lines, some have suggested that in order to comply with the grant (should one or more be awarded) that would have to change its bell schedule. This suggestion is wrong. Pal could comply fully with all of its obligations under the MOU and should be awarded the grant without changing its bell schedule. By offering alternative periods or courses open, it may allow college instructors to teach with the school day instead of only 7th period.

HAVE STAKEHOLDERS BEEN INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS?

Another question is whether stakeholders have been adequately involved in this process. We believe that there has been stakeholder involvement in the issues that relate to the grants. The Board and the Long Term Strategic Planning Committee have been hearing for a long time that Pal should provide a greater selection of courses that will enhance our students' career opportunities. For example, during a Spring 2014 professional development event, a student spoke passionately on this issue in the context of the Local Control Accountability System. These needs were reflected in one of our two proposals for 2014-2015, developed following a Board member attended by members of all stakeholder groups and discussed and debated at Board meetings earlier in the school year. Specifically, Goal 4 in the "CHS will increase 21st century career awareness and opportunities for students through expanding the Career Center and increasing community involvement in other career links, including the changing and increasing of internships." While Goal 4 is not precisely the same as the programs that will be offered should the grant be awarded, the concerns underlying that Goal are well aligned with the grant.

In addition, prior to the February 25, 2015 Board meeting, Kimberly Theiss shared information about the potential for multiple college course offerings on campus through a variety of pathway grants including those that might be made possible through the Los Angeles County Future Education Consortium coordinated by Santa Monica College and a California Career Pathways partnership with Da Vinci Design High School with Department Chairs and Curriculum Council.

WHERE ARE WE IN THE PROCESS NOW?

First, whether the two grant applications have been awarded. This may be a non-issue. Some have asked whether Pal is immediately bound to the grant process. The answer is that Pal is not bound until after it signs a contract with the lead organizations Da Vinci is one of them) of the awarded grants (one or more of the grants are funded). Pal has signed a Master MOU document between Da Vinci and donors of other proposed partners in the grant - employers, colleges, and other charter high schools and middle schools, among others. The Master MOU was prepared in order to meet grant application requirements, however it contains explicit language that Pal High "will be asked to sign a formal grant agreement" prior to payment of the funds to Pal High. Again, however, the grant has not been awarded, and Pal can decide that it does not want to go forward with the process. Of course, if Pal were to pull out of the partnership, it would not obtain any part of the grant.

As we said earlier, the Master MOU with Da Vinci was discussed at some length by the Board at its February 25, 2015 meeting, and it will be discussed again at its special May 8, 2015 meeting. Anyone who believes that participating in the grant would be harmful to Pal is invited to raise their views known to the Board either in writing, by a memorandum at the Board meeting, or by talking to any Board member. In addition, we invite any concerned stakeholder to address any views they might have to our administration by talking to Ms. Theiss or Dr. Magan, or writing.

Should a grant be awarded, Pal will then be asked to sign a more binding obligation to participate. Should Pal sign such an agreement, there could be consequences should Pal later decide to rescind its decision, however that is an issue that will arise only when Da Vinci requests the grant.

DOES PALI HAVE TO PAY OUT MONEY FOR THESE GRANTS?

No. Under the Master MOU, Pal will not have to pay out more money than it makes in connection with the Da Vinci proposal. It pays fees and has of the grant (should it be awarded). Pal would be obligated to continue the work begun in years one and two, continue to provide opportunities for students to enroll in college courses and have work-based experiences. At Da Vinci will Pal be required to pay any money to anyone in order to meet its grant obligations. At the February 25, 2015 Board meeting, this question was discussed directly. Pal was assured that the application was that Pal would meet its obligations by providing services, not through cash payments. For example, the grant requires a "non-traditional" position to facilitate student involvement in college courses, work-based experiences, etc. During years one and two of the grant, the funds received from the grant will pay for the position, then in the 3rd year, once the program is well-established, we anticipate the work load would be significantly less. A Pal administrator could perform that function, and the value would be considered a part of Pal's contribution to have "paid" the "in-kind" contribution to also be the value of classroom space for courses.

PROCESS OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PRINCIPAL SIGNING THE MOU

Dr. Magan signed the Master MOU before the February 25, 2015 Board meeting in order to meet the grant application deadline. Because the MOU did not require that Pal to go forward with the Da Vinci grant (should it be awarded) and because the MOU did not contemplate any cash payments by Pal in advance, even if Pal did go forward, the Board did not have the authority to sign the MOU as presented at its February 25, 2015 meeting. The Master MOU did not require signatures of any funds by Pal High, until January 2015, any other. Dr. Wunder stepped down from the Pal High Board, and thereafter there is no conflict of interest. (Da Vinci did request Letters of Intent to apply to the CCPT grant in November 2014, but at that time, did not identify any potential partners.) Dr. Wunder does not benefit personally from the Master MOU in any way.

Dr. Magan and Pal High actually were asked to join in the grant application by the grant writer, Tom Kelly, an independent consultant who works with several charter schools across California. We know Dr. Magan for a couple of years, and indicated to Dr. Magan that the grant meeting and professional development activities for other charter schools were specifically being targeted at a diverse range of charter schools across Los Angeles, including new startup charter that are not yet open, some operated by CMCS, some independent, and at least one conversion charter. It is important to note that Da Vinci, in the administration of the grant (if awarded) will in no way have any control or influence over any participating charter school's governance or operations. Rather, Pal will simply serve as an advisor and guide to each school as it designs and implements its own career pathway in accordance with the grant objectives. Da Vinci will provide various materials each school will adopt for its own purposes, will offer professional development to charter school's administration and staff in expanding successful pathways, and will help facilitate partnerships with local businesses and colleges to offer opportunities for the participating charter school's students. Diverse charter schools - serving mostly diverse populations of students across LA - were interested to participate in order to help them the ways that "best practices" in pathways development are adopted and adapted by different schools.

In the Da Vinci Career Pathways Partnership, Da Vinci would act as a facilitator to 16 high quality high schools and middle schools in Los Angeles that are in various stages of implementing career pathways to a diverse group of 100 students across the Los Angeles region. There is one way or another to implement Career Pathways and how the pathways are implemented is up to each individual school. If awarded, Da Vinci would serve as a facilitator of monthly partnership meetings and regular professional development focused on pathway design and development, and the sharing of best practices and strategies to create better outcomes for kids. The primary goal of the Da Vinci grant proposal is to design and implement rigorous academic and career pathways at public charter schools throughout Los Angeles so all students graduate college-ready and career-oriented.

If the grant is awarded, in exchange for participation in the CCPT and other services performed under the Da Vinci Career Pathways Partnership, Pal High would receive \$200,000 in grant funding over a five-year period, out of a total grant amount requested of \$7.5 million. If Da Vinci is asked for less than \$2.5 million, then Pal's funding would be reduced proportionately with the award. Pal will not get any Da Vinci Schools or Matt Wunder any amount of money now or in the future in support of the Partnership's work. Pal will receive "in-kind" contributions to the form of facilities, administrative support, some staffing costs (salaries and benefits) and other operating expenditures to be determined to administer the grant.

We look forward to answering any questions you may have regarding these two grant proposals on May 8, 2015. Please do not hesitate to contact us if there are any additional questions or concerns regarding these grants.

Respectfully,
Dr. Magan and the Board of Trustees

CONTACT US

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Pal High Middle School

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The school was built by
to facilitate teaching for students, and/or to your address book.

