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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**West Los Angeles College Dental Hygiene Program
Among 15 Given Initial Approval for Participation
in Historic California Community College Bachelor's Degree Program**

West Los Angeles College was among 15 community colleges selected for initial approval Tuesday by the California Community Colleges Board of Governors for inclusion in a pilot program to develop a bachelor's degree in a specified field. For West L.A., that field will be dental hygiene. Following additional review, the Board will consider final approval for this historic expansion of higher education in March.

"The selection of this program at West Los Angeles College is wonderful news for prospective students and the entire district," said Dr. Francisco Rodriguez, chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District. "It affirms the excellence of our faculty, curriculum, and facilities in dental hygiene, and the great partnerships we have in the Los Angeles region with prospective employers. The opportunity to make this high quality, four-year degree available for roughly \$10,500 in this high-need profession suggests to me that we will be immediately oversubscribed."

California State Senate Bill 850 authorized the Board to establish this program at no more than 15 community colleges.

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“We are thrilled to have been selected to be a part of this important pilot program,” said Scott Svonkin, president of the LACCD Board of Trustees. “This program could offer our students the chance to expand their horizon in higher education at an affordable cost. That’s why our board voted to participate in the great opportunity afforded by SB850. Our students’ chances of achieving their dream of a better life and brighter future will be helped by programs like this.”

Other California community colleges were chosen Tuesday for fields ranging from respiratory therapy to automotive technology to aerospace manufacturing. “Students will have a range of programs from which to choose to earn high quality, affordable and in-demand degrees,” said Brice W. Harris, chancellor of the California Community Colleges. “California employers win too, as they will have improved access to highly qualified candidates in these fields.”

“Over at least the last decade, dental hygienists trained at West have had a 100% record of passing the same board examinations that are required of students in bachelor’s programs in order to practice their profession,” said Dr. Nabil Abu-Ghazaleh, president of WLAC. “Receiving the bachelor’s degree from West will open the door for our graduates to private practice, leadership positions, and transfer into master’s programs.”

Currently, a baccalaureate degree in dental hygiene is not offered at California’s state colleges and universities. This degree is only available at private institutions where the cost can range from \$80,000.00 to \$120,000.00 versus the significantly lower cost of delivering an equivalent program in a community college setting.

“This has been a long time coming, a game changer for graduates of the program, and it will open doors that were barriers in the past,” said Carmen Dones, chairperson of the Allied Health Division at WLAC. “ Graduates will now be able to apply to be an educator, researcher or corporate representative, in addition to clinical practice. I have been receiving phone calls, emails and visits from interested students who are excited about this opportunity.”

About the Los Angeles Community College District

The Los Angeles Community College District, the nation's largest community college district, serves one-quarter million students a year in more than 36 cities in Los Angeles County at its nine colleges. The District covers nearly 900 square miles and has educated and trained the region's diverse workforce since 1969.