

# Los Angeles Times

## Pasadena City College's retiring chief gets \$400,000, documents show

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Pasadena City College officials agreed to pay controversial President Mark W. Rocha more than \$400,000 as part of his retirement settlement, according to documents released Thursday.

College officials initially denied that Rocha was receiving financial incentives as part of his departure, but school leaders agreed to pay him 18 months of salary and some of his potential legal fees. Rocha was also able to help prepare the news release announcing his retirement and received a letter of recommendation from Anthony Fellow, president of the college's board of trustees.

Rocha had been at Pasadena City College for nearly four years. Some faculty and students criticized Rocha for his management style and for approving the cancellation of a winter session.

His resignation becomes effective August 31, but his last official working day was July 31, according to the contract. Rocha, who has also worked at West Los Angeles College and Seton Hall, did not respond to a message left on his cell phone.

Initially, Pasadena City College officials declined to disclose details about Rocha's severance package. But after The Times and other media organizations filed formal requests for the agreement, college administrators released the documents. They declined to say, however, when the severance package was approved and which, if any, trustees voted to approve it. Rocha signed the agreement August 4, three days before his retirement was announced. Fellow signed the agreement August 7. No other trustees signed the document.

When told by a reporter that government agencies must disclose financial agreements and votes, the college's general counsel, Gail S. Cooper replied, "The board does everything it is required to ... under the law. Maybe you need to talk to a lawyer."

In response to The Times' public records request for the date and result of any vote approving the settlement, Cooper wrote that those records "to the extent they exist are protected by the attorney-client privilege."

"Votes and agreements are public," said Terry Francke, general counsel for the open-government group Californians Aware. "There should be no cuteness over that."

Trustees either did not respond to emails or could not be reached for comment.

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