

State Center chancellor Deborah Blue to get full pay, benefits for extra year

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State Center Community College Chancellor Deborah Blue will be bankrolled for a year after she ends her official duties in June, getting her \$225,000 annual salary plus benefits such as health insurance, a car allowance and other expenses.

Blue announced her retirement this week from State Center on the same day the district board voted to shorten her contract.

The embattled leader was supposed to serve until at least 2017. But that changed Tuesday night when the State Center trustees voted 4-2, with one abstention, to accelerate her departure.

Her [amended contract](#) shows she'll officially retire on June 30, 2015. But Blue will wrap up her regular day-to-day work this summer, when she'll resign as chancellor and take on the role of chancellor emeritus for a year.

During that year, she'll continue to receive the same salary and benefits she receives now. She'll get health and retirement insurance, a \$700 monthly car stipend and a \$500 allowance for other expenses.

The contract doesn't spell out Blue's job duties as chancellor emeritus, but says she'll have some responsibilities and will continue to report to the board. In the meantime, the board will conduct a nationwide search for her replacement.

Her salary, for the remainder of this year and all of next year, will be about \$300,000.

The new agreement comes with several strings.

If Blue gets another job that pays more than what she makes now, she'll no longer get paychecks from the district. If she accepts a position with a lower salary, the board will pay the difference.

The settlement also keeps both the district and Blue from filing lawsuits against each other.

Finally, it prevents both parties from publicly saying anything negative or potentially damaging about the other side. Blue and the board trustees are also supposed to avoid talking publicly about the terms of the agreement.

Board President Patrick Patterson said the deal was by mutual agreement.

"It was her desire, and our desire," he said. "There was give and take, like any time you reach an agreement." Patterson declined to give more details, and Blue declined to comment.

While Blue's fate -- and what she will get paid -- are now clear, questions remain about why the board took up her contract in the first place.

Her job status has been under closed-door review by college district trustees over the past two months. The board has been tight-lipped about the meetings -- none of the trustees even revealed the discussions were about Blue.

But Blue's supporters ultimately learned about the board's deliberations, with several coming out over the past few days to speak publicly on her behalf. Some questioned whether Blue's race -- she is African American -- was a factor in her ouster. At board meetings on Saturday -- and again on Tuesday -- many local education and civic leaders pleaded with board trustees to change their minds.

More than 100 attended Tuesday's meeting at Reedley College, where supporters like Fresno Unified Trustee Cal Johnson lauded Blue and expressed confusion about why the board wanted her out.

"I was just disappointed because they had a cross-section of the community" supporting her, he said. "It wasn't just black people, it was everybody talking on her behalf."

In the past few days, several city leaders who include Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin, Fresno Unified Superintendent Michael Hanson and Fresno City Council Member Oliver Baines took up Blue's cause.

Baines said Wednesday he wasn't surprised by Blue's severance deal, but still felt "shocked" and "disappointed" by the outcome.

"There was no public scandal, it seems like this was a divided board and not a unanimous decision," he said.

Other supporters, like Fresno Unified career education program manager Ellie Honardoost, called the decision a setback for the community.

"I'm just sad to see her go, period," she said.

Previously: [State Center chancellor Deborah Blue to end official duties in June](#)

CONTRACTS: Chancellor Deborah Blue's [original contract](#) and [amended contract](#).

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