In the six years since the last accreditation self study, College of the Desert has worked toward continuous quality improvement in each of the standards. Immediately following receipt of the 2004 self study evaluation report, work began to address the recommendations. The college consistently reported its work to the commission starting with a progress report in October 2006, a focused midterm report in March 2008, a midterm visit in April 2008, and the final follow-up report in March 2009 that was accepted by the commission in June 2009 with no additional requirements. As with most public colleges during the current economic downturn, College of the Desert has been tasked in recent years to do more with less and to meet the needs of its many students with their varied educational goals. Through a comprehensive planning process and effective shared governance, the college has managed to remain true to its mission while still maintaining fiscal stability.

While dealing with state funding cutbacks, the college has been the beneficiary of a $346.5 million bond measure that has provided funds to update and upgrade existing facilities as well as to build new facilities on the main campus and new education centers to the east and west of the existing campus. Planning of these facilities has been driven by the Strategic Master Plan, the Educational Master Plan, and the Facilities Master Plan. Each of these plans was created with significant input by the practitioners who will teach and provide services in these facilities.

Themes have been prevalent in the self study, including institutional commitments, evaluation, planning, and improvement, student learning outcomes (SLOs), organization, dialogue, and institutional integrity. Beginning with institutional commitments, the college worked to refine its mission, vision, and values statements to assure that the college was clear in terms of what we do to serve our community and our students. Mission is at the core of planning including strategic planning and other institutional plans at the college level and program review at the program, area, and unit levels. Mission drives instruction and services, informing curriculum, student services support services, and resource allocation.

The theme of evaluation, planning, and improvement was a major emphasis for the institution for the last several years and is strongly present throughout all of the standards. The college has worked hard to build its culture of evidence over the past six years. Although data collection and research are currently centralized in the Information Technology and Institutional Research area, the analysis of the data and the dialogue around the data and how it affects student learning is shared throughout the organization. The college is continuing to refine what data is important and how to use it effectively for program review, evaluation, planning, and continuous process improvement. The college’s annual plan, which drives achievement of the strategic plan, contains key performance indicators and requires progress reports three times per year to ensure that all areas are on target to achieve their goals. Decision making is focused on data-informed practices.

The theme of SLOs is becoming an integral component of the institution and its planning. Evidence of this progress is present in each of the standards. SLOs are identified for all courses and programs of study. Institutional outcomes have been created to cover all programs and services at the college. Additionally, all courses align with program
and institutional outcomes, as they enter into the assessment cycle. Faculty are learning to work with the Office of Institutional Research to obtain data specific to their programs based on assessments they are using to evaluate improvements in program and changes to curriculum.

The theme of organization is clear in the manner in which learning and learning outcomes are planned, measured, assessed, and communicated to the public. As described in Standard II, curriculum is created, assessed, and modified when necessary by faculty in a cycle that includes program review and dialogue about the process. Standard I outlines a planning process that is also organized in a cycle that begins with the college’s mission, establishes goals, objectives, and key performance indicators, includes program review in all units, and assesses their effectiveness as the foundation for establishing the goals for the following year. Standard III reflects a structure that ensures resource allocation is organized around the planning process. Standard IV makes clear that decision making is based upon a participatory process that is evaluative.

Dialogue is an essential component of all decision making and as such is a recurrent theme in each of the standards. The college has a strong culture of participatory governance that includes the utilization of dialogue as described in the accreditation themes. One of the college’s expressed values statements is to “communicate with authenticity in pursuit of broad understanding, effective dialogue, and inclusive decision making.” The college implemented dialogue training during the last self study process in 2004 and has continued to utilize the technique for effective decision making throughout the institution. Numerous committees addressing various issues and processes such as strategic planning, budget development, information technology, curriculum, research, SLOs and assessment, and program review, exist for the purpose of broad dialogue and informed decision making. This same philosophy exists for dialogue at the program, area, and unit levels. As defined, research reports and data inform the dialogue, and everyone “at the table” has an equal voice.

Institutional integrity is reflected in each area of the standards, with the shared governance structure providing the checks and balances that assure integrity in all that the college does. As stated, the college values are:

- Student Success: Student learning and growth are central to all we do.
- Diversity and Inclusion: We embrace the diversity of our community and uphold the dignity and worth of the individual.
- Integrity: We are open, honest, and reliable.
- Respect: We value the thoughts, words, and actions of our students, colleagues, and community.
- Dedication: Our faculty, staff, and administrators are responsible leaders who effectively implement programs in support of student learning and efficient college operations.
- Professionalism: We are current in our areas of expertise and embody high standards of conduct.
- Communication: We communicate with authenticity in pursuit of broad understanding, effective dialogue, and inclusive decision making.
- Lifelong Learning: Learning is essential to living for our students, faculty, and staff.

The college strives to be transparent in its planning and decision making, utilizing internal and external data scans and sharing outcomes with all campus
constituents and the community. The college works to provide clear expectations of our faculty, staff, and students and to provide the public with clear and effective communications.

**Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness**

**IA: Mission**
As part of the Strategic Master Plan process, the college’s mission, vision, and values statements were rewritten. Annually, as the first step in the planning process, they are reviewed and affirmed or amended if necessary. Establishing the mission is an organic process and must be responsive to the college’s and the community’s needs. The mission, vision, and values statements are the basis for all planning and evaluation endeavors at the college. The Educational Master Plan, Technology Plan, Facilities Master Plan, and all resource planning and allocation support our mission.

**IB: Improving Institutional Effectiveness**
Institutional effectiveness has been and continues to be a major area of focus for the college. Since the previous self study and subsequent reports, College of the Desert has devoted significant time and effort to improving the process designed to ensure institutional effectiveness. A Strategic Master Plan was developed as well as an Educational Master Plan, Technology Plan, and Facilities Master Plan. A new overarching strategic planning process was developed and improved to provide the integration needed as well as to link planning to resource allocation.

The college’s long-established program review process has matured into an integrated approach that encompasses both the five-year comprehensive review and an annual program review update. The process was initially established in instruction and then mirrored in all other units on campus. Program Review continues to be the locus of campus planning and resource allocation. SLOs have followed a similar path. The comprehensive planning process, which includes program review and SLO data, is designed to evaluate and assess the effectiveness and quality of the institution.

**Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services**

**Standard IIA: Instructional Programs**
The college’s instructional program is guided by the Curriculum Committee, which utilizes program review information and the SLOs and assessment cycle while adhering to state and district policies. The use of CurricuNet was initiated in 2009 and will assist faculty and staff with the management and assessment of student learning, assessment, and curriculum. The instructional area delivers classes to a diverse student body and balances new class offerings between academic, basic skills, noncredit, and career/technical classes. The college also serves business and industry in the community through the Partnership and Community Education program.

**Standard IIB: Student Support Services**
Although the current economic crisis in California has had a devastating effect on categorical program budgets, the area has continued to provide a high level of student support and services. Dialogue and cooperation among the various Student Affairs programs and the rest of the college community have permitted the numerous programs, including matriculation, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, Disabled Student Programs and Services, Upward Bound, outreach, student health, financial
aid, student life, counseling, transfer services, and the career center to provide the needed support necessary for student success.

Since the 2004 Self Study, Student Affairs has developed and is beginning to assess SLOs for all of its service areas. They are also a part of the college’s robust and integrated program review process. Student Affairs has made improvements through technology so that students have increased ways to access and support their educational experiences and to be successful in achieving their academic goals.

The Cravens Student Services Center, a one-stop facility that includes the majority of Student Affairs, was opened in fall 2010 and greets students at the main entrance to the campus.

**Standard IIC: Library and Learning Support Services**

The recent reorganization resulted in the creation of the School of Library, Learning Resources, and Distance Education. The College of the Desert library provides library and other learning support services that support the educational programs at the college by providing a wide variety of information resources, information services, equipment, facilities, and technology to fulfill its institutional goals. The library has risen to meet the challenges created by the development of new satellite educational centers and the growth of courses offering instruction through online delivery.

The library provides online databases, electronic books, periodical articles, and reference materials. Within the last year, the library staff has begun to add online tutorials to assist students in using the online databases. As part of a “multi-agency library,” access is also provided to materials that the COD library does not generally purchase.

**Standard III: Resources**

**Standard IIIA: Human Resources**

The college, through its Human Resources department, seeks highly-qualified personnel to staff its positions and support its mission and purpose, adheres to established policies, orders staff development opportunities, encourages diversity, and incorporates human resources values and objectives into the strategic plan. The institution assures the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing personnel who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to provide and support the college’s programs and services. The Board of Trustees has outlined policies for recruitment and hiring of personnel, and the college has developed detailed hiring policies and procedures. The college’s integrated program review process provides planning direction and supports decision making in the allocation of human resources.

**Standard IIIB: Physical Resources**

The college now serves over 13,000 students on our Palm Desert, Indio, and Mecca/Thermal campuses. The availability of bond funds has enabled the college to leverage its state funds in order to expedite construction of many new buildings. The college has done extensive planning to maximize the use of the bond funds, updating the facilities master plan in 2002–2003 and again in 2010 with substantial opportunity for faculty, staff, and community members to provide input. The college has been successful in integrating its institutional planning by department program reviews and strategic goals, which drives its Education Master
Plan and Facilities Master Plan. The added space that has been created as a result of the bond funds has allowed the college to meet the increased demand to meet student’s needs and is designed to integrate and promote interdisciplinary relations and student learning.

**Standard IIIIC: Technology Resources**
The institution makes decisions regarding the use of technology services, facilities, hardware, and software by examining a multitude of areas. Program review, the annual planning process, and the Facilities Master Plan are all tied to the Technology Plan and then directly linked to the Educational Master Plan. The Technology Plan is concerned with all aspects of technology at the college in accordance with, and in support of, the college’s mission. The Information Technology and Institutional Research department aims to provide the level of technology and support needed for instructional programs and college operations and is deeply committed to improvement and planning. The department provides administrative support to assure consistent, reliable, responsive services, including those in support of the college’s online offerings. The Information Technology and Institutional Research department, in collaboration with the Academic Senate’s Education Technology Committee, also acts as the clearing house for purchasing all equipment and software.

**Standard IIID: Financial Resources**
While the primary objective of institutional planning is to successfully meet the educational needs of the student body in the college’s service area in the context of the mission, a prerequisite objective of the college is to ensure the financial health and viability of the institution. Institutional planning at College of the Desert emphasizes the realistic assessment of availability of financial resources and of expenditure requirements. The college strives to manage its planning and assessment of programs and services and to incorporate the results into the operating budget. The College Planning Council reviews all planning and priorities that are produced at the unit level in order to evaluate their relationship to program review and student learning as well as their impact on the financial budget for the coming year; this process ultimately drives the budget development. Financial statements and unqualified audit opinions demonstrate that the college’s finances are expended in a manner that supports the mission and goals of the college.

**Standard IV: Leadership and Governance**

**Standard IVA: Decision-Making Roles and Processes**
College of the Desert prides itself on its multiple avenues of communication to enable participatory decision making and collegial consultation. “The College Planning Council Handbook” specifically outlines the college’s “Decision Making through Collegial Consultation” process including the various committees and their membership, role, and desired products that are involved in ongoing dialogue and collegewide decisions. The college also has numerous advisory committees and business and community partnerships through which it gathers input to assist in evaluation, planning, improvements and decision-making.

**Standard IVB: Board and Administrative Organization**
The College of the Desert Board of Trustees is an experienced five-member independent policy-making body that reflects the public interest in their activities and decisions. They have established and monitor policies that support student learning and
the fiscal stability of the district. The board reviews all policy documents, financial records, and planning documents with decision, commitment, and integrity. Both the board and the president take their fiduciary responsibilities seriously. As a team, they ensure that the district goals and needs are fiscally sound.

The current president was selected and continues to be evaluated using existing policies. He is delegated appropriate authority and responsibilities as defined by policy and is responsible for planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting, and developing personnel as well as assessing institutional effectiveness. The president delegates appropriate responsibility and authority to his vice presidents, who in turn administer their areas. With participatory governance in place, there is support for effective conduct of business and decision-making at the college level.