



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sept. 15, 2017

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

James Meier 760.773.2589 (office)
760.848.8230 (cell)
Interim Director,
Community Relations

College of the Desert expands tuition-free program for current freshmen and incoming 2018 graduates

PALM DESERT, CA — College of the Desert proudly announced Friday it will not only extend its tuition-free program to the next academic year, but it will also extend it to two years for 2017 and 2018 local high school graduates.

The college's successful pLEDGE program launched in the current 2017-2018 year, benefiting about 1,000 new students who graduated from local high schools in the spring and began attending College of the Desert full-time this year.

Superintendent/President Joel L. Kinnamon, Ed.D., and the Desert Community College District's Board of Trustees announced during their monthly board meeting today (Friday) that the current pLEDGE students will also receive free tuition in the 2018-2019 academic year and that local 2018 high school graduates will receive free tuition for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic years.

"We do not want the cost of college to prevent students from pursuing a higher education," said Kinnamon, who announced the inaugural pLEDGE program during his State of the College address in January.

"This program helps remove some of the economic barriers to entering the first year of college while also providing critical guidance, skills and support that is essential to students achieving their educational and career goals," he said.

And the program doesn't cost taxpayers anything extra.

About 75 percent of College of the Desert students qualify for some sort of financial aid, including PELL grants and Board of Governors (BOG) fee waivers. All incoming pLEDGE students apply for those programs as part of the admissions process. Generous donors in the desert community fund the difference.

"The pLEDGE is a powerful commitment to the educational and economic futures of our students, college, and community," Kinnamon said. "We are so grateful to all who contributed or will contribute to our pLEDGE campaign making college possible for every local high school student who wants to pursue the dream of higher education."

“Our message is clear: If you want to go to college, you can at COD,” Kinnamon said.

Students in the pLEDGE program must enroll full-time (at least 12 units per semester) at the college; participate in the college’s EDGE (Engage, Develop, Grow, Empower) summer program before their first semester; maintain good academic standing; and participate in 10 hours of community service, mentoring or internships.

College of the Desert has campuses in Palm Desert, Desert Hot Springs, Indio and Mecca/Thermal. The community college also offers classes at off-campus sites such as Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs and Palm Springs high schools.

About College of the Desert:

Established in 1958, College of the Desert (COD), located in Palm Desert, is an accredited community college serving eastern Riverside County, California. The College leads the region in providing quality, higher education, technical training and lifelong learning opportunities, in response to the dynamic needs of our diverse community. The College serves more than 14,000 credit and 1,000 non-credit students each year and is the number one source of transfer students to California State University, San Bernardino Palm Desert Campus. For more information, visit www.collegeofthedesert.edu.

#