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**College of the Desert Will Submit Accreditation Follow-Up Report,  
Demonstrating Sustained Governance Reform**

PALM DESERT, CA (February 20, 2026) — College of the Desert (COD) will be submitting a Follow-Up Report to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) for the purpose of demonstrating resolution of deficiencies cited by the Commission last year. The Follow-Up Report reflects the nature and substance of the College, as well as its best efforts to align with ACCJC Standards and policies, and was developed with appropriate participation and review by the campus community.

The report details how COD has addressed three specific ACCJC standards related to Board governance, including the requirement that the Board act as a collective entity, conduct rigorous self-evaluations, and fully delegate administrative authority to the Superintendent/President without interference.

Since 2023, the Board of Trustees has revised key board policies, participated in scenario-based legal training, conducted a candid public self-evaluation facilitated by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), and established a permanent Board Continuous Improvement Committee to sustain accountability over time.

"This report reflects a genuine cultural transformation in how our Board governs," said COD Superintendent/President Val Martinez Garcia. "Our Trustees have embraced what it means to lead with one unified voice, to trust administrative leadership, and to hold themselves accountable through honest self-reflection. That kind of disciplined governance is what our students and our community deserve."

Highlights of the report include a unanimous 5-0 Board vote affirming President Garcia's employment agreement, updated ethics and delegation policies codifying clear boundaries between governance and operations, and a structured self-evaluation process that directly informed Board training priorities.

College of the Desert most recently underwent a comprehensive institutional review in 2024, which included submission of its Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and a peer review team visit in September 2024. In January 2025, ACCJC reaffirmed the College's accreditation for 18 months and required submission of a Follow-Up Report addressing three governance standards. ACCJC accreditation operates on a regular multi-year cycle that includes institutional self-evaluation, peer review, Commission action, and ongoing monitoring as needed.

The Follow-Up Report has been reviewed by the College's shared governance leaders, including the Academic Senate, Classified Staff, and Associated Student Government, and will be submitted to ACCJC in March 2026.

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## **About College of the Desert**

College of the Desert serves more than 20,000 students across five campuses in Palm Desert, Indio, Mecca/Thermal, Desert Hot Springs, and Palm Springs. Founded in 1958 and opened in 1962, College of the Desert is governed by the Desert Community College District Board of Trustees. Through the pLEDGE program, the college offers eligible students two years of tuition-free education, removing financial barriers and expanding access to higher education in the community. College of the Desert provides the Coachella Valley with affordable degrees, certificates, and transfer pathways, offering in-demand programs that prepare workforce leaders and strengthen the local economy.