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College of the Desert Earns Full Reaffirmation of Accreditation

PALM DESERT, CA (June 25, 2026) — College of the Desert has received full reaffirmation of accreditation through 2031 from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), successfully concluding a follow-up review process focused on governance standards.

Over the past year, the Board took significant and meaningful steps to strengthen policies, enhance self-evaluation practices, participate in governance training, clarify Board and CEO roles, and institutionalize continuous improvement processes. The Commission determined those actions successfully addressed the standards.

Accreditation is the process through which colleges demonstrate educational quality, institutional effectiveness, financial stability, and commitment to continuous improvement. Accreditation is also required for institutions to participate in federal financial aid programs and ensures the transferability of academic credits.

In January 2025, ACCJC reaffirmed the College's accreditation while requesting a follow-up report focused on three governance-related standards involving Board unity, Board self-evaluation, and delegation of authority to the Superintendent/President. Over the past year, the College implemented policy updates, governance training, enhanced evaluation processes, and structural improvements designed to strengthen institutional governance.

The Commission's action affirms that those improvements have been successfully implemented and demonstrated. "This outcome reflects the dedication and commitment of our entire College community," said Val Martinez Garcia, Superintendent/President of College of the Desert. "Our faculty, staff, students, administrators, and Board of Trustees embraced this process as an opportunity for improvement. Today's action confirms the strength of our institution and our continued focus on serving students and our community."

Board of Trustees Chair Ron Oden said the reaffirmation demonstrates the College's commitment to accountability and effective governance. "The Board took the Commission's recommendations seriously and committed itself to strengthening governance practices and continuous improvement," Oden said. "This reaffirmation reflects the progress we have made together and reinforces confidence in the College's future."

The reaffirmation comes during a period of significant momentum for the College, including implementation of Vision 2030, expansion of workforce education programs, growth in partnerships across the Coachella Valley, and construction of the new Palm Springs Campus scheduled to open in 2027.

College of the Desert serves more than 20,000 students annually across the Coachella Valley and remains committed to providing accessible, affordable, high-quality education that supports student success and regional economic vitality.

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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.