

PEER REVIEW TEAM REPORT

College of the Desert
43-500 Monterey Ave.
Palm Desert, CA 92260

This report represents the findings of the Peer Review Team that conducted a focused site visit to College of the Desert September 26 - 27, 2024. The Commission acted on the accredited status of the institution during its January 2025 meeting and this team report must be reviewed in conjunction with the Commission's Action letter.

Dr. Timothy Karas
Team Chair

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College of the Desert
Peer Review Team Roster
TEAM ISER REVIEW

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Mendocino College
Superintendent/President

Dr. Marilyn Flores, Vice Chair
Rio Hondo College
Superintendent/President

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ACCJC STAFF LIAISON

Dr. Gohar Momijan
Vice President

**College of the Desert
Peer Review Team Roster
FOCUSED SITE VISIT**

Dr. Tim Karas, Team Chair
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Superintendent/President

Dr. Marilyn Flores, Vice Chair
Rio Hondo College
Superintendent/President

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San Bernadino College
Academic Senate President, Faculty

ADMINISTRATIVE MEMBERS

Ms. Dorothy Battenfeld
Santa Rosa Junior College
Board President, Trustee

ACCJC STAFF LIAISON

Melynie Schiel
Vice President

Summary of Focused Site Visit

INSTITUTION: College of the Desert

DATES OF VISIT: September 26-27, 2024

TEAM CHAIR: Dr. Tim Karas

This Peer Review Team Report is based on the formative and summative components of the comprehensive peer review process. In March 2024, the team conducted Team ISER Review (formative component) to identify where the college meets Standards and to identify areas of attention for the Focused Site Visit (summative component) by providing Core Inquiries that the team will pursue to validate compliance, improvement, or areas of excellence. The Core Inquiries are appended to this report.

A 4-member peer review team conducted a Focused Site Visit to College of the Desert September 26-27, 2024 for the purpose of completing its Peer Review Team Report and determination of whether the College continues to meet Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, Commission Policies, and U.S. Department of Education regulations.

The team chair and vice chair held a pre-Focused Site Visit meeting with the college CEO on September 4, 2024 to discuss updates since the Team ISER Review and to plan for the Focused Site Visit. During the Focused Site Visit, team members met with approximately 15 faculty, administrators, and classified staff in formal meetings, group interviews and individual interviews. 4 Team members met with five Trustees from the College. The team held one open forum, which was well attended, and provided the College community and others to share their thoughts with members of the Focused Site Visit team. The team evaluated how well the College is achieving its stated purposes, providing recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement. The team thanks the College staff for coordinating and hosting the Focused Site Visit meetings and interviews and ensuring a smooth and collegial process.

Major Findings and Recommendations of the Peer Review Team Report

Recommendations

Recommendations to Meet Standards:

Recommendation 1: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the governing board acts as a collective entity and that once the Board of Trustees reaches a decision, all board members act in support of board decisions. IV.C.2

Recommendation 2: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the Board of Trustees adheres to its policy on a regular evaluation that it uses the results to improve board performance, academic quality, and institutional effectiveness. IV.C.10

Recommendation 3: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board delegate full responsibility and authority to the CEO to implement and administer board policies without Board interference. IV.C.12

Recommendations to Improve Quality:

Recommendation 4: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the Board regularly assess its policies for their effectiveness in fulfilling the college mission and revise them as necessary. IV.C.7

Introduction

College of the Desert (COD) has been in continuous operation since 1958. COD serves the people in the eastern Riverside County. Since its founding in 1958 COD has grown from welcoming 500 students in 1962 to 16,500 students in 2022-2023. COD's main campus is located in Palm Desert with centers in Mecca/Thermal, Indio, and Palm Springs. COD offers 82 degrees, 103 certificates of completion, and 85 noncredit certificates of accomplishment.

The College Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) accurately portrays the mission, vision, and values of the institution. The team reviewed numerous materials supporting the self-evaluation report, which included documents and evidence supporting the Standards, Eligibility Requirements, Commission Policies, and USDE regulations. Evidence reviewed by the team included, but was not limited to, documents such as institutional plans, strategic planning documents, program review procedures and reports, student learning outcomes evidence, course syllabi, distance education classes, College policies and procedures, enrollment and student success information, committee minutes and materials, and governance structures.

During the focus site visit, team members conducted interviews and meetings, and observations involving College employees and students. An open forum provided the College community with opportunities to provide feedback, comments, and perspectives to the evaluation team.

The College chose two QFE projects. The first project, Diversity, Equity, and inclusion Project will focus on three pillars to reassess the College's Hispanic Serving Institutions practices; engage students early and more frequently; and create connective academic and service strategies integrating students' cultural knowledge, identity, and needs. The second project, Enrollment Project, will focus to diversify and align course offerings times and modalities with student needs; create proactive future semester course schedules and offerings using Student Enrollment Plan information and declare program Meta-Majors; and to align academic programs with regional workforce needs through the industry sector and community engagement.

The Team recognized through the ISER Review and the Focused Site Visit many aspects of the college that were notable. The team confirmed the college's BP/AP4105 is robust and inclusive of the training requirement of faculty to teach in an online environment, regular and substantive interaction definition and requirements, and ongoing professional development requirements to maintain the right to teach online. The campus is a Peer Online Course Review (POCR) certified campus and has an established process for faculty to have courses reviewed for alignment to the CVC Course Design Rubric. The trifecta of a robust policy regarding training for online teaching, the comprehensive initial training, and the campus POCR review processes ensures the instructional content and methods meet or exceed the academic and professional standards, resulting in student success. The college has a robust Program Enhancement Process (PEP), which culminates in PEP Program Showcases. This process and the showcases were

mentioned as a highlight during the Focused Site Visit. This process could provide model guidance for other institutions.

The college has a deep-rooted commitment to student success. This work is multifaceted with direct services to students, including the many affinity centers. Support services, including behavior health, are tied together through the Advocate System, which allows a team to respond and assist students in an integrated manner.

College of the Desert has a long history of community partnership and support. Legacy partnership, include the MacCallum Theater, to more recent partnership exemplified by the nursing program support from local hospital networks. Philanthropic work is noticeable college-wide.

During the Focused Site Visit the college's commitment to serving the local workforce needs in its career pathways was noteworthy. Examples included the design/construction of tiny houses, the culinary/hospitality offerings, health careers, and auto/new Roadrunners facility.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Authority

The team confirms that College of the Desert is authorized to operate as a post-secondary, degree-granting institution based on continuous accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). In addition, the College operates under the authority of the State of California Education Code, which establishes the California community college system under the leadership and direction of the Board of Governors (State of California Education Code 70900-70901).

The College meets the ER.

2. Operational Status

The team confirmed that College of the Desert is operational and provides educational services to approximately 12,000 unduplicated student enrollments (2021-2022) within degree applicable credit courses for the period of the 2022-2023 academic year.

The College meets the ER.

3. Degrees

The team confirmed that as of fall 2023, College of the Desert offers 18 Associate of Arts degrees, 20 Associate of Arts Transfer degrees, 33 Associate of Science degrees, 15 Associate of Science Transfer degrees, and 194 certificate programs (credit and noncredit). In 2022-2023 957 certificates and 1,408 associate degrees were awarded.

The College meets the ER.

4. Chief Executive Officer

The team confirmed that the Board of Trustees employs a Superintendent/President as the chief executive officer of College of the Desert (COD). Interim Superintendent/President Laura Hope serves as the chief executive officer of the college and was appointed by the COD Board of Trustees in June 2023. The CEO does not serve as a member of the Board of Trustees nor as the board president.

The College meets the ER.

5. Financial Accountability

The peer review team confirmed that College of the Desert performs audits for all financial records, which are conducted by an independent accounting firm. Audit reports are certified, findings and associated College responses are appropriately documented. Audits for College compliance with federal programs.

The College meets the ER.

Checklist for Evaluating Compliance with Federal Regulations and Related Commission Policies

The evaluation items detailed in this Checklist are those which fall specifically under federal regulations and related Commission policies, beyond what is articulated in the Accreditation Standards; other evaluation items under ACCJC standards may address the same or similar subject matter. The peer review team evaluated the institution’s compliance with Standards as well as the specific Checklist elements from federal regulations and related Commission policies noted here.

Public Notification of a Peer Review Team Visit and Third Party Comment

Evaluation Items:

X	The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comment in advance of a comprehensive review visit.
X	The institution cooperates with the review team in any necessary follow-up related to the third party comment.
X	The institution demonstrates compliance with the <i>Commission Policy on Rights, Responsibilities, and Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions</i> as to third party comment.

[Regulation citation: 602.23(b).]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

X	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.

Narrative:

The team confirmed College of the Desert has provided opportunities for third-party comment in advance of the team visit. College of the Desert has published the process for third-party comment on its website. The Commission did not receive any third-party comments. Information on the 2024 Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER), site visit, and visiting team is available to the public through the accreditation webpage.

Standards and Performance with Respect to Student Achievement

Evaluation Items:

X	The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance across the institution and has identified the expected measure of performance within each defined element. Course completion is included as one of these elements of student achievement. Other elements of student achievement performance for measurement have been determined as appropriate to the institution's mission. (Standard I.B.3 and Section B. Presentation of Student Achievement Data and Institution-set Standards)
X	The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance within each instructional program and has identified the expected measure of performance within each defined element. The defined elements include, but are not limited to, job placement rates for program completers, and for programs in fields where licensure is required, the licensure examination passage rates for program completers. (Standard I.B.3 and Section B. Presentation of Student Achievement Data and Institution-set Standards)
X	The institution-set standards for programs and across the institution are relevant to guide self-evaluation and institutional improvement; the defined elements and expected performance levels are appropriate within higher education; the results are reported regularly across the campus; and the definition of elements and results are used in program-level and institution-wide planning to evaluate how well the institution fulfills its mission, to determine needed changes, to allocating resources, and to make improvements. (Standard I.B.3, Standard I.B.9)
X	The institution analyzes its performance as to the institution-set standards and as to student achievement and takes appropriate measures in areas where its performance is not at the expected level. (Standard I.B.4)

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(i); 602.17(f); 602.19 (a-e).]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

X	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

The team confirmed using evidence provided and internal meetings involving all stakeholders, College of the Desert has self-identified elements of student achievement performance across the institution as appropriate to its mission and has identified the metrics pertinent to each element.

Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

Evaluation Items:

X	Credit hour assignments and degree program lengths are within the range of good practice in higher education (in policy and procedure). (Standard II.A.9)
X	The assignment of credit hours and degree program lengths is verified by the institution, and is reliable and accurate across classroom based courses, laboratory classes, distance education classes, and for courses that involve clinical practice (if applicable to the institution). (Standard II.A.9)
X	Tuition is consistent across degree programs (or there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition). (Standard I.C.2)
X	Any clock hour conversions to credit hours adhere to the Department of Education's conversion formula, both in policy and procedure, and in practice. (Standard II.A.9)
X	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission <i>Policy on Credit Hour, Clock Hour, and Academic Year</i> .

[Regulation citations: 600.2 (definition of credit hour); 602.16(a)(1)(viii); 602.24(e), (f); 668.2; 668.9.]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

X	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

The team confirmed that College of the Desert meets the credit hour and programs meet the minimum of 48 semester hours of total student work. These are documented in college policy.

Transfer Policies

Evaluation Items:

X	Transfer policies are appropriately disclosed to students and to the public. (Standard II.A.10)
X	Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to accept credits for transfer, and any types of institutions or sources from which the institution will not accept credits. (Standard II.A.10)
X	Transfer of credit policies identify a list of institutions with which it has established an articulation agreement.
X	Transfer of credit policies include written criteria used to evaluate and award credit for prior learning experience including, but not limited to, service in the armed forces, paid or unpaid employment, or other demonstrated competency or learning.
X	The institution complies with the Commission <i>Policy on Transfer of Credit</i> .

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(viii); 602.17(a)(3); 602.24(e); 668.43(a)(11).]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

X	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

The team confirmed the relevant policies are provided in the College Catalog.

Distance Education and Correspondence Education

Evaluation Items:

For Distance Education:	
X	The institution demonstrates regular and substantive interaction between students and the instructor in at least two of the methods outlined in the Commission <i>Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education</i> .
X	The institution ensures, through the methods outlined in the Commission <i>Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education</i> , regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors prior to the student's completion of a course or competency.
X	The institution demonstrates comparable learning support services and student support services for distance education students. (Standards II.B.1, II.C.1)
X	The institution verifies that the student who registers in a distance education program is the same person who participates every time and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit.
For Correspondence Education:	
N/A	The institution demonstrates comparable learning support services and student support services for correspondence education students. (Standards II.B.1, II.C.1)
N/A	The institution verifies that the student who registers in a correspondence education program is the same person who participates every time and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit.
Overall:	
X	The technology infrastructure is sufficient to maintain and sustain the distance education and correspondence education offerings. (Standard III.C.1)
X	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission <i>Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education</i> .

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(iv), (vi); 602.17(g); 668.38.]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

X	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the

	Institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.
	The college does not offer Distance Education or Correspondence Education.

Narrative:

The team confirmed the college's BP/AP4105 is robust and inclusive of the training requirement of faculty to teach in an online environment, regular and substantive interaction definition and requirements, and ongoing professional development requirements to maintain the right to teach online.

Student Complaints

Evaluation Items:

X	The institution has clear policies and procedures for handling student complaints, and the current policies and procedures are accessible to students in the college catalog and online.
X	The student complaint files for the previous seven years (since the last comprehensive review) are available; the files demonstrate accurate implementation of the complaint policies and procedures.
X	The team analysis of the student complaint files identifies any issues that may be indicative of the institution's noncompliance with any Accreditation Standards.
X	The institution posts on its website the names of associations, agencies and governmental bodies that accredit, approve, or license the institution and any of its programs, and provides contact information for filing complaints with such entities. (Standard I.C.1)
X	The institution demonstrates compliance with the <i>Commission Policy on Representation of Accredited Status</i> and the <i>Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions</i> .

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(ix); 668.43.]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

X	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

The team confirmed College of the Desert has policies and procedures that address student complaints and summaries of the policies are available in the catalog and online. The information is also provided in their Student Guidebook. Per AP 5530, most student complaints are first addressed in the Office of Student Life and referred appropriately. The students' initial complaints from the past seven years are kept in the Office of Student Life. The student complaint files for the previous seven years (since the last comprehensive evaluation) are available; the files demonstrate accurate implementation of the complaint policies and procedures. Information and process of complaints with the ACCJC and other accrediting agencies for programs are provided on the website.

Institutional Disclosure and Advertising and Recruitment Materials

Evaluation Items:

X	The institution provides accurate, timely (current), and appropriately detailed information to students and the public about its programs, locations, and policies. (Standard I.C.2)
X	The institution complies with the <i>Commission Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Policy on Representation of Accredited Status</i> .
X	The institution provides required information concerning its accredited status. (Standard I.C.12)

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1) (vii); 668.6.]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

X	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

The team confirmed program descriptions and degree requirements, board policies, admissions policies, and center locations are all identifiable on the College of the Desert website and College Catalog. The catalog details requirements for transfer, degrees, and certificates. Department pages list faculty, certificates/degrees offered, sequences for those certificates/degrees, and program completions.

The Accreditation status of the College and its programs is appropriately represented on the College website. There is a direct link to the College of the Desert accreditation webpage on the footer on the college webpage. The accreditation webpage has a direct link to the ACCJC website, where anyone may file a complaint with ACCJC.

Title IV Compliance

Evaluation Items:

X	The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program, including findings from any audits and program or other review activities by the U.S. Department of Education (ED). (Standard III.D.15)
X	If applicable, the institution has addressed any issues raised by ED as to financial responsibility requirements, program record-keeping, etc. If issues were not timely addressed, the institution demonstrates it has the fiscal and administrative capacity to timely address issues in the future and to retain compliance with Title IV program requirements. (Standard III.D.15)
X	If applicable, the institution's student loan default rates are within the acceptable range defined by ED. Remedial efforts have been undertaken when default rates near or meet a level outside the acceptable range. (Standard III.D.15)
X	If applicable, contractual relationships of the institution to offer or receive educational, library, and support services meet the Accreditation Standards and have been approved by the Commission through substantive change if required. (Standard III.D.16)
X	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission <i>Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Accredited Organizations</i> and the <i>Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV</i> .

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(v); 602.16(a)(1)(x); 602.19(b); 668.5; 668.15; 668.16; 668.71 et seq.]

Conclusion Check-Off:

X	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

College of the Desert has shown that they are in compliance with Title IV. Their last three audits show no unqualified opinions with no material weaknesses. The College is identified as a low-risk auditee and USDE has not identified any issues with financial aid responsibility. College of the Desert follows the federal regulations that require first-time borrowers of direct loans to

receive counseling available at studentaid.gov. The College has appropriate contracts and MOUs for third-party service providers for library and student support programs.

Standard I

Mission, Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

I.A. Mission

General Observations:

College of the Desert demonstrates its commitment to its mission which states its broad educational purpose in support of student learning and achievement. COD, through its decision-making, planning and resource allocation processes, aligns its mission with institutional priorities and ensures it is meeting the educational needs of students. The mission is reviewed, vetted with the college community, updated as needed, approved by the Board of Trustees and is widely distributed.

Findings and Evidence:

College of the Desert's mission describes the institutions broad and educational purpose and offered programs in "basic skills, career and technical education, certificate, transfer preparation, associate degrees, noncredit and distance education." COD utilizes external scans and other data analysis to ensure it is serving its intended student population as is evidenced by the College of the Desert Fact Book. COD demonstrates its commitment to student learning and student achievement by establishing programs and services through the College's planning and resource allocation processes (I.A.1).

College of the Desert uses data to determine how effectively it is accomplishing its mission throughout its planning and resource allocation process and ensures its successful implementation through the development their Educational Master Plan. Through its program review updates and the data from the Student Success Scorecard, COD demonstrates that the mission directs institutional priorities in meeting the educational needs of its students. (I.A.2).

College of the Desert's annual program review update (PRU) and its annual PRUs from multiple departments demonstrate the COD's programs and services are aligned with its mission. Annual planning as evidence by its Facilities Master Plan, Educational Master Plan and Strategic Master Plan demonstrate that the mission guides institutional decision-making, planning, and resource allocation, and informs student learning and achievement goals. (I.A.3)

The College's mission statement along with its vision and values are widely published on their website, college catalog, class schedule and in planning documents. The mission is reviewed through its collegial governance process, provides opportunity for public review and comment, and is approved by the Board of Trustees. Prior to board approval, the Assessment of Planning

and Outcomes (APO) Subcommittee initiates, periodically reviews, and recommends the mission to the College Planning Council to vet and approve (I.A.4).

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

I.B. Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

General Observations:

Various committees (e.g., CPC, OAC, DEC, Faculty Senate) and groups work together to meet the Standard. SLO assessment and program review assessment work in tandem to drive ongoing institutional quality. Instructional SLO assessment is reflective of course, program, and institutional-level outcomes. This occurs for student services as well. The College, after identifying weaknesses in its initial equity-focused planning, has become increasingly sophisticated in its analysis of DI data to close persistent equity gaps and has structured activities/interventions to address them.

Findings and Evidence:

College of the Desert demonstrates a sustained, substantive, and collegial dialog about student outcomes, student equity, academic quality, institutional effectiveness, and continuous improvement of student learning and achievement through an integrated program review process (comprehensive PEPs and annual PEPup reports) aligning with ongoing dialog and decision-making through a collaborative network of committees (CPC, OAC, faculty Senate, etc.). Further, the College's commitment to meeting the Standard is also expressed through regular planning and related reports such as the Student Equity Plan. (I.B.1)

College of the Desert defines and assesses student learning outcomes for all instructional programs and student and learning support services evidenced through the Assessment Schedules for All Areas and the comprehensive PEP and annual PEPup program review process. Instructional and non-instructional areas have learning outcomes that are regularly assessed. (I.B.2)

College of the Desert has established institution-set standards for student achievement appropriate to its mission, assesses these standards to support continuous improvement, and publishes this information. This is evidenced through the institutional effectiveness webpage and evidence submitted that shows institutional set standards and related data patterns. (I.B.3)

College of the Desert uses assessment data and organizes its processes to support student learning and achievement as demonstrated by its data-informed goals expressed in the Strategic Master Plan and through committee work such as CPC. (I.B.4)

Through a robust comprehensive and annual program review process known as PEP and PEPup, the COD aligns mission and program review to engage in data-informed discussion and analysis related to goals and objectives, student learning outcomes, and student achievement. Data is disaggregated in these formats for analysis by program type and mode of delivery. Further, the College's annual planning process that produces college-wide plans such as the Strategic Master Plan also serves to assess College mission and goals. (I.B.5)

College of the Desert disaggregates and analyzes student achievement data for subpopulations of students primarily through the 2022-2025 Student Equity Plan. COD took steps to improve upon the 2019-2022 Student Equity Plan through a concentrated effort to examine disproportionate impact data to identify target outcomes for 2022-2025 to improve student learning and achievement. (I.B.6)

The College Planning Council and Educational Policies and Practices Committee work in tandem to ensure that policies and practices across the institution are evaluated to ensure their effectiveness in supporting academic quality and accomplishment of mission. Further, the regular program review processes (PEP and PEPup) along with regular evaluation of planning and resource allocation prioritization, serve as further evidence of ongoing evaluation of college practices. (I.B.7)

Through various department and committee reporting structures such as webpages with current minutes and/or reports, along with emails and announcements by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, COD broadly communicates the results of all its assessment and evaluation activities so that the College has a shared understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and sets appropriate priorities. This is further evidenced by large-scale planning documents such as master plans. (I.B.8)

College of the Desert practices a robust integrated cycle that incorporates systematic evaluation and planning annually (and comprehensively at five-year intervals) at department/unit levels that feed into large-scale planning and evaluation efforts expressed through large-scale documents such as master plans. All planning and evaluation reflect the College mission to ensure continuous improvement and fidelity to broad educational purposes and aims. All areas of the college (academic, service, financial, technological, physical) participate in the documentation of planning and resource allocation in alignment with college goals and mission. (I.B.9)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

I.C. Institutional Integrity

General Observations:

College of the Desert demonstrates institutional integrity in publications provided to the public and staff. The team applauds efforts by the Educational Policies and Practices Committee to comprehensively review policies. COD uses its catalog, website, class schedule, and other documents to describe degrees and certificates, programs, courses offered, learning outcomes, success rates, and accreditation status.

Findings and Evidence:

College of the Desert maintains many resources that communicate the programs and services that support the College's mission. COD publishes a Catalog that provides stakeholders current and prospective students with accurate and timely information regarding requirements, course content, policies, expected outcomes, and student support services. In addition, the College publishes its accredited status via its website, catalog, and other appropriate sources. (I.C.1, I.C.2)

College of the Desert's Office of Institutional Research collects, analyzes, and publishes student achievement data primarily on the College website. The College uses documented assessment and evaluation of student achievement to assess academic quality. The College uses a variety of communication tools in communicating matters of academic quality to prospective students and to the public. Information from the Student Success Scorecard is also on the COD website and the state Chancellor's office. The College's Fact Book is on the website and contains retention and success rates, fall-to-spring persistence, degrees and certificates awarded, and retention and success rates by subject. (I.C.3)

College of the Desert's Catalog, website, and class schedule provide the public information regarding the purpose, content, course requirements, transferability, and institutional outcomes for the College's degrees and certificates. (I.C.4)

The Educational Policies and Practices Committee reviews College policies and procedures for currency and effectiveness. The committee meets regularly, and a review of committee minutes indicates a thorough and organized discussion. (I.C.5)

College of the Desert publishes information on its website, its catalog and schedule that informs current and prospective students regarding the total costs of education including textbooks and other materials. (I.C.6)

Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 4030: Academic Freedom addresses academic freedom and responsibility. The policy supports academic freedom for faculty and all constituencies and assures the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. (I.C.7)

Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 5500: Standards of Conduct establishes policies and procedures concerning student conduct including academic integrity and honesty. These policies are also published in the catalog and are available on the College website (I.C.8).

Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 4030: Academic Freedom establishes the responsibility of faculty to maintain objectivity and to separate personal conviction from professionally accepted standards. The Faculty Professional Code of Ethics also establishes the rights of faculty to "the free pursuit of learning" while emphasizing the need to maintain "high scholarly standards for their discipline and appreciation and respect for others". (I.C.9)

College of the Desert is a public institution of higher education and does not seek to instill specific beliefs or world views. (I.C.10)

Not applicable to College of the Desert. COD does not operate in a foreign location. (I.C.11.)

As demonstrated by review of evidence, the College demonstrates commitment to compliance with Commission policies, eligibility requirements, and standards. COD complies with ACCJC requirements for reporting and accreditation. Notices for team visits and changes for online courses were submitted to the ACCJC. COD communicates its accreditation activities and status to the college and the public. Accreditation status, institutional self-evaluation, ACCJC team reports, and Commission actions are posted on the public website. (I.C.12)

College of the Desert coordinates with the ACCJC and other accrediting agencies. COD communicates clearly with external agencies and is complaint. COD provided evidence demonstrating clear communication and observance of accreditation with external agencies. COD maintains relationships with other external accrediting agencies, including the California Bureau of Registered Nursing (BRN), Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR), and the California Association of Alcohol and Drug and Educators (CAADE). (I.C.13)

College of the Desert is a public institution and demonstrates its commitment to high quality education and student learning over other financial objectives as evidenced by its mission statement, planning, and financial resource allocation processes. The College also publishes its accredited status on the College website. (I.C.14)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

Standard II

Student Learning Programs and Support Services

II.A. Instructional Programs

General Observations:

The evidence provided in the ISER demonstrates that College of the Desert (COD) offers a wide variety of instructional programs via multiple instructional modalities, and all are aligned with the institution's mission. Across the 156 instructional programs offered at COD, students have access to 78 degrees, 103 certificates of completion, and 85 noncredit certificates of accomplishment. COD operates at multiple locations across the Coachella Valley: Palm Desert (main campus), Mecca/Thermal, Desert Hot Springs, Palm Springs, Coachella Library, Roadrunner Automotive Educational Center (Cathedral City, opened Spring 2022), as well as through articulation agreements with local high school partners.

As outlined in the Curriculum Development Handbook, all COD curriculum is built upon the foundation of approved student learning outcomes (SLOs). Three-year Program Enhancement Plan (PEP) and annual Program Enhancement Plan Update (PEP-Up) processes ensure continuous review of student and discipline outcomes. PEP and PEP-Up processes are informed by data provided on internal dashboards and guided by the COD Academic Senate's Outcomes and Assessment Committee. The peer review team verified that COD utilizes the eLumen platform to facilitate curriculum development/review, SLO assessment, and program review processes. The College utilizes a broadly inclusive curriculum development and review process, leveraging the expertise of faculty and industry advisory committees.

The COD's BP/AP4105 is robust and inclusive of the training requirement of faculty to teach in an online environment, regular and substantive interaction definition and requirements, and ongoing professional development requirements to maintain the right to teach online. The campus is a Peer Online Course Review (POCR) certified campus and has an established process for faculty to have courses reviewed for alignment to the CVC Course Design Rubric. The trifecta of a robust policy regarding training for online teaching, the comprehensive initial training, and the campus POCR review processes ensures the instructional content and methods meet or exceed the academic and professional standards, resulting in student success. The sample of DE courses reviewed overwhelmingly demonstrated course structure, instructional methodology, and design that supports Regular and Substantive Interaction by instructors.

Findings and Evidence:

A review of the College's catalogue confirmed that College of the Desert's instructional programs are consistent with the mission of the Institution and appropriate to higher

education. Upon review of the sample distance education courses provided in Canvas, it was determined that faculty are providing a substantive level of interaction with and feedback to students. The various programs of study offered by COD lead to the attainment of degrees, certificates of completion, or noncredit certificates of accomplishment. Articulation agreements are established with a wide range of public and private institutions, as well as with local high schools, and can be viewed on the COD website. Industry advisory committees provide substantive input regarding instructional programs and potential revisions/additions, as evidenced by numerous sets of committee meeting agendas and minutes reviewed by the team. Board policies and procedures govern the awarding of certificates and degrees and emphasize the institution's overarching objectives for degree attainment. (II.A.1)

Both full-time and adjunct faculty regularly participate in curriculum development and evaluation processes. The College Faculty Handbook and various guides for curriculum and syllabus creation underscore the importance of the role of all faculty in curriculum development and assessment processes. Instructor observation and evaluation processes/templates reviewed highlight the importance of effective instructional practices at COD. All syllabi for the College are similarly formatted using a digital platform and accessible via COD's public website. A review of the College Planning Council Handbook and annual PEP/PEP-Up report files confirmed that the assessment of student learning occurs annually in the Program Enhancement Plan Update (PEP-Up) and more thoroughly during the five-year comprehensive Program Enhancement Plan (PEP) processes. (II.A.2)

The team reviewed COD's Course outlines of record, which are available on a public-facing College website, and confirmed COD identifies student learning objectives for each course as part of the COR development process. Each COR is then reviewed by the College's curriculum committee, and then the State. CORs are developed in the eLumen online platform, where learning outcome assessment data is later collected and analyzed. Syllabus review is a component of the instructor evaluation process, and student learning outcome analysis is a required component of the Program Enhancement Plan/Update processes. The institution notes an opportunity exists to clarify and better monitor the assessment of all courses on a regular cycle, and this opportunity is explored in the QFE. The team noted and supports COD's goal within the ISER to refine their processes to ensure every SLO in every course is evaluated regularly. (II.A.3)

College of the Desert's catalogue confirms COD offers pre-collegiate self-paced noncredit curriculum to students who wish to build knowledge and skills prior to beginning their transfer-level coursework. Self-placement guides are available to students on the COD website to determine the supports that might best meet their needs. The ISER peer review team noted the success of the award-winning COD noncredit Engage, Develop, Grow, and Empower (EDGE) program which helps students build foundational skills in English, math and college readiness. Students can access academic support for pre-collegiate level courses via the Tutoring and Academic Skills Center (TASC). (II.A.4)

College of the Desert courses, degrees, and certificate programs conform to standard higher education practices and structures. Board policies and procedures reviewed by the team outline standard practices for course and degree length and graduation requirements at COD. Relatedly, the team reviewed illustrative maps that are provided for the instructional programs on campus to depict the components required for program completion. Student feedback on courses and faculty is gathered and assessed as part of the faculty evaluation process, as demonstrated by the faculty evaluation templates and student survey data reviewed. (II.A.5)

College of the Desert reviews course offering scheduling as evidenced by the Program Enhancement Process (PEP) documentation, and the Enrollment Management Plan recommends a more regular review of course scheduling to ensure students can complete their program of study in a timely manner. COD dashboards provide insights regarding fill rates and student outcomes. A review of student engagement data confirmed COD's shift in instructional modality to allow for online asynchronous courses has positively impacted enrollment for the College post-pandemic, with online/hybrid classes representing 74% of all courses as of Fall 2022. Curriculum Committee meeting minutes confirm that COD courses that fall out of use are formally discontinued. COD operates under an annual scheduling plan and reports developing process to utilize student education plan data to help inform scheduling needs. The committee encourages the College to continue developing this process and sharing their learning with the broader community college system. COD's pLEDGE program provides tuition-free courses for the first year of study to students who complete the summer noncredit EDGE pre-collegiate prep program. The self-study references the development of a strategic enrollment plan project to seamlessly register students for courses directly from their ed plan, and the committee encourages the College to continue building this process and sharing its progress across the system for the benefit of system-wide efficiency. (II.A.6)

A review of COD dashboards and the CCCCO Datamart substantiated that COD serves a diverse population, with significant differences in student population and community demographics from one campus to another across the College. Faculty and staff are provided opportunities to grow in their understanding and skill in supporting diverse groups through professional development and book talks, as email invitations and flyers for PD sessions confirm. Guiding plans of the College call for reduced equity gaps (Strategic Plan, Strategic Educational Master Plan). A review of the COD course schedule validated that a variety of course modalities and scheduling options are provided by COD to help meet the needs of a wide variety of students. Robust professional development offerings are provided for faculty through the Berger Faculty Innovation Center, as demonstrated on the College website. The team also noted the wide variety of student academic and basic needs supports on the College website which are provided to assist COD students throughout their academic journey. (II.A.7)

College of the Desert implements numerous practices to ensure assessments are effective and free from bias. The Credit for Prior Learning Coordinator assists with assessment processes to help eliminate bias. Departmental SLO assessments are normed, as evidenced in sample assessment reports. Evidence of the Mathematics and ESL programs utilizing common assessments and normed grading to ensure consistency in scoring was reviewed. (II.A.8)

A review of the COD catalogue confirmed the College awards credits, degrees, and certificates in a manner consistent with generally accepted higher education practices. Student achievement of learning outcomes is assessed regularly as part of the Program Enhancement Plan/Update process. COD operates in a 16-week semester and requires 54 hours of student work per credit awarded. As outlined in the evidence provided, each COD course and instructional program are developed using a Standard course outline of record (COR) format, undergoes review of the College Curriculum Committee and CCCCCO to ensure alignment with State and Federal requirements. (II.A.9)

As outlined on the College of the Desert website, COD has clearly outlined transfer policies and articulation agreements with numerous public and private universities and local high schools. Furthermore, the College provides multiple opportunities for students to benefit from the associate degree for transfer (ADT) pathway to the CSU system, having submitted 29 degrees for ADT approval and 208 courses for C-ID verification. COD offers credit for prior learning (CPL) to military veterans who complete at least 12 units at the College. The College also offers credit by exam (CBE) options for students. COD's Transfer Center serves as the central location for transfer services and support. Additionally, incoming transfer credits are evaluated based on an evaluation of the student learning objectives of each course. CTE articulation agreements are managed by the CTE department. (II.A.10)

The Curriculum Development Handbook and evidence provided regarding the PEP/PEP-Up processes demonstrate program outcomes (POs) and student learning objectives (SLOs) for each course are appropriate to the program level and developed through a broadly collaborative curriculum process. The team reviewed evidence that confirmed assessment of POs and SLOs is conducted annually through the Program Enhancement Plan/Update process. (II.A.11)

As outlined in the COD catalogue, degree programs at COD require appropriate general education coursework and at least 18 units of credit from the focus area. The Curriculum Committee Handbook and members assist faculty in identifying the appropriate general education courses for the programs/courses they are developing/revising, considering both CSU and UC IGETC requirements. (II.A.12)

A review of the COD catalogue confirmed all degree programs at COD include general education and major coursework, focusing on at least one area of inquiry appropriate to the discipline and degree level. Faculty leverage their discipline expertise to ensure each degree program contains the appropriate general education and discipline specific courses to produce adequate discipline mastery in the given area and align with current theories in the field. COD offers Associate of Science and Associate of Arts degrees and associate degrees for transfer (ADTs) at the AS and AA level. ADTs are developed and reviewed in partnership between the College, CCCCCO, and CSU system. The College's assessment process provides outcomes data to inform course/program/instructional refinement needs, and industry advisory committees provide

feedback regarding alignment of course/degree programs to industry needs and trends, as evidenced in minutes from several industry advisory committee meetings. (II.A.13)

CTE programs at COD are developed and monitored in partnership with industry advisory committees, as evidenced by the numerous advisory committee meeting agendas provided. The team verified that COD monitors program effectiveness through the annual Program Enhancement Plan Update (PEP-Up) process and state level review every two years. Furthermore, the CTE program reviews student employment and wage information following program completion to ensure program effectiveness. (II.A.14)

Programs that are no longer effective or meet the Institution's needs are discontinued, following a prescribed collaborative process. The College provided evidence of the Reading program being discontinued in 2022. The team encourages the College to clearly document and track the support provided to students affected by discontinuance. (II.A.15)

College of the Desert provided evidence that it utilizes three key processes to evaluate and improve the quality and currency of all instructional programs, regardless of delivery mode: the annual Program Enhancement Plan Update (PEP-Up) process, the five-year Program Enhancement Plan (PEP) process, and regular assessment of student learning outcomes. These review processes are linked to the College's guiding plans and are integrated into the annual resource prioritization processes. The College further fosters learning and continuous improvement by requiring each discipline to present a FLEX session "Showcase" following their five-year Program Enhancement Plan review and development process. Flyers and email invitations to the showcase events, schedules of showcase presentations held during FLEX week, and sample discipline area presentations were provided to demonstrate that this closing the loop practice is institutionalized. (II.A.16)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

II.B. Library and Learning Support Services

General Observations:

College of the Desert demonstrates that it supports student learning and achievement by providing a wide variety of library and learning support services in person, online, and at various offsite locations. The college relies on the expertise of faculty, librarians, and learning support professionals to provide relevant materials and services to support student learning as evidenced in the extensive annual planning processes. The college evaluates library and learning support services and uses these results to measure attainment of student learning

outcomes. Collaborations with other institutions or sources are formally documented and regularly evaluated.

Findings and Evidence:

College of the Desert supports student learning and achievement by providing library and learning support services and personnel responsible for student learning and support. BP 4040 ensures the college will support library services and collections. In addition, AP 4040 outlines the goals for the selection of resources to support student success. The team suggests updating BP and AP 4040 to remove reference to old Accreditation Standards. The services of both the library and learning support center (TASC) are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety and include both on-campus and online formats. Learning support services include computer workstations, study rooms, a vast library collection, tutoring support on-campus and online, skills workshops, and library instruction. COD offers similar or complementary services to its off-site locations. The team acknowledges the effort and undertaking of hosting all technology equipment for checkout for the college. In addition, the team was pleased to see that all peer-tutors go through extensive training and are CRLA certified. The team would have liked to see the information collected from focus groups since it resulted in TASC making significant changes and encourages the college to continue its practice with focus groups. (II.B.1)

Relying on the expertise of faculty, librarians, and learning support service professionals, the college carefully selects and maintains equipment and resources to support student learning. This is evidenced by the robust print and electronic collection of textbooks which is responsive to student needs and success. The college uses the annual planning and resource allocation cycle and PRUs to identify and prioritize resources and equipment. The team recognizes and appreciates the inclusion of the library and learning support centers in each instructional PRU. The team would also like to recognize the great participation by librarians on various planning committees. (II.B.2)

College of the Desert regularly evaluates library services through annual data and statistical reporting, exams, and quizzes. TASC evaluates its services through student surveys, and previously through focus groups. These evaluations ensure their adequacy in meeting student needs. The annual PRU process allows the library and TASC to validate that they are contributing to the attainment of student learning outcomes. The library acknowledges a previous lack of leadership and new leadership has made it a priority to ensure that SLOs are regularly assessed. This is evidenced by the 22/23 Library PRU which states student learning outcomes for various credit and non-credit courses were updated or created. The team looks forward to reviewing the assessment of the new library SLOs but acknowledges that the results will not be reflected until the college's next accreditation cycle. (II.B.3)

College of the Desert collaborates with other institutions and sources such as the Inland Library Network (a part of the Riverside County Library System), OCLC for cataloging, and NetTutor to

offer a third-party 24-hour tutoring service. These services are regularly evaluated as stated in standard II.B.3. (II.B.4)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

II.C. Student Support Services

General Observations:

Student support services are regularly reviewed and evaluated to meet the needs of the students. Learning outcomes and area outcomes are established and guide program improvement. The college offers an extensive list of programs and services that address basic needs of students as well as diverse identities. Co-curricular programs, athletics and cultural programming are available to students and the community at large. The college maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially, and has secure back up for appropriate files.

Findings and Evidence:

Student Services regularly evaluates their services and programs through the annual PRU process. Assessment reports are completed bi-annually, and student survey data and disproportionate impact data is included in assessing and improving services and student learning. The PRU template and FYF sample provided includes prompts to address SLOs, ISLOs and Program Outcomes. (II.C.1)

College of the Desert also reflects on the data and proposes new or improved programs when necessary to meet student needs. A new program proposed based on program evaluation and assessment of outcomes was the Gents Alliance mentoring program that serves male students of color. (II.C.2)

Comprehensive services are provided in person at four of the college sites and essential services are provided at the fifth location at the Desert Hot Springs. Most of the services are also offered in different modalities, including online services through Zoom, Canvas, student portal, and Cranium Café. It is noted that equity-focused specialized programs are also offered to support disproportionately impacted students, and such programs and spaces include: the Black Student Success Center, Dreamer Center, EDGE/pLEDGE, Gender and Sexual Diversity Pride Center. (II.C.3)

College of the Desert has a robust co-curricular and athletics program and the programs participate in the annual PRU process and the academic program review every five years. The

athletic programs are under the director of kinesiology and athletics in the School of Health and Sciences. Courses are provided for both competition season and for off-season. The Office of Student Life oversees co-curricular programming including the support for the Associated Student Government. Processes are in place to monitor the budgets of clubs and student government that include students, advisors (if applicable) and director or administrator. A positive aspect of co-curricular activities is the support of the community for the theatre productions and the art gallery. (II.C.4)

Counseling and academic advising services are provided to students through a variety of special programs and through general counseling. Counseling services are provided in all locations and counselors advise students on transfer and certificate or major requirements. It is noted that the institution has implemented the Student Planning tool in Ellucian Self-Service that allows students to enroll directly for classes from their education plan. All students who are pursuing certificates or an Associate of Arts degree are required to complete an online orientation. Additional evidence was provided to show the engagement of counseling faculty in professional development that supports student success and engagement. (II.C.5)

Admission policies are in line with the mission of the College and the criteria are listed in the catalog and the website. Criteria for special programs, such as Registered Nursing Program and Physical Therapy Assistant are also listed in the catalog and website. (II.C.6)

College of the Desert does not use an admission or placement instrument and all students have access to transfer-level coursework for English and math. (II.C.7)

Board policy 5040 addresses the college's student records and expectations for their security. All permanent records are in an imaged format with AMI Laserfish. Systems are in place to allow access to student records to only authorized personnel. Students are notified of their FERPA rights annually through the schedule of classes and catalog and via email that is sent to all enrolled students during the first week of fall and spring semesters. (II.C.8)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

Standard III

Resources

III.A. Human Resources

General Observations:

After an extensive review of the evidence provided, the ISER Peer review team concludes that College of the Desert has established appropriate criteria, qualifications, and policies, procedures for selecting qualified administrators, faculty, and staff to conduct the work of the College. Job descriptions, position criteria and selection procedures are available to the public through postings on the College website. The College follows a clearly outlined, collegial position request process, which allows for broad participation across the institution and ensures that staff selections meet the needs of the institution.

Findings and Evidence:

College of the Desert's position descriptions in the job announcements align with the CCCC Minimum Qualifications Handbook. The team confirmed COD job descriptions, position criteria and selection procedures are available to the public through postings on the College website. The College follows a clearly outlined, collegial position request process mapped in the College Planning Council Handbook, which allows for broad participation across the institution and ensures that staff selections meet the needs of the institution. The team encourages the College to pursue their self-identified need to clarify the "role of the Diversity and Equity Council and the Office of Human Resources in employment equity and diversity". (III.A.1)

The team reviewed COD policies and procedures which show that COD uses various criteria to ensure faculty possess the knowledge, skills, and educational attainment levels required for successful instruction. COD utilizes the CCCC Handbook of Minimum Qualifications to inform discipline-specific hiring criteria and evaluate each candidate's potential contribution to the college. COD's policies and procedures regarding the screening of faculty applicants are clear and consistent. Both COD job descriptions and the faculty CBA illustrate that COD faculty responsibilities include teaching, development/review of curriculum, and evaluation of student learning. Policies and processes are established for applicants seeking equivalency. (III.A.2)

Review of the evidence confirmed COD ensures all administrators meet the educational and professional experience requirements necessary to perform the functions of their roles.

Appropriate policies and procedures govern the screening and hiring of administrators, in alignment with the minimum qualifications guidelines set forth by the CCCCCO. Administration positions are designed to support institutional effectiveness. (III.A.3)

Screening and hiring policies and procedures of COD ensure that all applicants considered for employment requiring college degrees possess appropriate degrees from U.S. accredited universities. Non-U.S. transcripts require equivalence certification before an applicant's academic record is acknowledged, as outlined on the college's equivalency website. (III.A.4)

COD effectively manages its human resources by ensuring evaluations are conducted in a timely manner, following prescribed timelines and processes in alignment with the mission and goals of the institution. College HR provides managers with evaluation rosters and timelines, as demonstrated through copies of email correspondence and evaluation trackers provided by HR. Collective bargaining agreements outline evaluation process details. Evaluation documents are standardized and reflect the range of responsibilities included in each type of role. As outlined in the collective bargaining agreements, probationary tenure-track faculty are evaluated annually for the first four years, and then every three years thereafter. Adjunct faculty are evaluated in their first year, and then every three years thereafter. New classified staff are evaluated in their second and fourth month of employment, and then annually thereafter. Administrators are evaluated each of their first two years, and then every other year thereafter. Evaluation results are documented and filed appropriately, as required by COD board policies and procedures. (III.A.5)

(III.A.6) NO LONGER APPLICABLE

Review of the evidence provided confirmed the college maintains enough faculty to ensure COD can support the instructional and support programs necessary for achieving the goals and mission of the College. The college consistently meets its faculty obligation number and continues to expand both the number of degrees and certificates offered and the locations at which it operates, as evidenced by the state FON reports provided. The faculty prioritization rubric outlines the criteria against which faculty requests are evaluated. During the focused site visit concerns were raised that the CEO turnover inhibits the college's ability to sustain institutional effectiveness and academic quality. (III.A.7)

The faculty handbook and adjunct association collective bargaining agreement demonstrate COD utilizes employment policies and practices for adjunct faculty which include onboarding, orientation, and professional development, as well as clearly defined practices and timelines for evaluation (III.A.8). Through email communication and PD flyers provided as evidence, the team verified COD adjunct faculty can engage in the broader college community through participation in college committee work, Department meetings/events, and professional development activities. The team also noted the highlight that COD adjunct faculty participation in college committees is incentivized through compensation for service time. (III.A.8)

College of the Desert's robust resource prioritization and allocation process outlined in the College Planning Council Handbook provides for broad participation across the College and results in sufficient staffing across the institution. The peer review team noted the thoroughness of COD's evidence, which documents the College following all of the steps of the prioritization and allocation processes. Increases in classified positions in 2023 were the result of the prioritization process, which is informed by the program enhancement plan/update process. Email communication from the Interim Superintendent/President reviewed in this report outlines the outcomes of the 21-22 prioritization process and reflects a transparency in closing the loop on this annual cycle. (III.A.9)

As illustrated on the institutional org charts, COD employs a sufficient number of administrators to accomplish the mission of the institution. 53 administrators work for COD, and since Fall 2023, the college has had a fully established executive team with four permanent vice presidents in place. Managers are provided training and professional development opportunities aligned with their areas of assignment, as confirmed by the evidence. The robust planning and resource request process of COD has allowed the College to maintain adequate staffing levels. (III.A.10)

COD utilizes clear and equitable personnel policies and processes, which are stored on a publicly accessible website. Collective bargaining unit agreements and MOUs are in place, as is a formal grievance process. Employee group handbooks are current and accessible. (III.A.11)

As codified in board policy, COD demonstrates commitment to equity and diversity. The evidence provided confirms COD partnered with the USC Equity Institute for employee professional development. COD fosters transparency regarding equity and diversity through the use of employee diversity dashboards. COD committees support diversity and equity throughout the College via workshops, professional development, and advisory services. COD provided evidence that EOD training is required for members of search committees. The College has recently begun to evaluate employment diversity data and highlight the Student Equity Plan in the College Planning Council Handbook. (III.A.12)

COD's commitment to ethical and collegial behavior is codified in board policy, including a Code of Ethics and a newly added policy (2022) against bullying and abusive conduct. Human Resources facilitates participatory governance and collective bargaining processes related to board policy and procedure updates, as evidenced in the collective bargaining agreements on the COD website and EEO Plan. (III.A.13)

In alignment with the COD Strategic Master Plan, and outlined in the related Professional Development Plan, COD provides significant professional development support to all employees, from FLEX offerings, to specialized trainings for particular groups. Adjunct faculty are provided specialized support and access to the general faculty PD offerings. The Faculty Development Committee plays a leadership role in developing and managing professional development for faculty, including a faculty mentor program, as outlined on the COD Faculty Mentor webpage. A significant positive PD opportunity at COD is the partnership with Kansas

State University, where COD employees can apply to participate in a discounted-tuition cohort-based doctoral program. The ISER peer review team supports COD's internal recommendation to develop a more structured review and analysis of current PD offerings to increase future effectiveness and efficiency. (III.A.14)

COD maintains secure and confidential personnel record storage governed by board policy and procedure. Records are stored in locked cabinets and offices. Access to personnel files is granted, according to BP and AP guidelines, and logged appropriately. (III.A.15)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

III.B. Physical Resources

General Observations:

College of the Desert strives to effectively use its physical resources to support its mission and improve academic quality and institutional effectiveness. COD has significant community support as evidenced by the approval of several large bond measures. The institution relies on an integrated planning approach to ensure that resources are allocated following the needs of the institution. COD relies on the Strategic Master Plan, Educational Master Plan, Facilities Master Plan, and Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan for long-term planning needs. Other needs are identified through the program review process. COD utilizes a work order system to identify maintenance and equipment repair needs as they arise.

Findings and Evidence:

College of the Desert has several bond-funded capital projects in progress. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that facilities are constructed and maintained to safety standards. Capital projects and additional needs of the institution are identified in the Facilities Master Plan and a Facilities Advisory Committee and Citizens' Bond Oversight Committee are active to ensure that community input is received, and fiscal review requirements are being met. COD has an internal public safety department tasked with ensuring the safety of the campus community. Safety training is offered through Keenan SafeColleges and an Emergency Operations Plan is in place. (III.B.1)

The institution relies on the strategic plan, educational master Plan, Facilities Master Plan, Five Year Capital Outlay Plan and Program Review process to ensure that facilities, equipment and related assets are sufficient to meet support its programs and meet the needs of the institution. The integrated planning process ensures there is alignment between the various initiatives and

the mission of the College. The facilities work order system is used to ensure that preventative maintenance and other issues are identified and resolved timely. (III.B.2)

COD relies on the Facilities Master Plan, Five Year Capital Outlay Plan, and annual Program Review update to ensure the feasibility and effectiveness of physical resources in supporting programs and services. Equipment prioritization is driven by the Program Review Update from which requests for resources are prioritized. The Facilities Advisory Committee reviews requests related to space utilization, new and expanded space requests, and minor renovations. (III.B.3)

Long range capital plans are part of the institution's integrated planning approach and align with and support the college's mission and the institutional goals. The team reviewed and confirmed evidence to support that long range capital plans support institutional improvement goals and reflect projections of the total cost of ownership of new facilities and equipment. For example, the September 2022 Board Study Session on the Phase 1 Feasibility Study for the Palm Springs capital projects note that the study came after the project scope was developed. Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) is outlined in the study with a recommendation that one-time non-apportionment funds are needed to cover TCO until enrollments are sufficient. (III.B.4)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

III.C. Technology Resources

General Observations:

College of the Desert has an established planning process that assures technology resources to support student learning and services. Network infrastructure has undergone a complete review and overhaul to address infrastructure, disaster recovery and security. The Technology Master Plan (TMP) guides the institutions technology goals and objectives. COD has a process for updating and replacing technology to ensure infrastructure and capacity that supports programs, services and its operation and provides adequate training and support for employees and students in the use of such technology and systems.

Findings and Evidence:

College of the Desert provides sufficient technology to support students and employees. The IT website and the Technology Master Plan (TMP) 2020-2025 lists the minimum technology standards. Students have access to computers through labs available at different sites and departments across campuses. The IT department identifies the TMP as their guiding plan to establish resources and needs. The department participates in the annual program review

updates and a robust technology monitoring system provides data necessary to inform replacement and refresh efforts. The New Living Technology Replacement Program (TRP) tracks their technology equipment, and the Instructional Equipment and Technology Prioritization process follows a collegial process to prioritize the needs of departments. A similar replacement cycle was also developed to change media equipment to upgrade screens and projectors in the classrooms. Technology needs are addressed through each program's PRU and Program Enhancement Plan and they are prioritized based on the prioritization process established in the College Planning Council Handbook. Training is provided by the IT department and needs for training are established through input from constituents with a training survey disseminated to employees and students. The college has also focused its efforts in disaster recovery, and cybersecurity for the college and participated in a review of the twelve recommended cyber best practices and a plan is in place to address recommendations. The college is also participating in a pilot program with the Chancellor's office to increase the college's network security and mitigating data loss. A new cybersecurity training program was created as part of the onboarding process for all new hires and for all employees. Instructional support is offered through the Distance Education Committee and is outlined in AP 4105. (III.C.1)

The Technology Master Plan acts as a guiding plan for college's technology mission and it includes technology goals and objectives that are mapped to the College's strategic goals. The plan also defines technology standards and criteria for new technology and refresh cycles for equipment. Part of the annual program review process includes the identified technology needs from programs and departments. Although the current TMP encompasses the years 2020-2025, the plan is reviewed and updated annually and is linked to the Strategic Master Plan. (III.C.2)

College of the Desert has employees responsible for protecting the college from security threats and maintaining technology for all programs, services and operations of the College. The IT department operates a HelpDesk system to track requests related to technology. With the support of a bond, the college created a Network Operation Center that is secured and only accessible by IT and Public Safety employees. The IT has implemented a new backup policy to mitigate effects of a security breach and backups exist both on campus and online. (III.C.3)

Training is available to employees to effectively use technology and its systems. Training needs are established through surveys and the Information Systems & Technology Committee identifies the need based on input from surveys. Ongoing training is provided at the Technology Learning Center as well as online and through other vendors. Training schedule is available for faculty and staff. Training for distance education for faculty is provided during flex days before each semester. Per AP 4105, faculty are required to get certification to teach online and the training for the certificate includes the necessary regulations for online teaching. COD operates under acceptable use practices and utilizes the Canvas LMS. (III.C.4).

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

III.D. Financial Resources

General Observations:

College of the Desert demonstrates that it has sufficient financial resources. COD plans for long term fiscal solvency as shown by the funding of its OPEB liabilities and taking a conservative approach to adding local debt.

Findings and Evidence:

The institution demonstrates sufficient reserves to support learning programs and provide services to the community with reserves exceeding 20% in FY 2021-22 and in projected future years. Financial resources are allocated and reallocated through a participatory governance structure with transparency. Board policies and administrative procedures are in place to ensure that there is sufficient oversight over financial affairs. (III.D.1)

The institution outlines its planning process in the College Planning Council Handbook. The mission, vision, goals, and college plans inform the annual program review updates which are used in the prioritization and resource allocation process. Policies and procedures exist to ensure that financial practices are sound and financial stability is maintained. Financial information is disseminated through budget updates and presentations at regular governance meetings. (III.D.2)

College of the Desert has Policies and procedures that guide budget development. Constituent groups participate in the financial planning process through the institutional planning process as defined in the College Planning Council Handbook with the Budget subcommittee leading the financial planning process. Constituent groups participate in developing institutional plans and budgets through their representation on participatory governance committees which are tasked with developing and reviewing plans and budgets. (III.D.3)

College of the Desert's financial planning process is based on realistic assumptions and current information. Cost of Living Adjustments, other state and federal funding, enrollment projections, contractual information, and other critical information is considered in the budget development process. College of the Desert has strong community support as demonstrated through its donor contributions to the COD Foundation and approval of recent bond measures which benefit the institution and its students. (III.D.4)

College of the Desert has policies and procedures in place requiring the responsible use of financial resources and adequate internal controls. In the 2023 annual audit report, College of the Desert did not have any material weaknesses identified though significant deficiencies were noted. In the three years preceding 2023, the college had no findings in the annual audit report. The College presents budgetary and financial information to the Board of Trustees, College Planning Council and Budget Subcommittee. As part of its annual planning cycle the institution evaluates its financial management to improve operations. (III.D.5)

College of the Desert's budgetary documents use revenue estimates based on information from the Chancellor's office, School Services of California and the Riverside County Office of Education. Expenditures account for increasing costs and contractual obligations. Budget assumptions are reviewed by the Budget Subcommittee. Information is frequently and transparently shared on the public website and with participatory governance committees and the Board of Trustees. (III.D.6)

College of the Desert's responses to external audit findings are comprehensive, timely, and communicated appropriately. College responses to audit findings are included in the schedule of findings. (III.D.7)

College of the Desert's internal controls are tested during the annual external audit report and deficiencies are noted. The institution relies on the annual audit report to identify areas of weakness and address them. Senior leadership in key financial areas are new in their roles and are taking steps to improve processes and controls as indicated in the 2023 external audit report. (III.D.8)

College of the Desert has sufficient cash flow and reserves to maintain stability, support strategies for risk management, and implement contingency plans for financial emergencies. The College increased its reserve requirement to 16.7% with BP 6305. Current reserve levels exceed the required reserve level and provide sufficient fund balances to assist with financial emergencies. The Institution is a member of the Joint Powers Authority, Statewide Association of Community Colleges and has sufficient insurance coverage in place to meet its needs. (III.D.9)

College of the Desert has Board Policies and Administration Procedures in place to ensure the effective oversight of finances and the management of financial aid, grants, externally funded programs, auxiliary funds, foundation funds, contractual relationships and other assets. Effective oversight and management practices are evidenced by favorable external annual audit reports for the college, Bond Measures B and CC, Auxiliary Fund, and Foundation. The Citizens' Bond Oversight reviews expenditure reports for Measure B and Measure CC. Additional oversight is demonstrated through presentations and reports to the Board of Trustees and Budget Subcommittee. (III.D.10)

College of the Desert demonstrates sound financial planning and considers both the short-term and long-term implications of its commitments. The level of financial resources provides reasonable expectations of financial solvency as revenue and expenditures are based on planning information from the Chancellor's Office and School Services of California. Multiyear projections are developed to analyze the long-term financial health of the institution based on current assumptions. To assist with meeting its future obligations, College of the Desert has created and funded an irrevocable trust for the purpose of funding the future liability of post-employment benefits. (III.D.11)

College of the Desert plans for and allocates appropriate resources to pay liabilities and future obligations including Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), compensated absences, and other employee-related obligations. The latest actuarial study completed was for June 30, 2022, with a valuation date as of June 30, 2021, showing a Net OPEB liability of \$4,995,274. Fund 69 (Other Internal Services Fund) includes additional reserves for OPEB liabilities; however, these funds are not irrevocable. Fund 69 reserves would be sufficient to cover the Net OPEB liability. The institution considers the increasing employer contributions required for STRS and PERS due to pension cost increases in its budgeting practices. (III.D.12)

College of the Desert acts conservatively with locally incurred debt and locally incurred debt has a minimal effect on the college's unrestricted general fund. If locally incurred debt utilization is increased within reason, sufficient resources exist for the repayment of such debt. (III.D.13)

College of the Desert has sufficient policies and procedures in place to ensure that all financial resources are used with integrity and in manners consistent with the intended purpose of the funding source. Annual external audits test internal controls and review compliance with various programs. Internal reports and approval queues are used for internal control purposes. The Citizen's Bond Oversight Committee is tasked with reviewing all expenditures for the Bond programs (Measure B and CC) ensuring expenditures align with Bond language approved by voters. (III.D.14)

College of the Desert monitors and manages student loan default rates and adheres to Title IV of the Higher Education Act. In 2019 the default rate was 12%, significantly lower than the maximum allowable default rate of 30%. (III.D.15)

College of the Desert has sufficient policies and procedures in place to ensure that contractual agreements are compliant with all relevant laws and regulations. Board policies and administrative procedures are in place to ensure adequate internal controls exist and that fiscal objectives, procedures, and constraints are communicated to the College and Board of Trustees. Contractual agreements are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution and support the effective operations of the institution. (III.D.16)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

Standard IV

Leadership and Governance

IV.A. Decision-Making Roles & Processes

General Observations:

College of the Desert has Board Policies and Administrative Procedures in place that establish administrator, faculty, classified staff, and student participation in decision making processes. Board Policy 2510 and Administrative Procedure (AP) 2510 delineate the roles of faculty, staff, students, and administration in these processes. The College Planning Council is the primary participatory governance body. The College Planning Council includes representation from faculty, management, students, and classified staff. The Academic Senate is the College's main governance body for faculty on academic and professional matters. BP 2510 also establishes that the Board works closely with the Academic Senate on curriculum change and approval.

Findings and Evidence:

Institutional leaders at the COD have created an environment that encourages innovation. The College's Edge/Pledge program was recently featured in ACCJC's On the Move publication. The College Planning Council is the main body overseeing initiatives with institution-wide implications. The Educational Master Plan also ensures that initiatives are coordinated and meet College goals. Board Policy 2510 Participation in Local Decision Making and Administrative Procedure 2510 establishes the roles for college stakeholders in decision making as well as the process by which decisions include collaboration. The College Planning Council Handbook also establishes how consultation drives decision making. (IV.A.1)

College of the Desert operates under Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 2510: Participation in Local Decision-Making. This policy and procedure establish the participation of faculty and students in college decisions, specifying the role of the Academic Senate. The appendix of the College Planning Council Handbook includes Education Code Section 70901 (B) that requires the board of governors to establish "Minimum standards governing procedures established by governing boards of community college districts to ensure faculty, staff, and students the right to participate effectively in district and college governance." Administrative Procedure 2510 requires the Academic Senate to "work with students, staff and administration - those with expertise and those affected - in the development of policies and implementations." Membership of the College Planning Council includes administrators, faculty, classified staff and students. (IV.A.2)

In addition to Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 2510: Participation in Local Decision-Making, the College has Administrative Procedure 3250: Institutional Planning that stipulates that the College will allow all stakeholders "to review and recommend planning decisions related to human, physical, technology, and financial resources to the Superintendent/President. The Superintendent/President will present all institutional plans to the Board of Trustees for approval." The College Planning Council is organized with a tri-chair in order to have leadership responsibilities shared by administrators, faculty, and classified staff. (IV.A.3)

Board Policy 2510 establishes that faculty have a substantive and clearly defined role in all institutional policies concerning curriculum, degree requirements, program review, accreditation as well as significant roles in institutional planning and budget development. The Curriculum Committee is a standing subcommittee of the Academic Senate and includes membership from management. Administrative Procedure 3250 stipulates that the College Planning Council is the main governance group for making recommendations to the President and Board. Administrative Procedure 3250 establishes that assessment of outcomes will be part of program review and part of institutional planning overall. The College Planning Council Handbook describes the structures responsible for recommendations. (IV.A.4)

The College Planning Council Handbook outlines the College's structure of governance ensuring that all college stakeholders have access to the President. The College Planning Council includes representation from management, faculty, classified staff and students. The Council is the main campus-wide governance group responsible for formulating recommendations to the College President and Board. The Program and Course Approval Handbook details the curriculum process and faculty, administration, and Board responsibilities regarding curriculum. (IV.A.5)

The College Planning Council Handbook is available to all college stakeholders on the College website. Similarly, meeting minutes and agendas for the College Planning Council are also available on the College website and BoardDocs. The Academic Senate makes meeting minutes and agendas available on the College website, and the Curriculum Committee also uses the College website to communicate curriculum decisions to the College. (IV.A.6)

College of the Desert has a Long-Term Integrated Planning Calendar 2020-2030 that articulates review cycles and key deadlines for college plans. College committee meeting minutes showed recommendations related to resource allocation and planning happening on a regular cycle. Committee meeting minutes are available to the campus community for review. Decisions are widely shared through channels, including formal committee representative report-outs to department meetings, Academic Senate, and other governance committees. Furthermore, during the site visit evidence indicated decisions are shared through weekly communication from the President (Monday Morning Minute), the Roadrunner Roundup Student Newsletter, and "Happy Hour with Hope" community meetings. (IV.A.7)

Conclusions:

The team reviewed and confirmed evidence to support leadership roles and the institution's governance and decision-making policies, procedures, and processes are regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The institution widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.

The College meets the Standard.

IV.B. Chief Executive Officer

General Observations:

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for College of the Desert oversees the college's operations, planning, resource allocations which are consistent with the mission of the College. Board Policies and Administrative Procedures ensure the Board delegates authority to the Superintendent/President.

Findings and Evidence:

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is primarily responsible for the institution's quality as delegated authority is given to the Superintendent/President through Board Policy 2430. The CEO provides leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, personnel matters and institutional effectiveness through shared governance and the delegation of responsibilities. Board policies and administrative procedures demonstrate the CEO's leadership and consultation with multiple constituency groups and updates to the Board of Trustees. (IV.B.1)

The CEO oversees and evaluates the administrative structure which is updated annually and reflects the hierarchy of positions under the Governing Board. Through established administrative procedures, the CEO delegates authority to administrators in Human Resources to recruit and select employees. (IV.B.2)

College of the Desert has established policies and procedures that guide the CEO for institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment. Administrative Procedure 3250 establishes a collegial process for the College's College Planning Council (CPC), which includes representation all of constituency group, to review and evaluate resource planning and recommend the allocation of resources to the CEO. (IV.B.3)

The CEO establishes the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and the Accreditation Steering Committee (AST) to delegate the self-evaluation process and ensure the college is in compliance with accreditation requirements. Through board policy and administrative procedures, the CEO delegates the responsibility of accreditation to faculty, staff, and administrative leaders. (IV.B.4)

Through codified board policies and administrative procedures, the CEO ensures institutional practices are consistent with the institutional mission and polices, including effective control of budget and expenditures. The College's Integrated Planning model is operationalized and evaluated through a systemic and cyclical process that leads to continuous improvement. Fiscal and budget management strategies are consistent with state and federal regulations and include effective control of budget and expenditures. (IV.B.5)

The CEO publishes all board policies and administrative procedures on the College's website to communicate institutional practices. The CEO holds an Annual Luncheon and Community Listening Sessions to communicate with both internal and external constituency groups. In addition, the CEO provides timely updates through its website, email and forums. (IV.B.6)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

IV.C. Governing Board

General Observations:

The College of the Desert Community College District is governed by a five-member board elected by geographic regions, and one student trustee, selected by the student body of the college who is a nonvoting member. The Board of Trustees has authority over and responsibility for establishing and prioritizing policies related to academic quality, integrity, financial condition, and the effectiveness of student learning programs and services of the college.

The Board of Trustees has authority and maintains appropriate board policies to assure the academic quality, integrity, and effectiveness of student learning. The Board of Trustees is informed of board policies, orientation materials provided during orientation and engages in ongoing professional development and training. The Board of Trustees engages in setting priorities and planning and receives regular updates on key indicators of students learning and achievement, institutional plans, and accreditation. The governing board conducts regular self-evaluations and periodic evaluations of the superintendent/president.

The Governing Board is informed and demonstrates that they understand their role and responsibility in the accreditation process. The College Institutional Self Evaluation Reports were reviewed prior to submission to ACCJC by the Governing Board.

Findings and Evidence:

The Board of Trustees has authority over and responsibility for establishing and prioritizing policies related to academic quality, integrity, financial condition, and the effectiveness of

student learning programs and services of the college. Chapter 2 (BP 2010-2750)- Board of Trustee delineates the Governing Board’s membership, duties and responsibilities, governance, and decision making. Board Policy 6200 establishes the annual budget preparation and administrative Procedure 6305 Reserves outlines the minimum reserves percentage in alignment with relevant State requirements. The Board has adopted policies, including BP 5050- Student Success and Support, to ensure the effectiveness of student learning programs and services. (IV.C.1)

In September 2023 the Board held a training covering topics related to roles, responsibilities, ethics, and governance. The ISER evaluation notes recent disagreements among board members regarding the establishment of new buildings after the Board has acted on the item, which indicates potential challenges in acting in a unified manner. Training is mentioned as a method of developing a better understanding of shared decision making and working to represent a unified body. The ISER states “the Board has periodically disagreed about the priorities of the college and the development of new campuses, the Board is working to strengthen this area by scheduling training to reinforce their roles as a unified body and practice shared decision-making.” During the Focused Site Visit the team reviewed additional evidence, held interviews with college stakeholders, including all trustees and found that the board continues to not act in a consistently unified manner once the board reaches a decision. Furthermore, a common theme shared was concerns of trustees undermining the collective Board putting the district at risk by reporting false information to the public. (IV.C.2)

The governing board has policies for selecting and evaluating administrators. Board Policy (BP) 2431 Superintendent/President Selection, BP 2432 CEO Succession, BP 2435 Evaluation of Superintendent/President, and BP 2430 Delegation of Authority to Superintendent/President. Evidence provided demonstrated the CEO is evaluated according to policy. (IV.C.3)

The governing board is an independent, policy-making body that reflects the public interest in the quality of the institution’s educational programs and services. Trustees are elected by geographic regions representing the interests of the county residents. The governing board advocates for and defends the college and protects it from undue influence or political pressure. The Board has adopted Board Policy (BP) 2715 Code of Ethics; BP 2716 Political Activity; BP 2100 Board Elections, BP 2345 Public Participation at Board Meeting; and BP 2350 Speakers. Public interest is welcomed in the form of public comment at the board of trustee's meetings on agenda and non-agenda-related items (BP 2350). The governing board acts as the ultimate and final decision-making body for the adoption of policy. Policies are adopted with the input and feedback of the public (BP2350), the College League of California, and the College Planning Council (BP2410) being taken into consideration. (IV.C.4)

The governing board has developed, implemented, and followed policies consistent with the college’s mission to ensure the quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning

programs and services and the resources necessary to support them. Evidence is reflected in a host of specific Governing Board policies. The Board Policies and Administrative Procedures are comprehensive listed in chapters academic affairs, student services to fiscal affairs and human resources. All these policies and procedures are publicly available on the college website. (IV.C.5)

The governing board publishes bylaws and policies specifying its size, duties, responsibilities, structure, and operating procedures in Chapter 2 of their Board Policies available on their website. These policies describe the size and composition of the governing board, how members are elected, how meetings are conducted, the duties and responsibilities of governing board members, and the code of ethics/decorum members are expected to follow. (IV.C.6)

In September 2023, the College Planning Council approved the 2023-2024 Planning Handbook. In Fall 2023 the college committed to a seven-year review cycle for board policies and administrative procedures; however, Board Policy 2410 states a five-year review cycle. In reviewing the 40 board policies in the 1000-2000's over 50 percent were past the stated next review date. Seven of the 40 policies were due to be reviewed prior to 2020. At the time of the site visit, the College was beginning year two of its review cycle and evidence was provided of a clear AP/BP Review Cycle Workflow that has already been vetted through several constituency groups. The College Planning Council is expected to adopt the workflow and recommend it for board approval. Thereafter, Board Policy 2410 will reflect how the College regularly assesses its board policies. The College will need to ensure that the review cycle continues to follow its revised Board Policy 2410. (IV.C.7)

Throughout the year, the governing board schedules study sessions from college staff members detailing programs. Reports on key indicators and planning documents are presented to the board. In 2023 a sample of the breadth types of study sessions and reports presented to the board of trustees includes, Palm Spring Development, Vision for Success goals, Partnership and Community Education update, basic needs center, enrollment by zip code and program demand, and budget updates. (IV.C.8)

The Board has a mechanism (Board Policy 2100) for providing for continuity of its membership with staggered terms of office. The Board engages in study sessions on topics such as governance, roles and responsibilities, ethics, and Brown Act obligations; Accreditation, policy review; and self-evaluation are discussed. Trustees receive ongoing professional development at retreats, conferences, and study sessions. Board members participated in Effective Trusteeship Training the CCLC Annual Trustee Conference, HACU's Annual National Forum, and ACCT's National Legislative Summit. (IV.C.9)

On May 20, 2022, the summary results of the Board self-evaluation were presented and discussed. The Board self-evaluation demonstrated agreement (strongly agree/agree) with most evaluation areas. Evaluation areas where a majority did not strongly agree/agree were in

the sections on Policy Role and Community Relations. In 2023, there was a gap in the board self-evaluation, which does not conform to the adopted policy of setting the cycle of board self-evaluations as annual. In April 2024, the board held a special board meeting to discuss the ACCJC Core Inquires and Updates, Board Training on Ethics and Goal-setting, conduct Board Self-Evaluation and Preliminary Goal-Setting. Results of the 2024 self-evaluation highlighted similar areas of needed improvement related to the board's policy role and board unity, which were raised in the 2022 self-evaluation. Themes emerged from the interviews and documents reviewed during the Focused Site Visit that included meetings consistently veering from the collective business of the board towards perceived social, political, or personal matters of individual trustees; the need to be receptive and respectful of all viewpoints; once decisions are made trustees should support the board action; and trustees loose site that they represent the entire community not only their specific districts. The team found that trustees generally had an appreciation for the board training in the interest of board growth and development. However, the team also found evidence to indicate that the board discussion related to the self-evaluation was not productive, valued, nor regarded as a tool for improvement, and was simply a “check box”. The team did not find evidence that the results of the board self-evaluation were used to improve board performance, academic quality, and institutional effectiveness. Evidence indicated that the board as a collective whole was not present at for the April 2024 self-evaluation discussion. (IV.C.10)

Governing Board Policy 2715, Code of Ethics/Standards of Practice outlines the commitment of the Board to operating with ethical standards following the principles of service, cooperation, respect, integrity, confidentiality, and openness. Governing Board Policy 2710, Conflict of Interest outlines the commitment to avoiding conflicts of interest by the Governing Board members. Board member interests are disclosed through annual filing of the Economic Interest Form (Form 700) under California law. In the 2022 Board Self-Evaluation two of the five responses strongly agreed/agreed with the statement “The Board adheres to a code of ethics or standards of practice”. However, the evidence further indicated the board does not collectively adhere to the Governing Board Policy 2710 regarding engagement in activity that is inconsistent with, incompatible with, in conflict with or inimical to his/her/their duties as an officer of the District. During the focused site visit it was noted that increased self-monitoring by the board of trustees related to standards of practice and conflict of interest, beyond employment and financial conflicts, would strengthen the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution. (IV.C.11)

While BP 2430 Delegation to the Superintendent/President states the BOT clearly delegates to the CEO the executive responsibility for administering the policies adopted by the Board and executing all decisions of the Board requiring administrative action, the team found that the board has not been delegating authority to the CEO without interference. The team found that the Board of Trustees holds the CEO accountable for the operation of the college as evidenced by the record of CEO evaluation. However, it is also apparent that the BOT does not collectively

differentiate their policy making role from district operations. Evidence indicates board items are consistently pulled from the consent agenda or action delayed unnecessarily. Also, the team found that in some cases it is noted that members of the board are directly interfering with operations. (IV.C.12)

The Board Self-Evaluation noted low agreement on the areas related to the Board delegating the operations of the college to the CEO, the board focuses on policy and not administrative matters, and the Board behavior sets a positive example. During the Focused Site Visit the team found that the survey and interview responses confirmed issues that have been ongoing and continues to be disruptive to college operations through a lack of authentic delegation to the CEO, an understanding of its policy role versus administrative matters, and the board ability to give collective direction to the CEO. (IV.C.12)

The governing board maintains a focus on accreditation by being informed about Eligibility Requirements, the Accreditation Standards, Commission policies, accreditation processes, and the Colleges' accredited status through regular and special Board meeting and study sessions. The Board has adopted Board Policy 3200 Accreditation and Administrative Procedure 3200 outlining the roles and responsibilities related to the accreditation process. For example, the Governing Board was briefed on the accreditation standards at a workshop in September 2023. (IV.C.13)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard except for IV.C.2, IV.C.10, IV.C.12.

Quality Focus Essay

The ACCJC's Guide to Institutional Self-Evaluation states the function of the Quality Focus Essay (QFE) as "the opportunity for member institutions to be innovative and to propose new ideas and projects that will improve student learning and/or student achievement at the institutional level." Colleges are asked to "identify two or three areas of need or areas of interest that arise out of the institutional self-evaluation and that focus on student learning and student achievement." The Team reviewed the QFE identified in the College's ISER. The Team acknowledges the collaborative process the College underwent through to identify the QFE projects designed to improve institutional effectiveness in assessing student learning and student achievement. The College identified two projects for improvement of institutional effectiveness and enhancement of academic quality:

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Project

2. Enrollment Project

Project one has three elements to reassess the College's Hispanic Serving Institutional practices; engage students early and more frequently and create connective academic and service strategies integrating students' cultural knowledge, identity, and needs. The college has developed a two-phase action planning process during the 2024 calendar year. The project enables College of the Desert to promote equitable, diverse and inclusive (DEI) best practices and modalities supporting the achievement of student success outcomes. The college has identified three long-term outcome measures:

- Employee retention and turnover rates: Employee of Color retention and turnover rates will decrease by 10% by 2026.
- Training and development participation: Participation rates of DEI training programs will increase by 10% by 2026.
- Student learning: By 2029, increase the number of Black and Latinx students earning an associate degree by 10%.

The second QFE project supports the College's student success, career pathways, and enrollment efforts. The project has three elements to:

- Diversify and align course offerings (Degree and Certificate) times and modalities with student needs;
- Create proactive future semester course schedules and offerings using enrolled Student Education Plan (SEP) information and declared program Meta-Major maps; and
- Align academic programs (Degree and Certificate) with regional workforce needs through the industry sector and community engagement.

This aligns with COD'S California Guided Pathways Project. The College developed a thoughtful and comprehensive action plan and timeline for this work, with efforts beginning in 2024 and concluding in 2025. The phased approach starts with enrollment map assessments and implementation of proactive scheduling followed by establishing the Community Engagement Committee. The identified outcome measures include Increased availability of course offerings, times, and modalities aligned with student enrollment patterns; and diversification of course offerings and locations.