



*Outcomes | Innovation | Improvement*

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR  
COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES  
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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## **CORE INQUIRIES**

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

The Core Inquiries are based upon the findings of the peer review team that conducted Team ISER Review on March 20, 2024.

Dr. Timothy Karas  
Team Chair

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College of the Desert

Peer Review Team Roster

**Team ISER Review**

March 20, 2024

Dr. Timothy Karas, Team Chair Mendocino College Superintendent/President	Dr. Marilyn Flores, Vice Chair Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President
<b>ACADEMIC MEMBERS</b>	
Ms. Davena Burns-Peters San Bernardino Valley College Academic Senate President, Faculty	Ms. Tia Germar Butte College Librarian Faculty
Mr. Daniel Pittaway Coastline Community College Associate Professor; Student Success Coordinator	Dr. Jerry Saviano Honolulu Community College Professor of English
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE MEMBERS</b>	
Ms. Dorothy Battenfeld Santa Rosa Junior College Trustee	Mr. Shaminder Brar Antelope Valley College Vice President Administrative Services
Dr. Rebecca Farley Kern Community College District Associate Vice Chancellor	Dr. Alketa Wojcik MiraCosta College Vice President, Student Services
<b>ACCJC STAFF LIAISON</b>	
Dr. Gohar Momjian, Vice President Melynie Schiel, Vice President	

## Summary of Team ISER Review

INSTITUTION: College of the Desert

DATE OF TEAM ISER REVIEW: March 20, 2024

TEAM CHAIR: Dr. Timothy Karas

A ten (10) member accreditation peer review team conducted Team ISER Review of College of the Desert on March 20, 2024. The Team ISER Review is a one-day, off-site analysis of an institution's self-evaluation report and supporting evidence. The peer review team received the college's institutional self-evaluation report (ISER) and related evidence several weeks prior to the Team ISER Review. Team members found the report to be a comprehensive document detailing the college's alignment to the 2014 Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, and Commission policies. The College provided a thoughtful report, reflecting on the institution's transformational processes, equitable student outcomes, and planning for continuing institutional improvement.

In preparation for the Team ISER Review, the team chair attended a team chair workshop on December 5, 2023 and held a pre-review meeting with the college CEO on January 18, 2024. The entire peer review team participated in a team workshop provided by staff from ACCJC on February 1, 2024. Prior to the Team ISER Review, team members completed their assessment of the college's alignment to the Accreditation Standards and policies, identified areas for further clarification, and provided a list of requests for additional evidence to be considered during Team ISER Review.

During the Team ISER Review, team members spent the morning discussing their initial observations and their preliminary review of the written materials and evidence provided by the College for the purpose of determining whether the College meets Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, and Commission policies. In the afternoon, the team further synthesized their findings to validate the excellent work of the college and developed Core Inquiries to be pursued during the Focused Site Visit, which will occur the week of September 23, 2024.

Core Inquiries are a means for communicating potential areas of institutional noncompliance, improvement, or exemplary practice that arise during the Team ISER Review. They describe the areas of emphasis for the Focused Site Visit. During the Focused Site Visit, the team will tour the facilities, conduct scheduled meetings and an open forum, gather additional information to further their analysis to determine whether all standards are met, and accordingly finalize their Peer Review Team Report which will identify commendations or recommendations. The college should use the Core Inquiries and time leading up to the focused site visit as an opportunity to gather more evidence, collate information, and to strengthen or develop processes in the continuous improvement cycle. In the course of the Focused Site Visit, the ACCJC staff liaison will review new or emerging issues which might arise out of the discussions on Core Inquiries.

## Core Inquiries

Based on the team's analysis during the Team ISER Review, the team identified the following core inquiries that relate to potential areas of clarification, improvement, or commendation.

<p><b>Core Inquiry 1:</b> The team seek to better understand Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) analysis linked to long-range capital planning.</p>
<p><b>Standards or Policies:</b> III.B.4</p>
<p><b>Description:</b> The team did not find evidence of TCO for new buildings and staffing that is needed for the additional buildings. The team seeks to better understand the planning and process that the college has in place to address TCO.</p>
<p><b>Topics of discussion during interviews:</b> The college process for determining TCO for physical resources: The team would like to understand the process for identifying staffing needs and resources for new facilities and expansion of other facilities, as it relates to total cost of ownership.</p>
<p><b>Request for Additional Information/Evidence:</b> Please provide the Facilities Annual Program Review Update showing that the District's staffing needs are addressed in a TCO process.  Provide evidence of such TCO processes.</p>
<p><b>Request for Observations/Interviews:</b> Interview with the VP Administrative Services Director of Facilities and/or Exec. Director of Facilities Planning.</p>

**Core Inquiry 2:**

The team seeks to better understand the process, timeline, and results used to regularly evaluate decision-making policies, procedures, and processes to ensure their integrity and effectiveness. What practices are used to widely communicate results of these evaluations?

**Standards or Policies:**

IV.A.7

**Description:**

The team would like additional evidence on the process and results used to evaluate decision-making policies, procedures, and processes. It is unclear of timelines utilized to carry out this work, the results from the evaluation tools, where the discussions take place, how is this communicated widely.

**Topics of discussion during interviews:**

How are results of the decision-making processes and policies communicated widely?  
Where does the discussion of results and actions for improvement occur?

**Request for Additional Information/Evidence:**

CPC Self-Survey Results (Evaluation instruments and resulting reports that assess effectiveness of committees, including plans for improvement);  
Minutes from meetings when effectiveness of governance structures and processes were discussed;  
Examples of communications to the college on results of the evaluations or discussions.

**Request for Observations/Interviews:**

Members of CPC  
Institutional Effectiveness & Research staff

**Core Inquiry 3:**

The team seeks to better understand how the board acts in a collective entity, including once a decision is reached all members act in support of the decision.

**Standards or Policies:**

IV.C.2; IV.C.10

**Description:**

The ISER notes the turnover of key personnel and changes to the Board have affected the governance functions of the college. By conducting focused training, the board works to strengthen its skills as a uniformed body. It is unclear whether “*once the board reaches a decision, all board members act in support of the decision*”.

The team observed after a gap in completing a board self-evaluation, the process has begun to approve a revised self-evaluation tool and tentative future timelines have been set for the evaluation. The prior self-evaluation indicated a majority did not strongly agree/agree were in the sections on Policy Role and Community Relations. It was noted that the public information on the website concerning trustee representational areas is out of date.

**Topics of discussion during interviews:**

Discussions on how the Board acts as one collective entity after decisions are made reflecting split votes or differing perspectives.

Describe the board self-evaluation process and how the results are used to continuously improve or create board goals.

**Request for Additional Information/Evidence:**

Board Self-Evaluation Tool and Results

Minutes from Board Meeting upon conducting Self-Evaluation.

Calendar of Board trainings

Updated Board area maps post 2020 census redistricting review.

**Request for Observations/Interviews:**

Executive Assistant to the Board

CEO

Board Members

**Core Inquiry 4:**

The team seeks to better understand the effectiveness and implementation of the College’s adopted seven-year review cycle for board policies and administrative procedures.

**Standards or Policies:**

IV.C.7

**Description:**

The team noted a significant number of policies which were out of date and seeks clarification on the process used to review all policies and procedures according to the adopted review cycle. How does the college ensure that policies and procedures identified as past their posted review date be reviewed?

**Topics of discussion during interviews:**

Discuss revised approval process and measures taken to bring all policies and procedures up to date.

**Request for Additional Information/Evidence:**

Minutes from CPC or appropriate college committee where policies and procedure are reviewed.

Board meeting minutes approving policies according to cycle.

Policy review calendar and timeline.

**Request for Observations/Interviews:**

Personnel with responsibility for ensuring review cycle is followed.

Executive Assistant to the Board