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**PALO VERDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT**
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

# Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 10, 2026
Closed Session: 4:00 p.m. | Open Session: 5:00 p.m.
Physical Meeting Location: One College Drive, Blythe, CA – CS 209
LiveStream Meeting Location: PVC Needles Center, 725 W. Broadway, Needles, CA

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## 1. OPENING OF MEETING

1.1 CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Vice President/Acting President Gloria Copple.

1.2 ROLL CALL

- **Trustees Present:** Gloria Copple, Stella Styers, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz-Student Trustee(arrived for the reconvening to open session)
- **Trustees Absent:** Angel Ramirez
- **Administrators Present:** Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent/President, Dr. Sam Robinson, Acting Assistant Supt./VP of Instruction and Student Services, Stephanie Slagan, Assistant Supt./VP of Administrative Services and College Advancement

***Note:***

- *In accordance with California Education Code, the*

*Student Trustee's vote is advisory and does not count toward the final Board action.*

1.3 APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION AGENDA

**Motion:** Approve the Closed Session Agenda for this meeting.
**Moved by:** Stella Styers
**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson
**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams

## 2. HEARING OF CITIZENS - CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

Public comment on items listed on the Closed Session agenda will be heard prior to the Board adjourning to Closed Session. Each speaker is limited to five (5) minutes, with a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes per topic, unless otherwise determined by the Board President. The Board cannot take action on items not listed on the agenda.

2.1 PUBLIC COMMENT ON CLOSED SESSION ITEMS 53 - 54

**David Silva** expressed appreciation to the Board of Trustees and Administration for the opportunity to speak and noted that he had intended to provide his comments at the prior Special Board Meeting; however, the meeting was canceled. Mr. Silva distributed a written statement to the Board of Trustees and read it during public comment. The written statement is attached to and incorporated into these minutes.

David Silva Statement.pdf

**Elizabeth Cusick** addressed the Board regarding the Upward Bound TRIO program and submitted a memorandum outlining concerns related to federal compliance, governance oversight, student impact, and alleged retaliation. She stated that Upward Bound is a federally funded program authorized under the Higher Education Act and governed by U.S. Department of Education regulations (34 CFR Part 645), which impose mandatory compliance obligations on the District.

Ms. Cusick referenced 34 CFR § 645.1, stating that the

regulation requires the provision of specific academic and college preparatory services to eligible students, and 34 CFR § 645.43, which she stated requires institutions to serve the approved number of participants and grant the project director sufficient authority to effectively administer the program.

She further stated that under federal grant requirements, if a grant director is absent for any reason, the U.S. Department of Education must be notified because the program would otherwise be considered out of compliance until a temporary director is designated. Ms. Cusick asserted that while she was on approved leave, no temporary director was assigned and no notification was made to the Department of Education. She stated that Department correspondence continued to be sent to her and that such correspondence included concerns related to budget compliance, required reports, and reporting deadlines. She referenced Stephanie Slagan in relation to fiduciary oversight responsibilities associated with the grant.

Ms. Cusick further stated that she was informed by community members that the Upward Bound program had been placed “on hold” and that services were suspended by Ger Xiong, Dean of Student Services. She asserted that suspending services or materially altering program operations would constitute a material change to the approved federal grant and would require prior written approval from the U.S. Department of Education. She stated that, to her knowledge, no such approval had been obtained and no formal plan had been communicated, and she expressed concern that these actions resulted in the program being out of compliance with federal requirements.

Ms. Cusick further stated that during her approved leave, no interim project director was appointed and that, as a result, certain federal budget and annual performance reporting deadlines were missed or delayed, which she asserted placed the program out of compliance. She stated that while on leave and not performing work duties, she continued to receive compliance-related emails from the U.S. Department of Education because no interim director had been designated.

Ms. Cusick stated that she forwarded those communications to Superintendent/President Dr. Bruce Moses and included Gloria Copple, whom she identified as Board President, for the purpose of ensuring that appropriate staff could address reporting deadlines and restore services. She stated that she did not supervise staff, make programmatic decisions, access systems, or direct operations while on leave, and that her intent in forwarding the communications was to protect students and preserve the federal grant.

Ms. Cusick further stated that she received a cease-and-desist letter from Vice President of Human Resources Dr. Erica Holmes instructing her to stop forwarding Department of Education communications and warning of potential disciplinary action. She characterized this action as retaliatory and referenced whistleblower protections in connection with her prior complaint.

During her remarks, Ms. Cusick requested additional time to complete her comments after the five-minute limit had expired. Trustee Copple permitted her to finish her statement.

Ms. Cusick further stated that the cease-and-desist directive interfered with what she described as federally required compliance communications and asserted that the action was retaliatory in nature. She expressed concern that these actions exposed the District to potential legal risk. Ms. Cusick further alleged that the program was being intentionally kept out of compliance, and stated that continued noncompliance could result in termination of the Upward Bound grant by the U.S. Department of Education. She expressed concern that, if the program were terminated, it may no longer be in place upon her return from leave.

Ms. Cusick further stated that the combined actions of administration, Human Resources, and program oversight resulted in disruption of federally mandated student services and created risk of federal findings, enforcement action, or potential grant termination. She further asserted that these circumstances could compromise student outcomes, affect upcoming reporting cycles due to what she described as a gap in services, and raise concerns regarding ACCJC standards and compliance with applicable law.

She stated that required services were not being provided during her absence, that the U.S. Department of Education had not been notified of a change in program leadership, and that no temporary director had been appointed during the period in which she continued receiving federal correspondence. She further stated that students and parents had voiced concerns and expressed her belief that appropriate corrective action had not occurred.

Ms. Cusick expressed concern that the Upward Bound program was destabilized during her leave, raising concerns that the grant director position could be eliminated prior to her return. She asserted that the matter requires Board-level oversight and should not be delegated.

She emphasized that the Upward Bound program serves vulnerable students protected under federal law and stated that failure to take corrective action could expose the District to federal enforcement, accreditation consequences, and potential liability related to grant compliance.

Ms. Cusick further stated that she recently obtained her Human Resources file and identified what she described as inconsistencies within the record, which she asserted may constitute violations of law. She referenced a prior Board meeting during which Ms. Irma Gonzales stated that she had issued a write-up while serving as her supervisor. Ms. Cusick stated that upon reviewing her personnel file, she did not locate any such write-ups and asserted that the contents of her file raise additional concerns regarding Human Resources practices and compliance.

Ms. Cusick further referenced Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 7700 regarding whistleblower protections and anti-retaliation provisions. She requested Board clarification and investigation concerning what she described as the unauthorized disclosure of a confidential whistleblower complaint. She asserted that under BP/AP 7700, the Board holds authority to conduct and control investigations when senior administrators are implicated and that retaliation is prohibited under applicable state and federal whistleblower protections.

Ms. Cusick stated that during a prior open session, she

disclosed only the existence and general nature of her allegations and did not identify individuals or publicly provide the full whistleblower complaint or supporting documentation. She stated that her written materials were marked “closed session only” and were intended for Board members’ confidential review. Ms. Cusick further stated that when she delivered the materials, she informed Ms. Naomi Alaniz that the packets were for Board members only. She reiterated that during her public remarks she did not identify any individuals by name and that the portion of her written packet containing specific evidence and names was clearly designated for closed session review only. She asserted that disclosure of that information constituted a violation of confidentiality.

Ms. Cusick further referenced a recent Board meeting during which Ger Xiong stated that she had obtained the whistleblower complaint through a public records request. Ms. Cusick stated that this assertion raised serious governance and legal questions. She questioned how the document was obtained and whether it was released through a public records request. She stated that if the packet had been provided solely to Board members for closed session review, she questioned how Ms. Naomi Alaniz would have received the packet. She further questioned that if Ms. Naomi Alaniz had not received the packet, how Ger Xiong obtained it.

Ms. Cusick further stated that if the entire packet had been publicly disclosed, she believed that would constitute a significant whistleblower violation. She stated that the packet contained confidential information, including supporting evidence and names that she believed were required to remain in closed session. She reiterated that, to her understanding, only Board members had received the packet and questioned which Board member, and under what authority, may have provided the materials to others.

Ms. Cusick stated that not only Ger Xiong, but also Ms. Irma Gonzales, appeared to have access to the packet. She referenced a public meeting during which Ms. Gonzales stated that because she had been named in allegations of fraud and mismanagement, she intended to file a grievance with Human Resources. Ms. Cusick characterized that action as retaliatory

and asserted that BP/AP 7700 provides whistleblower protections that she believes supersede other policies or laws.

Ms. Cusick further referenced BP/AP 7700 and stated that conflicted administrators who are implicated in allegations may not oversee or influence investigations concerning those matters. She asserted that delegated authority is suspended in matters involving executive misconduct and that the Governing Board retains full authority to direct investigations, retain independent investigators or counsel, and control the confidentiality and custody of whistleblower materials.

Ms. Cusick further stated that retaliation against whistleblowers is prohibited under District policy as well as California and federal law. She stated that she believes retaliation continues to occur. Ms. Cusick stated that she had emailed the Board, including the Board President, regarding the investigation and that she had not received a response other than a single email from legal counsel indicating that an investigation would begin soon. She expressed concern that retaliatory actions were continuing.

Ms. Cusick further asserted that the alleged unauthorized disclosure of a confidential whistleblower complaint, together with subsequent actions directed at her, raised concerns regarding breach of whistleblower confidentiality, violations of closed session protections, retaliation and intimidation, undermining of Board oversight authority, and increased legal and accreditation exposure for the District.

Ms. Cusick further requested that the Board determine how Mr. Ger Xiong obtained the whistleblower complaint, establish a chain of custody for the materials, and identify whether any Board member or District official improperly disclosed the document. She asserted that the matter should have been handled in closed session. She further requested corrective measures to protect confidentiality and institutional integrity and stated that additional training may be necessary.

Ms. Cusick further requested that the Board determine how Mr. Ger Xiong obtained the whistleblower complaint, establish a chain of custody for the materials, and identify whether any Board member or District official improperly

disclosed the document. She stated her belief that a Board member had released the packet and questioned why such disclosure occurred. She asserted that the matter should have been handled in closed session. She further requested corrective measures to protect confidentiality and institutional integrity and stated she felt a lot of training needed to be conducted.

Ms. Cusick addressed Superintendent/President Dr. Bruce Moses, stating that the matter occurred under his oversight. She asserted that when allegations involve senior administration, Board Policy and Administrative Procedure provisions supersede delegated authority and that the Governing Board retains exclusive authority to control investigations and ensure enforcement of whistleblower confidentiality and anti-retaliation protections.

Ms. Cusick further stated that she did not know who directed Vice President of Human Resources Dr. Erica Holmes to issue the cease-and-desist communication and asserted that Dr. Holmes had no acknowledgement of the email from the Department of Education. She stated that she did not initiate contact with the U.S. Department of Education and that the Department contacted her regarding reports she described as overdue and out of compliance.

Ms. Cusick stated that she sends emails to all the Trustees, including Trustee Copple and President Moses, and that she had not received any responses. She expressed concern regarding the lack of response to her communications.

**Discussion:**

Following Ms. Cusick's remarks, Trustee McNeil asked Trustee Copple whether she wished to respond to Ms. Cusick regarding her statement that Board members had not replied to her emails.

Trustee Copple stated, "We're not supposed," and further explained that because the matter involves a whistleblower complaint, Board members are limited in what they may communicate and that the matter must proceed through the investigation process. She stated that this is why Ms. Cusick

likely had not received direct responses from Trustees.

Trustee McNeil added that the lack of response was not due to the fact that they don't care, but rather because the Board is "hogtied" until the investigation is completed.

Trustee Copple further stated that communications received are being forwarded; however, Trustees cannot respond to Ms. Cusick.

## 3. RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION

The Governing Board recessed to Closed Session at 4:30 p.m.

3.1 CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATOR (GOVERNMENT CODE 54957.60)

- Agency Representative:
  - Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent/President
- Employee Organizations:
  - CSEA Chapter 180
  - Palo Verde Community College Association/CTA

3.2 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE/DISMISSAL/RELEASE (GOVERNMENT CODE 54957)

3.3 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION (GOVERNMENT CODE 54957(B))

- Superintendent/President

3.4 CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - ANTICIPATED LITIGATION; SIGNIFICANT EXPOSURE TO LITIGATION (GOVERNMENT CODE 54956.9)

- 1 (one) case

## 4. RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION

The Governing Board reconvened to Open Session at 5:47 p.m.

4.1 FLAG SALUTE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4.2 REPORT ON ANY ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION

Vice President/Acting Board President Gloria Copple reported that an ad hoc committee has been formed in response to

complaints concerning two Board members and that an investigation will be conducted.

4.3 APPROVAL OF OPEN SESSION AGENDA

**Motion:** Approve the Open Session Agenda with Action Item 11.3 pulled.
**Moved by:** Jon McNeil
**Seconded by:** Gloria Copple
**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz

4.4 APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 17, 2025, SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

**Motion:** Approve the December 17, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes.
**Moved by:** Jon McNeil
**Seconded by:** Stella Styers
**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz

4.5 APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 22, 2025, SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

**Motion:** Approve the December 22, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes.
**Moved by:** Jon McNeil
**Seconded by:** Stella Styers
**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz

4.6 APPROVAL OF JANUARY 13, 2026, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

**Motion:** Approve the January 13, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes.

**Moved by:** Jon McNeil
**Seconded by:** Stella Styers
**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz

**Discussion:**

Trustee McNeil stated that the reason he moved approval of all three sets of minutes was because he had reviewed them thoroughly. He stated that the minutes were excellent, that they captured everything, and that he wanted to publicly commend Ms. Naomi Alaniz for her work.

Naomi Alaniz thanked Trustee McNeil and stated that she appreciated his comments.

4.7 ANNOUNCEMENT OF RECUSAL FROM AGENDA ITEMS

No recusals were declared.

## 5. HEARING OF CITIZENS - NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Public comment on matters not listed on the agenda but within the jurisdiction of the District will be heard during this section only. Each speaker is limited to five (5) minutes, with a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes per topic, unless otherwise determined by the Board President. The Board cannot take action on non-agenda items but may refer matters to the Superintendent/President for follow-up or place them on a future agenda.

5.1 PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS 55 - 59

**Jorge Robles**, a Palo Verde College student representing himself, approached the podium and addressed the Board in sign language. An interpreter was not present.

Trustee Williams asked, “Can we have our interpreter up here?” Trustee McNeil responded, “That’s the point, we don’t have one.”

**Robert Hope Murillo**, ASG President, representing himself, the Associated Student Government (ASG), and Puente, distributed a written statement to the Board of Trustees and read the statement during public comment. The written statement is attached to and incorporated into these minutes.
Robert Hope Murillo Statement.pdf

**Lillian Jones**, ASG Vice President, addressed the Board and stated that she previously participated in the Puente program and that it contributed to her academic success. She stated that although the Puente program has shut down, she continues to receive support from her counselor and her English teacher, who also serves as her club advisor. She expressed appreciation for faculty and staff who remain committed to supporting student success.

Ms. Jones further stated that one of the College's main goals is to keep students on campus and engaged beyond their class time. She stated that programs such as Umoja and Puente help students "stay up here" by hosting events throughout the year. She noted that these programs regularly organized activities that encouraged students to remain on campus. Ms. Jones stated that she has heard from staff that an important goal is to encourage students to stay on campus rather than attend class and immediately leave. She emphasized that if the College wants active and engaged students, programs such as Umoja and Puente are important in supporting that goal.

**Elizabeth Berry**, Needles ASG representative, addressed the Board regarding the possibility that a graduation ceremony would not be held at the Needles Educational Center this year. She stated that it had been brought to her attention that the proposal under consideration was to hold a single graduation ceremony in Blythe at the Main Campus and reimburse transportation costs for Needles graduates traveling to Blythe. Ms. Berry questioned why such decisions were being considered without input from the Needles community. She stated that decisions affecting the Needles

Educational Center should not be made without consultation with students and community members who are directly impacted. She further questioned who would be reimbursed and who the added expense would fall on.

Ms. Berry noted that the previous year's Needles graduation ceremony included more than 150 attendees, including families, community members, local stakeholders, and prospective students. She raised concerns regarding the potential cost of chartering transportation and questioned how the proposal would accommodate individuals with health limitations, those unable to travel long distances, or students and families who may not be able to commit several additional hours for travel and ceremony attendance. She stated that some graduating students in Needles had indicated they would not participate if the ceremony were held only in Blythe.

Ms. Berry stated that the Needles graduation ceremony currently operates at minimal cost and that expenses are covered by the Needles Educational Center, not the Main Campus. She questioned why additional expense would be incurred to transport students to Blythe when a local ceremony is already in place. She further stated that San Bernardino County residents contribute tax revenue to support the Needles Educational Center and expressed that community members should have the opportunity to celebrate graduates at the site where they completed their coursework. Ms. Berry characterized the proposal to hold a single graduation ceremony in Blythe as unnecessary, costly, and unfair to Needles students and their families, and she requested clarification as to why the change was being considered.

Ms. Berry also addressed concerns regarding the ADS (Alcohol and Drug Studies) program at the Needles Educational Center. She stated that she is completing her second degree and certification requirements, which include ADS 150 and ADS 151, courses that require an internship component. She stated that she contacted the instructor to determine what steps were necessary to arrange the internship and was informed that internship arrangements had been made for students in Blythe, but no arrangements were or would be

made for students at the Needles Center.

Ms. Berry stated that she was advised to seek internship opportunities independently in locations such as Lake Havasu City or Kingman, which she indicated was not feasible for her and other Needles students. She stated that she did not know what to look for or what questions to ask, and expressed that arranging placements should not fall on students. She stated that it is not her job to know these things; it is her job to learn, which is why she enrolled in Palo Verde College.

Ms. Berry stated that she is the first ADS student at the Needles Center to make it this far, and she certainly won't be the last. She expressed concern that although the Palo Verde College operates a campus in Needles, students are not receiving the kind of support to complete the programs offered. She stated that if she had known that she would get to the end of her program only to be left hanging, she probably would not have enrolled. She requested increased support for Needles students in the ADS program and other programs facing similar challenges.

## 6. REPORTS

Reports are limited to a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes, unless otherwise determined by the Board President.

### 6.1 PVCCA/CTA - RICHARD CASTILLO, PRESIDENT OF PVCCA/CTA

Richard Castillo, President of PVCCA/CTA, provided an update on contract negotiations with District administration. He stated that negotiations are scheduled to resume the following day at noon and noted that progress was made during the January 28 session, stating that "the needle moved" forward. He stated that the bargaining team believes they are getting close to reaching a total agreement on a new contract. He stated that as discussions narrow, the remaining issues will likely come down to money.

He reported that the union presented four articles to the District during the last session, including articles related to evaluation, grievance procedures, due process/investigations, and Article 11 concerning the prisons program. He stated that the union seeks to maintain the status quo regarding binding

arbitration within the grievance process and noted that CSEA retained binding arbitration in its agreement.

Mr. Castillo further reported that District administration presented counteroffers on Article 2, salary and benefits, and Article 4. He noted that the needle pretty much stayed in place, but it had moved a little bit in other areas. He stated that additional negotiation dates are scheduled in March and stated that if negotiations extend into April, it will mark one year of bargaining, and noted that the union does not wish to surpass CSEA's prior 18-month negotiation timeline, stating that they hope to reach agreement sooner.

Mr. Castillo also reported that the union submitted a couple of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to District administration, including one related to increased part-time faculty participation in the equivalency process and a few other things. He concluded by inviting questions from Board members.

6.2 ACADEMIC SENATE - SARAH FRID, PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC SENATE

Sarah Frid was not present at tonight's meeting.

6.3 CSEA, CHAPTER 180 - ALICE DEAN, PRESIDENT OF CSEA CHAPTER 180

Alice Dean, President of CSEA Chapter 180, addressed the Board and thanked them for having a space for CSEA on the agenda. She stated that CSEA did not have anything to report tonight.

6.4 ASSOCIATED STUDENT GOVERNMENT - MELINA RANGEL-RUIZ, STUDENT TRUSTEE

Student Trustee Melina Rangel-Ruiz provided an update on Associated Student Government activities. She reported that ASG is selling Valentine's grams for $2, described as butterfly-themed items made by ASG officers. She also reported that the Pride Club is selling themed buttons for $3 each or two for $5, and that the Lodge of Artistry is selling handmade bookmarks for $1. She encouraged everyone to support the student clubs and ASG. Student Trustee Rangel-Ruiz further announced that a special guest speaker is scheduled to

appear on campus on February 23 and encouraged attendance and support.

6.5 ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT/VICE PRESIDENT OF INSTRUCTION AND STUDENT SERVICES - CLINT COWDEN
OR
ACTING ASSISTANT SUPT./VP OF INSTRUCTION AND STUDENT SERVICES, DR. SAM ROBINSON

Dr. Sam Robinson, Acting Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Instruction and Student Services, stated that her board report was attached, but she wanted to thank everyone in Student Services and Instruction. She expressed appreciation, noting that it takes a significant team effort to launch a semester. Dr. Robinson expressed her appreciation for the support she has received and thanked staff, faculty, and student workers for their teamwork and assistance. She stated that she looks forward to working together throughout the spring semester and concluded by inviting any questions from the Board.

6.6 ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT/VICE PRESIDENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND COLLEGE ADVANCEMENT - STEPHANIE SLAGAN

Stephanie Slagan, Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Administrative Services and College Advancement, congratulated the 30 students who received laptops this semester and stated that the Foundation was pleased to provide them. She noted that this was a wonderful start to the semester and stated that the recipients' names were posted on the Foundation's Facebook page and that the students were contacted directly. She concluded by stating that her written report was attached.

**Discussion:**

Trustee Copple asked how many students received laptops.

Ms. Slagan responded that 30 students received laptops this semester and that 30 were also distributed last semester.

Trustee McNeil stated that six of the recipients were students from the Needles Educational Center and expressed that he

was very excited about that.

6.7 SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT - DR. BRUCE MOSES

Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent/President, welcomed everyone back and recognized Black History Month. He stated that he would reserve his remarks for his presentation under Agenda Item 7.2.

6.8 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Trustee Jon McNeil** stated that he would be remiss if he did not provide a report and noted that he believes it is important to share information. He stated that his comments are intended to make the Board and the College more effective and efficient. He further stated that he values transparency and believes that when individuals are aware of what he and the Board are doing, including activities in Needles, it makes everybody that much more powerful.

Trustee McNeil reported that he led a visit to Mojave College in Kingman to tour its new manufacturing training center. He stated that the facility is approximately 36,000 square feet and described it as incredible and an amazing visit. He noted that the City Manager and former City Manager participated in the visit.

Trustee McNeil stated that the individuals who operate the center had previously worked closely with the welding instructor at the Needles Educational Center and had developed an idea years ago to expand Career Technical Education programs and make them more effective. He stated that as those programs grew, they were brought together, and through grants and various funding sources, the college constructed the new manufacturing training center. He encouraged others to visit the facility.

Trustee McNeil stated that there was a “PR snafu” related to the visit. He noted that he had invited the Board at the prior meeting and that, two days before the trip, the invitation to staff members was canceled. He stated that he was very sorry about how that occurred and described it as a “black eye,” the way it happened, noting concerns regarding transparency.

Trustee McNeil stated that he understood there were concerns regarding the cost of people going and noted that, as the matter had been discussed at three prior Board meetings, those expenses should have been figured out in advance. He reiterated that transparency and communication are important and expressed regret that the invitation to staff was canceled. He added that there may be an opportunity to organize a future visit and stated that the trip is worthwhile.

Trustee McNeil reported that enrollment at the Needles Educational Center now exceeds 100 students. He noted that when he first began serving as a Board member, there were no classes and no students at the center, and stated that the center is now “humming”. He stated that nearly 24 classes are being offered and noted that many classes are full.

Trustee McNeil stated that during a recent visit he observed a full English class and commended the instructor, Richard, stating that he was “teaching his brains out” and saying, “Nice job.” He stated that the growth in enrollment is particularly encouraging and noted that Needles students are filling available distance learning seats that might otherwise remain unfilled by Blythe students. He stated that enrollment distribution between Needles and Blythe will eventually balance out and expressed that he is very excited.

Trustee McNeil stated that the graduation issue is really “a thorn”. He noted that during the prior year’s Needles graduation ceremony, 100 chairs were initially set out, an additional 30 were added, and approximately 150 people attended, with some standing. He stated that if a single ceremony were held in Blythe and transportation were provided using vans, transporting approximately 150 attendees at eight passengers per van would require roughly 19 vans. He described that scenario as “ludicrous.”

Trustee McNeil stated, “The town is on fire,” and described the momentum occurring at the Needles Educational Center. He reported that he recently spoke with two students who previously lived in Blythe and relocated to Needles to live with family members, stating that the change was influenced by the positive environment and experiences they have had in Needles.

Trustee McNeil stated that the success in Needles is not attributable to him, but credited Jacklyn Randall for her leadership, describing her as having strong leadership qualities and noting that people gravitate toward her. He further stated that faculty members have expressed a preference for teaching in Needles due to the positive atmosphere and thanked Richard again for his work there.

Trustee McNeil expressed pride in what is happening at the Needles Center and stated that it represents a terrific opportunity for continued growth. He further stated that when the money is settled, he believes the Needles Center will pay for itself this current year and, in future years, will be contributing back to help support the Center.

Trustee McNeil concluded by emphasizing that his belief is that all his comments are based on helping the Board and College be effective, efficient, transparent, and communicative.

**Trustee Glenda Williams** stated that she wanted to comment on the proposal not to hold a graduation ceremony in Needles. She stated that she does not understand taking people out of their community and bringing them to Blythe, emphasizing the importance of being surrounded by “your humans”, neighbors, friends, and community members, during significant events. She described Needles as a close-knit community where individuals support one another and shared a personal anecdote illustrating that sense of community.

Trustee Williams stated that community support is an important part of graduation and requested that Needles be allowed to hold its own ceremony. She stated that the community would do what is necessary to make it work locally. She further stated that transporting approximately 150 attendees in vans “sounds nuts” and would create logistical concerns, noting that even a single traffic issue could disrupt the entire event. She concluded by stating that those were her thoughts on the matter.

Trustee Williams also suggested offering “do-it-yourself” type classes that would teach practical skills such as basic home

repair and maintenance. She stated that such classes could bring more community members into the Needles Educational Center and help individuals develop skills needed for future homeownership.

Trustee Williams stated that there are likely instructors with the expertise to teach these types of courses and that offering them could serve as a “seed” to encourage participants to enroll in additional classes and consider pursuing a degree. She emphasized that taking one step can lead individuals toward greater educational opportunities.

**Trustees Gloria Copple**, **Stella Styers**, and **Brad Arneson** stated that they had no report at this time.

## 7. PRESENTATIONS

### 7.1 PALO VERDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT AUDIT REPORT ENDING JUNE 30, 2025

Ben Leavitt, CPA with CWDL, presented the Palo Verde Community College District Audit Report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025. He stated that he would review the report at a high level and invited Board members to ask questions throughout the presentation.

Mr. Leavitt explained that the audit report contains four primary deliverables. He reported that the District received an unmodified opinion on its financial statements, which is the highest level of assurance an external auditor can provide. He stated that, based on the audit procedures performed, the financial statements may be relied upon by the Board and District stakeholders.

Mr. Leavitt reviewed the structure of the report, including Management’s Discussion and Analysis (MD&A), the core financial statements, notes to the financial statements, required supplementary information, and supplementary information required by the State of California and the federal government.

He then summarized the remaining audit reports, including the “Yellow Book” report on internal controls and

compliance, the federal single audit conducted under Uniform Guidance, and the state compliance testing performed in accordance with the Chancellor's Office Contracted District Audit Manual (CDAM). Mr. Leavitt reported that no significant deficiencies, material weaknesses, or compliance findings were identified in any area.

He concluded by stating that the District received an entirely clean audit for fiscal year 2025, with no findings in the financial statements, federal awards, or state compliance testing, and no prior-year findings requiring corrective action. Mr. Leavitt then invited questions from the Board.

**Questions and Public Comment:**

Elizabeth Cusick asked whether the audit conducted was a forensic financial audit or a routine annual audit. She asked whether the auditors reviewed expenditures at the level of examining specific grant budget narratives and corresponding receipts, using the example of a $1 expenditure for a pen, to confirm that each dollar received was spent exactly as budgeted, or whether the audit was more general in scope.

Mr. Leavitt responded that the engagement performed was a routine annual financial audit and not a forensic audit. He explained that a forensic audit is typically initiated in response to a specific concern or allegation and involves an enhanced or expanded scope of procedures. He stated that under the routine annual audit, the firm performs required financial statement testing as well as federal compliance testing under Uniform Guidance. For fiscal year 2025, that included major program testing of the Student Financial Assistance (SFA) cluster.

Ms. Cusick sought clarification, asking whether "zero findings" meant that if the government provided $1 and the District's books reflected that $1 was spent in connection with the federal program, the auditors verified that alignment. Mr. Leavitt responded that confirming reported dollar amounts is one aspect of the testing, but that federal compliance testing extends beyond simply matching revenues and expenditures. He explained that auditors also evaluate compliance

attributes required under federal regulations.

Ms. Cusick further questioned whether a forensic audit would involve a deeper review of underlying documentation, including tracing expenditures back to original supporting documentation and receipts beyond what is reviewed in a routine audit.

Mr. Leavitt explained that under the routine audit, auditors do drill down into underlying supporting documentation, including reviewing invoices and accounts payable packets to support selected disbursements. However, he stated that this testing is performed on a statistically relevant sample basis and does not include review of 100 percent of transactions. He explained that a forensic audit would typically involve a significantly expanded sample size, and in some cases may review every transaction, particularly in a fraud-focused engagement.

Ms. Cusick acknowledged the clean audit results and stated that zero findings indicate that the system is functioning as designed. She posed a hypothetical scenario in which a subsequent forensic audit could potentially identify discrepancies not identified in a routine audit due to the broader scope of review.

Mr. Leavitt responded that while routine audit procedures are specifically designed to detect material misstatements and compliance issues, it is possible that an expanded forensic scope reviewing a greater volume of underlying documentation could identify matters not captured within standard sampling procedures. He further noted that CWDL specializes in California community college audits and designs its procedures carefully to address financial and compliance risks.

Mr. Leavitt reiterated that for fiscal year 2025, no findings, material weaknesses, significant deficiencies, or compliance exceptions were identified in the financial statements, federal awards testing, or state compliance testing.

Scott Dean asked how a forensic audit would be initiated and what circumstances would require one. He referenced Mr.

Leavitt's earlier comments that a forensic audit may occur in response to a complaint and questioned how the auditors would become aware that a complaint had been made.

Mr. Leavitt responded that a forensic audit is typically scoped at the direction of management or, more commonly, management acting under direction of the Governing Board. He explained that a forensic audit would generally be initiated when there is an identified concern, such as a whistleblower complaint or other indication that "something doesn't smell right," and the District determines that a routine audit lens is insufficient. He stated that a forensic audit involves a significantly expanded scope and level of detail, often requiring many multiples of the hours and staffing associated with a routine audit engagement.

Mr. Leavitt provided examples from private industry, referencing cases such as Enron and WorldCom, where significant red flags prompted exhaustive financial examination. He explained that in a forensic engagement, auditors may perform extensive sampling or, in some cases, review 100 percent of transactions within the identified area of concern. He further noted that both he and his partner are Certified Fraud Examiners (CFEs), and that while that credential informs their routine audit procedures, it is more directly utilized in fraud or forensic audit engagements. He stated that such engagements typically occur when at least one instance of identified fraud has been discovered and management or the Board seeks to determine whether additional issues exist.

Mr. Dean responded by referencing Enron and stated that in that case management concealed problems from the public. He questioned whether the District would effectively have to "turn itself in" in order for a forensic audit to occur and whether the auditors rely on management to disclose such issues.

Mr. Leavitt responded that Mr. Dean's point regarding Enron was fair, noting that in that case management was actively concealing financial misrepresentations. He explained that in a public entity such as a community college district, the Governing Board functions separately from management and

retains oversight authority. He stated that if a concern were raised, whether by a whistleblower, the community, or another source, the Governing Board could direct an expanded forensic review, either through the routine auditor or an independent firm.

Mr. Leavitt further explained that the Governing Board has authority to oversee management, including the authority to hire and dismiss the Chief Executive Officer, and therefore has the ability to escalate concerns and initiate corrective action if necessary. He stated that it is important for the Governing Board to set a strong "tone from the top" in ensuring financial integrity and transparency. He also noted that severe financial misrepresentation is extremely rare within the California Community College system.

7.2 UPDATE ON INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENTS (ISA) REVENUE

Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent/President, presented an update on Instructional Services Agreements (ISA) revenue, also referred to as Industrial Emergency Council (IEC) vocational training. He stated that the presentation was part of the District's broader review of revenue streams in preparation for budget development. He noted that ISA revenue is the District's second-largest revenue stream after incarcerated student programs. Dr. Moses stated that the data presented was derived directly from Chancellor's Office reporting (Schedule C) and is publicly available for all California community college districts.

Dr. Moses explained that ISA, also referred to as IEC (Industrial Emergency Council), operates under an agreement ratified by Palo Verde Community College in 2013 to provide Industrial Emergency Council vocational training. He stated that IEC primarily consists of fire science training, emergency management training, and other public safety programs, with most instruction focused on fire-related training. He explained that Palo Verde College offers these courses throughout the State of California, outside of the District's service area. Dr. Moses further noted that ISA/IEC programming requires coordination across multiple departments, including Academic Scheduling, Admissions

and Records, Instructional Services, and Administrative Services.

Dr. Moses explained that in order to offer ISA courses within another community college district's service area, Palo Verde College must request authorization from that district. He stated that letters are sent under his signature requesting permission to conduct specified courses within those districts. He provided examples of recent authorization requests and noted that the District has also received denial letters from other community college districts declining permission to offer certain courses. He stated that the number of denial letters has increased in recent years. Dr. Moses stated that he brings this up because Palo Verde College is at risk of losing more of these training facilities and opportunities. He further stated that "we've heard we're at risk at the prisons that we teach in," and that it would be negligent if he did not bring this to the Board and let them know of these risks.

Dr. Moses explained Full-Time Equivalent Students (FTES), noting that one FTES represents a full-time student taking 15 units over a full academic term. He clarified that most students are part-time and that FTES is calculated based on total contact hours across courses. Dr. Moses presented FTES revenue data for the past several fiscal years and stated that incarcerated student programs and ISA programs collectively account for approximately 80–85% of the District's FTES-generated revenue. He stated that in fiscal year 2024–2025, incarcerated education generated approximately 46% of FTES revenue and ISA generated approximately 39%, with credit classes on the main campus comprising the next largest category. He reported that these two primary revenue streams generated approximately $13.5 million in fiscal year 2024–2025.

Dr. Moses stated that both incarcerated education and ISA revenue streams are subject to risk. He stated that when he interviewed for the position, he indicated that the District needed to diversify its revenue portfolio, noting that relying primarily on these two "buckets" would not be sustainable long term. He stated that efforts have been made to diversify revenue by increasing dual enrollment and expanding

noncredit offerings; however, more work is needed because these two primary revenue sources are expected to dwindle. He stated that the Board should keep in mind that enrollment in ISA and incarcerated student programs is likely to decrease.

Dr. Moses explained that ISA enrollment data is lagging due to the rolling nature of course offerings statewide, making it difficult to provide real-time FTES totals until later in the fiscal cycle. He further reported that the District's current FTES total is just below its state-established cap of 3,000 FTES. He explained that exceeding the cap results in serving students without receiving state apportionment funding and noted that in prior years the District did exceed the cap and subsequently reduced certain program offerings in order to bring FTES back under the funding limit.

Dr. Moses stated that the District must begin making changes and increasing local enrollment, continuing efforts to grow local learners and generate additional revenue streams that do not currently exist. He stated that relying primarily on existing revenue sources is not sustainable and invited questions from the Board.

**Questions and Public Comment:**

Elizabeth Cusick asked Dr. Moses, "You stated that when you came on board, you realized that those two categories were not going to be sustained. Is that correct?"

Dr. Moses responded that when he interviewed for the position, one of the things he stated was that the District needed to diversify its portfolio.

Ms. Cusick asked what year he made that statement in.

Dr. Moses responded, "July 2024."

Ms. Cusick noted that the current date is February 2026 and asked what the plan is moving forward.

Dr. Moses responded that the District has a Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) that outlines goals and objectives. He stated that his goals focus on increasing local learners, including adult learners who have not yet been tapped,

particularly through noncredit programming, adult education, and dual enrollment. He stated that the District is working to increase the number of dual enrollment students at both Palo Verde Unified School District and Needles Unified School District.

Ms. Cusick then asked what specific programs were being planned for implementation. She stated that she wanted to "go over some numbers real quick" and proceeded to provide population figures before Dr. Moses responded. She referenced the population of Blythe as ranging between approximately 8,000 to 10,000 individuals, excluding the prison population, and stated that she was referring to "butts in seats," meaning local individuals who could physically attend classes. She stated that if 50 percent of that population were assumed to be eligible to attend college, that would equate to approximately 5,000 individuals, and questioned whether that would meet his numbers.

Trustee Stella Styers stated for clarification that the population is approximately 17,000 to 18,000.

Ms. Cusick responded, "That is incorrect," and stated that the higher population number included both prisons. She reiterated that she was referring to "butts in seats," meaning local individuals who could physically attend classes. She stated that, using her 50 percent estimate, the number of individuals available for the programs Dr. Moses is seeking to implement would be approximately 5,000.

Dr. Moses responded, "Well, let me correct you on one thing," and stated that he is not personally trying to implement programs. He explained that program development should be based on the data and information contained within the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP), which was in motion prior to his arrival and has since been completed.

Dr. Moses stated that the Comprehensive Education Plan identifies different programs and the potential job outlook for the community. He stated that he cannot start a program because that is a "10 plus one" matter and must come from the faculty through curriculum development. He stated that while there are programs he would like to see started, it does not start with him; it starts with faculty saying they are

interested in developing the program.

Dr. Moses provided examples of potential programs identified through labor market demand, including a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program. He stated that there are CDL employment opportunities within the Blythe region and within the Needles region; however, the District does not currently offer a CDL program. He noted that there are multiple programs that could be developed, but reiterated that it doesn't start with him.

Ms. Cusick stated that she understood program development is a community effort and that she was speaking on behalf of the community regarding concerns about the sustainability of the College. She referenced the graph previously presented and stated that it showed incarcerated students and another category representing approximately 80 percent of those being served.

Ms. Cusick reiterated her estimate of approximately 5,000 local individuals, based on her 50 percent assumption. She stated that if the District is trying to reach local learners and have "butts in seats" locally, that number would represent the available population. She expressed concern that if the prison population and the other category were to go away, the institution would be left with that local population. She asked where that would leave the institution and questioned whether 5,000 people would be enough to sustain the College, stating, "Is that enough? That's my question."

Dr. Moses responded that he was struggling to understand her figure of 5,000 people.

Ms. Cusick further stated that if approximately 5,000 individuals from the community were to enroll, many would not be full-time students. She noted that, as previously stated, much of the population attends part-time rather than full-time. She questioned whether reaching that population would generate sufficient FTES to sustain the College and asked whether that would be enough to sustain the institution.

Dr. Moses responded that if the District had an additional 2,500 individuals enrolling locally beyond current enrollment

levels, that would represent “a good problem.”

Ms. Cusick stated that she was referring to the goal if the programs currently being served were to go away and asked, “which is what you’re forecasting, correct?” She further stated that she was glad the District was looking at this.

Dr. Moses responded that he was not forecasting that the programs would “go away,” but rather that they would continue to dwindle. He stated that based on information available to the administration, the District will not continue to be able to serve approximately 50 percent incarcerated students and another approximately 35 percent in ISA programs due to the nature and structure of those educational agreements.

Dr. Moses stated that the administration understands that those numbers are not sustainable when looking three, five, or ten years into the future. He stated that the institution must begin structuring itself to serve other areas within the community.

Referring back to Ms. Cusick’s example, Dr. Moses stated that if the College were to enroll 500 new part-time students over the next two semesters, he would be “ecstatic.”

Trustee Williams referenced a prior discussion regarding noncredit classes that feed into credit programs. She recalled that noncredit courses, such as Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and medical terminology, could serve as preparatory pathways into programs such as nursing. She stated that noncredit courses can generate approximately $1,500 in state funding and asked whether those types of programs remain available as feeder programs into credit coursework.

Trustee Williams further stated that some students do not succeed in nursing programs due to challenges with medical terminology and suggested that offering noncredit medical terminology courses prior to enrollment in nursing could improve student success and strengthen the nursing pool.

Dr. Robinson stated that through the District’s adult education program, mirrored courses are being offered in

both noncredit and credit formats. She stated that several faculty members have adopted noncredit versions of their credit courses as an on-ramp into credit programs.

Dr. Robinson provided examples, stating that in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) there is both a noncredit version and a four-credit version of the course. She also noted that in Child Development, a faculty member has piloted a noncredit version alongside the credit version, with both running concurrently.

She explained that noncredit courses provide a lower-stakes opportunity for students, particularly those who have stopped out for a period of time, to reintroduce themselves to coursework and build confidence without impacting their GPA. She stated that noncredit courses serve as a pathway to onboard or transition students into credit programs.

Dr. Robinson stated that this approach supports outreach to adult learners. She further noted that Alejandro Clark, Director of the Regional Consortium, presented at Faculty Flex Day and generated interest in expanding noncredit offerings. She stated that the District is working to expand noncredit programming and recently received a grant from the Metropolitan Water District to explore additional noncredit opportunities.

Dr. Moses added that the District has data indicating that more than 800 individuals in the City of Blythe have some college credit but no degree or certificate. He stated that these individuals represent another cohort of adult learners the District can reach out to. Dr. Moses provided examples, stating that some individuals may have attended a four-year institution years ago, stopped out, returned home, and entered the workforce but still hold college credit. He stated that these individuals could potentially be reengaged and onboarded into education at Palo Verde College through noncredit, not-for-credit, or credit programming.

Peter Martinez, Chair of the Business Division, addressed the Board and stated that he wished to offer comments to support the District's efforts. He stated that the Business Division has been working closely with the community and

conducting research and assessment to create additional opportunities.

Mr. Martinez stated that when discussing opportunities, the division has been focusing on noncredit programs, particularly eight-week courses designed to build momentum and serve as stepping stones into accredited programs. He stated that other community colleges throughout the state and in Southern California have successfully developed similar short-term programs.

Mr. Martinez reported that the Business Division has been engaging with its advisory groups and recently held a meeting attended by Dr. Robinson, during which discussions included internships and financial literacy programming. He stated that these short-term programs could serve as hubs or gateways into credit-bearing programs. He emphasized that such offerings provide a stepping stone for students to return to college and enroll in more advanced coursework.

Mr. Martinez stated that the Business Division is interested in growing entrepreneurship and working with industries, particularly focusing attention on local industries and not just PVID. He stated that local industries are looking for data, truck drivers, and technology-related skills. He noted that when the College met with PVID, they were pleased to engage because, historically, the College had not reached out to them. He acknowledged that and stated that efforts are now underway to build momentum not only with that industry but also with industries on the Arizona side of the state line.

Mr. Martinez stated that “it’s going to take a village,” and referenced working with the Academic Senate and CAP to build those conversations and move initiatives forward. He noted that he serves in other educational settings and has had discussions about how the region can move forward, including conversations about supporting nursing programs. He encouraged the Board of Trustees to provide leadership and help move the institution in that direction, stating that if the Board sets the tone, broader support from outside the region would follow.

Dr. Baba Adam addressed the Board and provided

clarification regarding dual enrollment data. He stated that in 2022–2023 the District had 398 unduplicated high school student headcount enrollments, and that those students completed approximately 130 units. He stated that in 2023–2024 there were 416 unduplicated high school student headcount enrollments, with slightly fewer units completed. He further reported that in 2024–2025 there were 715 high school students enrolled in classes.

Dr. Adams emphasized that these students are taking college courses while still in high school and are not using their Pell Grant eligibility. He stated that the smaller class structure supports student success and transfer readiness. He noted that this growth represents only the “tip of the iceberg” and that there are additional opportunities for expansion, including potential outreach across the river into Arizona.

Dr. Adams stated that the District’s growth is not solely attributable to prison programs or ISA programs, but that there are positive developments occurring locally. He stated that there are good things happening at the College that are not always discussed publicly.

Dana Rethwisch addressed the Board and added to Dr. Robinson’s comments regarding Child Development. She stated that faculty have been working for approximately two years to mirror certain noncredit and credit courses, and that this semester marks the first time those mirrored courses have been fully implemented.

Ms. Rethwisch reported that a preparation and education course, developed in collaboration with the two local school districts, is being offered this semester on Wednesday evenings. She stated that the course is designed to prepare individuals to enter the field of education as teachers, paraprofessionals, or other staff members. She noted that the course is being offered in both Blythe and Needles and that enrollment is approximately evenly split between credit and noncredit students. She stated that she considers that a success.

Ms. Rethwisch also referenced Trustee Williams’ earlier comments regarding home repair-type courses. She stated

that she recently met with Alejandro Clark and the District's construction faculty member to discuss high school pathway courses, noncredit offerings, and shorter-term community courses similar to those described earlier. She stated that those discussions are moving forward.

Ms. Rethwisch, noting her role as Curriculum Co-Chair for faculty, explained that curriculum development is a lengthy process and stated that new programs cannot be implemented immediately. She stated that it can take approximately two years to move curriculum through the academic approval process. She encouraged Board support in helping to pave the way for these initiatives and stated that faculty are actively working to identify opportunities and move them through the system.

Trustee Williams responded that she was thrilled to hear that and thanked her.

Ms. Cusick stated that she had one final question regarding the reported high school enrollment figures. She referenced the 715 unduplicated high school student headcount previously reported and described that number as "awesome" and "amazing." She then stated that, according to the California Department of Education, Palo Verde High School has approximately 775 students enrolled in grades 9 through 12. She asked whether that would mean that nearly 95 percent of Palo Verde High School students were enrolled in College courses.

Dr. Baba Adams responded that he did not know what all that is, but stated that the figures he reported were drawn directly from the District's Colleague database. He stated that those students are coded in the system as "special admit" and "dual enrollment," and that he was reporting the data as reflected in the District's records.

Ms. Cusick stated that her primary concern is ensuring that the District has accurate data in order to make informed decisions regarding programs and sustainability. She stated that understanding where the institution stands is critical in

order to work together and move forward. Ms. Cusick complimented Mr. Martinez and others for their hard work.

Ms. Cusick also referenced her role as Director of the TRIO Upward Bound program. She stated that when she began in 2023 there were approximately 18 students enrolled in the program and that the federal baseline requirement was 60 students. She stated that within several months enrollment increased to approximately 64 students.

Ms. Cusick stated that Upward Bound strongly encourages students to participate in dual enrollment. She reported that approximately 90 percent of her students graduated with certificates and that all of her senior high school students graduated above baseline measures. She stated that, with the exception of two students, her high school seniors enrolled in other colleges after graduation and characterized that outcome as “100 out of 100 percent.” She stated that these successes are not being reported.

Trustee McNeil stated that he wanted to comment on what had been discussed, particularly referencing Mr. Martinez’s remarks regarding strategic planning. He referenced his recent visit to the manufacturing training program in Kingman and stated that the program took many years to develop. He stated that Kingman built its program through strategic plan after strategic plan and then assembled all the elements over time.

Trustee McNeil stated that the District does not currently have a strategic plan structured in that manner and emphasized the need for a plan that identifies funding, timelines, and accountability. He stated that a strategic plan will evolve over time and require adjustments year after year as it develops.

Trustee McNeil agreed with Mr. Martinez that outreach to the community and industry is essential, stating that Kingman developed its program by talking to people and identifying workforce needs. He stated that progress will not happen overnight, but emphasized that the District needs to begin the process. Trustee McNeil stated, “I think Bruce is right, we need to start.”

Mr. Martinez offered an additional comment and stated that he believes the District is at a pivotal point. He referenced a proposed lithium project in Imperial County, stating that the project is currently valued at approximately $10 billion. He further stated that two investors from Taiwan recently proposed an investment of approximately $3 billion related to development of a data center and lithium extraction operations.

Mr. Martinez stated that this presents a significant opportunity for Palo Verde College, particularly in areas such as trucking and automation. He stated that trucking programs could generate substantial revenue and that automation and related technical fields could support workforce needs associated with the project. He further suggested that the District may want to consider degree pathways beyond the associate level, noting that bachelor's degree programs are being developed in some areas.

Mr. Martinez stated that while this was not the time for a full discussion, he would welcome the opportunity to share additional information and potentially invite a guest speaker to discuss the project further. He noted that the initiative involves stakeholders across San Diego and Riverside Counties, including state legislators, investors, and regional partners. Mr. Martinez encouraged the Board to consider potential opportunities beyond the immediate region. He stated that he believes Clint Cowden had already envisioned that type of broader regional approach and that the District should continue expanding on that concept while working closely with local workforce development partners.

Trustee Copple stated that the Board should probably schedule a study session to talk about these matters and suggested setting a meeting at a later date to further discuss the ideas raised by Mr. Martinez.

Scott Dean stated that four of his sons attended Palo Verde College and that each experienced success afterward.

7.3 CLIMATE SURVEY

Dr. Erica Holmes, Vice President of Human Resources, presented the results of the Fall 2025 Palo Verde College Employee Climate Survey.

Dr. Holmes stated that the purpose of the survey was to gather employee feedback in order to inform institutional improvements and retention strategies. She explained that the survey questions and design were reviewed by multiple groups prior to administration and that the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Committee provided final approval of the survey instrument.

Dr. Holmes stated that the survey was administered through SurveyMonkey and remained open for approximately eight weeks. Employees received multiple reminders and had ample opportunity to participate. She reported that data analysis was conducted by the District's Institutional Research Office and that action planning based on the results is ongoing.

Dr. Holmes stated that the survey addressed several areas, including safety, diversity and inclusion, belonging, compensation, and employee satisfaction with benefits.

Dr. Holmes reported that 82 employees responded to the survey. She stated that responses were unduplicated, as employees were only permitted to submit one response, and that participation represented nearly 50 percent of District employees.

Dr. Holmes reviewed areas reflecting positive employee feedback. She reported that 84 percent of respondents indicated that their contributions support the success of Palo Verde College. She stated that 85 percent felt they have opportunities to make meaningful contributions, and 80 percent indicated that their job responsibilities are fulfilling. She further reported that 72 percent of respondents felt that supervisors communicate with clarity, and 73 percent indicated that Student Services promotes success for all students. Dr. Holmes stated that these were areas where the institution did very well, according to the employees.

Dr. Holmes then presented survey results identifying areas

with lower positive response rates and opportunities for improvement. She reported that 44 percent of respondents indicated satisfaction with interdepartmental communication and stated that the District is working across departments to improve communication. She reported that 32 percent of respondents felt that administrative leadership demonstrates openness. She further reported that 22 percent felt positively about recognition for contributions and stated that Human Resources is exploring ways to support departmental employee recognition efforts as well as the development of a districtwide recognition program. Dr. Holmes reported that 22 percent of respondents indicated satisfaction with work-life balance and stated that this was considered an unfavorable response rate. She indicated that discussions will be convened to address work-life balance concerns.

Dr. Holmes further reported that 21 percent of respondents felt positively about safety awareness and information. She stated that the District was already working on this when the data came back and noted that an active shooter training was previously scheduled for that day, with a future training scheduled for faculty. She stated that additional safety-related training and communication are planned, including information regarding first aid, safety protocols, and Narcan awareness. Dr. Holmes clarified that employee concerns in this category relate to campus safety awareness rather than conference or professional development opportunities.

Dr. Holmes stated that when employee feedback is collected, it is important to use that information to guide action. She outlined short-term targets, including 30-, 60-, and 90-day benchmarks to address areas identified in the survey. She stated that initial efforts would focus on communication improvements and updating recognition tools, describing these as “low-hanging fruit” that could help employees feel supported in the short term.

Dr. Holmes emphasized that these efforts are ongoing and cannot be addressed solely through centralized planning. She stated that improvement requires participation across departments and encouraged supervisors to conduct short-term “spot checks” within their own areas to gather feedback on preferred communication methods and recognition

practices. She stated that departments will be encouraged to ask employees how they prefer to be recognized and how they prefer to receive communication, whether by email, face-to-face meetings, or other formats.

Dr. Holmes also reported that a Climate Survey webpage has been created on the District's website. She stated that the webpage includes the PowerPoint presentation as well as a detailed executive summary containing additional charts and data beyond what was presented at the meeting. She noted that the materials are publicly available for transparency.

Dr. Holmes concluded by thanking the Institutional Research Office for assisting with survey administration and data analysis.

**Questions and Discussion:**

Trustee McNeil asked whether the survey was anonymous and whether employees at the Needles Educational Center participated. Dr. Holmes confirmed that the survey was anonymous and that Needles employees were included. Trustee McNeil also inquired about the number of responses, and Dr. Holmes reported that 82 responses represent approximately 48 percent of District employees. Trustee McNeil expressed appreciation for the presentation and the information provided.

7.4 EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

Dr. Erica Holmes, Vice President of Human Resources, began by stating that she was going to be sharing workforce information.

She stated that the data presented focused specifically on employment within the City of Blythe, rather county at large. She began by identifying major employment sectors in Blythe, including public administration, education, accommodation and food service, retail, agriculture, and health care. Dr. Holmes stated that she reviewed employment rankings and job market data derived from sources including the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS.gov) and aggregated employment information from platforms such as Glassdoor

and Salary.com.

Dr. Holmes reported that, based on the data reviewed, employer rankings in Blythe were presented from sixth to first as follows: Albertsons, agriculture, the City and County, Palo Verde Unified School District, and Ironwood State Prison. She reported that Palo Verde College ranked number one among employers in Blythe.

Dr. Holmes stated that Palo Verde College is viewed as an employer of choice and identified several factors contributing to that distinction. She stated that the College offers mission-driven work focused on student and community success. She referenced competitive salaries, institutional loyalty and longevity among employees, and supportive colleagues as contributing factors.

Dr. Holmes stated that she has observed a culture of respect within the institution and a commitment to supporting students, faculty, and staff. She further stated that the College has, in the Superintendent/President position, a leader with the background and administrative capability to guide the institution through the challenges it is currently experiencing.

Dr. Holmes also identified additional factors contributing to Palo Verde College being viewed as an employer of choice. She referenced opportunities for career growth, community impact, diversity initiatives, and a supportive workplace culture. She acknowledged that work-life balance is an area needing continued attention but stated that the College also makes efforts to celebrate accomplishments and foster collegiality.

Dr. Holmes described the College as a “family” environment and presented data illustrating familial employment connections within the District. She reported the following:

- 18 employees have a spouse who also works for the District.
- 8 employees have a sibling employed by the District.
- 26 employees have an in-law employed by the District.
- 30 employees have a cousin employed by the District.
- 1 employee has both an aunt and a nephew employed by the District.

Dr. Holmes also noted familial relationships involving Board members, stating that there is one parent-child relationship, one Board member with a sibling employed by the District, and one Board member with a nephew employed by the District.

Dr. Holmes stated that such relationships are not uncommon in rural communities and referenced generational patterns among both students and employees. She stated that the College serves as an economic engine for the community and expressed pride in the institution's multigenerational workforce presence.

Dr. Holmes stated that the District is proud to employ Palo Verde College graduates. She reported that during the current spring semester, 41 students are employed by the District. She noted that some of those student employees may eventually graduate and pursue permanent employment with the College. Dr. Holmes reiterated that the College engages in mission-driven work and serves as an economic engine for the community, providing employment opportunities where individuals seek to work and build careers.

Dr. Holmes addressed the topic of nepotism and referenced the District's nepotism policy. She stated that the District has zero instances of nepotism and that family relationships among employees do not constitute nepotism under District policy. She stated that the policy exists to ensure ethical guidelines are followed so that family members may work within the same district without violating laws or policies.

Dr. Holmes stated that no family member supervises another family member and that hiring practices are structured to prevent conflicts of interest. She referenced comments she had received regarding perceived nepotism and characterized such concerns as a myth. Dr. Holmes stated that the District verifies employee relationships and utilizes the NeoGov application system, through which applicants disclose any family members employed by the District. She stated that this information is used to structure interview committees appropriately and to ensure proper placement within departments to avoid conflicts of interest. Dr. Holmes stated that the District follows established policies and ethical hiring

practices and reiterated that family employment relationships do not equate to nepotism under District policy.

During the presentation, Ms. Cusick interjected and stated that she had a comment regarding nepotism and the NeoGov system. She stated that she had applied for positions at the College 23 times and that, in her experience, the NeoGov application did not include a question asking whether an applicant has a relative employed by the District.

Dr. Holmes responded that the system does include such a question but stated that, for the sake of time, she would continue with the presentation.

Dr. Holmes concluded her presentation by sharing workforce data obtained from the City of Blythe website, noting that the data was reported in 2023. She stated that the data reflects 2,374 individuals who both live and work in Blythe, 3,581 individuals who live in Blythe but work outside the city, and 3,167 individuals who commute into Blythe for employment. She stated that this information is important for workforce planning considerations both now and in the future.

Dr. Holmes also referenced educational attainment data for the community, noting categories including “some college,” individuals without associate or bachelor’s degrees, and those holding graduate or professional degrees. She stated that understanding these attainment levels helps identify potential gaps within the community and may inform both student recruitment efforts and workforce planning. She noted that, in some cases, individuals with advanced degrees relocate to the community to fill workforce needs. Dr. Holmes stated that the data is relevant not only for recruiting students but also for understanding the qualifications needed for positions within the District.

Dr. Holmes concluded by stating that Palo Verde College is a great place to work and to study. She stated that each day as she drives to work and sees the College on the hill, she “feels joy.” She acknowledged that the institution faces complex issues but emphasized that working together is how those

challenges are addressed. Dr. Holmes expressed gratitude for the opportunity to work at the College and encouraged all employees to continue giving their best efforts and maintaining a positive attitude in order to sustain Palo Verde College.

Trustee Styers thanked Dr. Holmes for her presentation and stated that she found it refreshing.

## 8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

There are no discussion items for this meeting.

## 9. INFORMATION ITEMS

9.1 REPORT OF PURCHASES AND WARRANTS - JANUARY 2026

9.2 ENROLLMENT FEE REVENUE REPORT – P1

**Public Comment:**

Alice Dean addressed the Board on her own behalf and stated she wanted to remind the Board that when we speak about revenue, it is an outcome, but the true outcome should be student success. Ms. Dean shared that during a recent visit to Needles, four of her five CalWORKs students met with her and Grecia. She stated that they were able to complete files, check in with the students, provide supplies, and give full education plans. She reported that one student learned she only needed four more classes to graduate and became emotional because she had believed she had much longer to go. Ms. Dean stated that moments like that are what she looks forward to when visiting Needles and working with any of her students. Ms. Dean stated that if students feel unsupported or fearful to participate, as had been discussed earlier in the meeting, it will lead to decreased enrollment. She emphasized the importance of focusing on students' needs, listening to them, and addressing their concerns so that enrollment can increase. She stated that when students are happy and feel supported, they will encourage others to attend Palo Verde College.

## 10. CONSENT ITEMS

**All Consent Items will be considered for approval in a single motion. A total of 15 minutes will be allotted for questions or clarifications from Board members and for public comments on Consent Items. Following this period, any Board member may request that one or more items be moved to the Action Agenda**

10.1 APPROVAL OF PERSONNEL ACTIONS REPORT - FEBRUARY 2026

10.2 APPROVAL OF PART-TIME TEMPORARY STUDENT WORKERS FOR SPRING 2026 SEMESTER

10.3 APPROVAL OF PART-TIME INSTRUCTORS FOR SPRING 2026

10.4 APPROVAL OF 2026–2027 NONRESIDENT TUITION FEE

10.5 APPROVAL OF CURRICULUM ITEMS

10.6 APPROVAL OF SPECIAL ADMISSIONS AND CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT OF 6TH - 8TH GRADE STUDENTS - SPRING 2026

10.7 APPROVAL OF DESTRUCTION OF RECORDS – ADMISSIONS & RECORDS

10.8 APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS FOR FEBRUARY 2026

**Motion:** Approve Consent Items 10.1 through 10.7 as presented and/or amended.
**Moved by:** Stella Styers
**Seconded by:** Jon McNeil
**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz

## 11. ACTION ITEMS

11.1 ACCEPTANCE OF AUDIT REPORT ENDING JUNE 30, 2025

**Motion:** Accept the Audit Report ending June 30, 2025.
**Moved by:** Jon McNeil
**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz

Trustee McNeil congratulated Ms. Slagan on once again receiving a clean audit. Trustee Arneson likewise thanked and congratulated her, noting that it was a lot of work.

11.2 APPROVAL OF ACADEMIC CALENDARS - FALL 2026 AND SPRING 2027

**Motion:** Approve the Academic Calendars for Fall 2026 and Spring 2027.
**Moved by:** Stella Styers
**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson
**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz

Student Trustee Rangel-Ruiz stated that she had reviewed the proposed academic calendars and asked whether Flex Days could be moved from Friday to Monday, noting that Friday had previously been the last day for students to enroll or add classes.

Dr. Robinson responded that the proposed calendars had already been adjusted. She explained that for Fall 2026, Flex Days are scheduled for Monday and Tuesday prior to the start of the semester, with classes beginning on Wednesday. She stated that this structure allows students to attend classes on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Monday, and Tuesday before the drop/add deadline.

Dr. Robinson further stated that similar adjustments were made to the Spring 2027 calendar to avoid Flex Day occurring on the last day of the drop/add period. She explained that the drop/add deadline will also be adjusted accordingly so that students continue to have five instructional days before the

deadline.

Student Trustee Rangel-Ruiz thanked Dr. Robinson for the clarification.

11.3 APPROVAL OF AMENDED AGREEMENT #1 WITH 2 DEGREE SHIFT FOR ACCJC INSTITUTIONAL SELF-EVALUATION REPORT SUPPORT

This item was pulled from the agenda.

11.4 APPROVAL OF MAXIENT SERVICE AGREEMENT FOR STUDENT AND STAFF CONDUCT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE PLATFORM

**Motion:** Approve the Service Agreement with Maxient Service LLC.
**Moved by:** Stella Styers
**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson
**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz

11.5 APPROVAL OF AMENDED AGREEMENT #1 WITH KYLE CRIDER

**Motion:** Approve Amended Agreement #1 with Kyle Crider, extending the term through July 30, 2026, and revising the scope of services as presented.
**Moved by:** Stella Styers
**Seconded by:** Jon McNeil
**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz

11.6 APPROVAL OF MBS DIRECT SERVICES ADDENDUM

**Motion:** Approve the MBS Direct Services Addendum.
**Moved by:** Stella Styers
**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson
**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon

McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz

**Public Comment:**

Alice Dean addressed the Board on her own behalf, stating that as a CALWORKs Student Services Technician I, she uses the service on a daily basis when ordering books for students. She stated that the company has been good to work with and asked the Board to approve the item so that the District may continue utilizing their services. She thanked the Board.

11.7 APPROVAL OF AUTHORIZED AGENTS AND RCOE CERTIFICATION OF SIGNATURES FOR PVCCD

**Motion:** Approve the Authorized Agents and Certification of Signatures for the Palo Verde Community College District.
**Moved by:** Stella Styers
**Seconded by:** Jon McNeil
**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Brad Arneson, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz

11.8 APPROVAL OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2026 MEETING SCHEDULE

**Motion:** Approve the Board of Trustees 2026 Meeting Schedule.
**Moved by:** Stella Styers
**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson
**Action:** Motion tabled. No vote taken

**Board Discussion and Public Comment:**

Trustee McNeil stated that he would really like to move Board meetings to Thursdays. He referenced prior discussion and stated that he understood the Superintendent had raised concerns regarding Wednesdays. Trustee McNeil stated that his intent in proposing a change was to enhance transparency and allow community members to choose between attending City Council, School District, and College Board meetings. He stated that the proposal was not intended to disrupt the

community but to promote openness and communication. He also referenced comments made at a previous meeting by the Chamber of Commerce President supporting consideration of a change in meeting day.

Dr. Bruce Moses responded to clarify that he did not state that he had an issue with Wednesday meetings. He stated that he had been asked to provide documentation regarding internal and external activities that occur on Wednesdays within the community and that he had provided that information. He further stated that he does not have a vote on the matter and requested that the record reflect that clarification.

Trustee McNeil acknowledged Dr. Moses' clarification.

Trustee Copple stated that the matter was fundamentally about public access and the Board's duty to the community, not about personalities, politics, or divisions within the Board.

Trustee Copple then read the following prepared statement: "In Blythe, yes, we have several agencies that hold meetings on Tuesday nights. And community members, including the Chamber of Commerce, they've clearly expressed that this overlap prevents them from participating in the governance of their own institutions. When the public cannot attend, transparency suffers and trust weakens. As trustees, we are entrusted with serving the long term interests of the college and the community, not short-term considerations, not elections and not personal differences. Adjusting our meeting night is a simple, reasonable step that would improve public access without harming any board member or the institution. So even if this motion does not succeed tonight, the record should reflect that the community asked that the issue was presented and that the responsibility to improve public participation was considered. Thank you."

Trustee Copple concluded by stating that since Wednesday was not good, she felt that Thursday would be good.

Alice Dean asked to speak on the item as a community member. Ms. Dean stated that she hears the concerns within the community regarding access to Board meetings and expressed support for moving the meeting night to Wednesday or Thursday. Ms. Dean referenced prior discussion regarding churches meeting on Wednesdays and stated that

church activities typically do not last the entire evening. She stated that some churches encourage youth participation in civic activities and that families could still attend Board meetings while youth attend church activities. She further stated that parents often drop off their children for youth events and are able to attend other activities before picking them up. Ms. Dean stated that changing the meeting night would provide greater opportunity for community members to attend and expressed that she believes moving the meeting would be a good idea. She thanked the Board.

Trustee Copple asked Trustee Arneson whether he preferred Thursday or Wednesday. Trustee Arneson responded that he prefers Tuesday and stated that that is why he voted for Tuesdays.

Trustee McNeil stated that if the item did not pass and did not receive four votes, the Board would remain on the current schedule. Trustee Copple responded that there are five Board members and that only three votes are required. Trustee McNeil acknowledged that only three votes would be needed.

Trustee Styers asked, “Does this interfere with the calendar that we’ve already voted on?”

Trustee Copple responded that the calendar had not been approved and stated that the Board had only been discussing it. Trustee Copple then noted that a quorum was present and that the Board could take a vote.

Trustee Styers stated that she would like to table the item and suggested obtaining additional input from the City of Blythe and the Palo Verde Hospital. She stated that the Hospital Board is an ongoing issue and expressed that she did not believe the matter should rest solely on Palo Verde College.

Trustee Copple responded that the Board is its own entity and can make its own decisions regarding its meeting schedule. She stated that if other agencies already have their meeting dates set, why can’t we just change ours?

Trustee Styers reiterated that she was requesting additional discussion with other entities. Trustee Copple responded that the Board had already had substantial discussion on the matter. Trustee Styers then stated, “Alright, let’s take a vote.”

Trustee Copple reiterated that the Board would proceed to a vote.

Trustee McNeil requested that the Needles meeting currently scheduled for April be moved to May because it falls during Spring Break.

Trustee Styers stated that she is aware of one Board member for whom it is very difficult to attend meetings on Tuesdays and noted that she did not know what that Board member's schedule would be if meetings were moved to Thursdays.

Trustee Copple stated that it appears the Board member referenced has had difficulty attending meetings regardless of whether they are held on the first Tuesday or scheduled as special meetings. She further noted that a quorum was present that evening and that there were enough members to proceed with a vote.

Trustee McNeil stated that he would choose to move the meetings to Thursday. Trustee Williams asked whether the change would begin this year. Trustee McNeil responded that it would begin this year, and Trustee Copple clarified that it would take effect the following month.

Trustee Arneson asked whether there is a policy stating that meetings are held on Tuesdays. Trustee Copple responded that the Board is changing it and stated that the Board has the authority to change the policy. Ms. Alaniz stated that there is an existing policy that would need to be revised and brought back to the Board for a first and second reading. Trustee Arneson then asked whether the policy should be revised first and questioned whether proceeding otherwise would be "putting the cart before the horse."

Trustee Copple stated that the organizational meeting was the time when the Board was allowed to change the meeting dates and that it is during that meeting that dates are changed. She further stated that the Board had been postponing that action. Trustee Arneson responded that if the Board moves its meeting before changing the policy, it would be violating its own policy. Trustee Copple replied that the Board would do both, explaining that the meeting date would be changed and the policy would be changed. Trustee

Arneson responded that it didn't make sense.

Naomi Alaniz asked for clarification, stating that she did not want the matter to come back on her in the event it was handled incorrectly. She referenced Board Policy 2330, noting that it states, "the Board shall act by majority vote of all the membership of the Board." She stated that her understanding of that language was that it would require four votes, as a majority of the full Board membership. She added that she could be wrong and requested clarification, noting that she believed legal counsel had previously indicated that interpretation, but was not certain.

Trustee Copple suggested that the Board table the item and bring the item back at the next meeting in order to obtain clarification. Trustee McNeil responded that the next meeting would need to be scheduled, noting that in December the Board had only scheduled meetings through the current meeting date. Trustee Copple stated that January and February had been approved. Trustee McNeil noted that the Board had one remaining meeting scheduled for February, referencing the previously approved February 24 meeting date.

Ms. Alaniz stated that the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools had advised that if the Board is unable to approve a meeting calendar, the District must revert to Board Policy, which provides that regular meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month. She noted that, under that policy, the March meeting would fall on the second Tuesday in March. Trustee McNeil stated that this would make the next meeting March 10. Ms. Alaniz further stated that the District would defer to Board Policy until a meeting schedule is approved in order to remain in compliance with Education Code and the Brown Act, as communicated by the County Superintendent's Office.

Trustee McNeil stated that at that time the Board would discuss changing the Board Policy and establishing a final meeting schedule, noting that four votes would be needed. He stated that the item would go on the next agenda and that the Board would vote to continue having another meeting on March 10. Trustee Copple reiterated that Item 11.8 would be

tabled.

Ms. Dean asked to add a comment and stated that, as a board member “down there”, her understanding is that to make policy changes, the Board must first vote to change the policy before it can change its policy. She further stated that if the item were postponed again, the same issue would arise when it returned for consideration, because the Board would still need to vote to change the policy before changing the policy. Trustee Copple responded that what Ms. Dean was saying was correct and stated that the Board would have to vote to see if it wanted to change the policy.

Trustee McNeil stated that the item should be placed on the agenda for the March 10th meeting and questioned whether that meant the Board would not be meeting on February 24th. Trustee Copple responded that she was unsure, stating that a meeting had been scheduled, but she did not know. Trustee Styers asked whether they were referring to the Study Sessions. Ms. Naomi Alaniz stated that the Study Sessions are also addressed in Board Policy, which provides that Special Meetings are generally held on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Trustee Copple stated that the policy can be changed and expressed uncertainty as to why the Board did not want to do so. Trustee Copple then reiterated that Item 11.8 would be tabled.

## 12. CLOSING OF MEETING

12.1 POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Trustee McNeil requested the following items be placed on a future agenda:

- Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule
- Updated report on ISA
- Presentation and/or discussion regarding expanding Career Technical Education (CTE).

12.2 ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:07p.m.

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**Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent/President**

**Minutes approved at March 10, 2026, Regular Board Meeting**

*Minutes generated by Naomi Alaniz, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/President and Board of Trustees. These minutes are a concise summary of reports, discussions, and actions taken at this meeting. For detailed comments and discussion, a tape is available to the public for 30 days after the date of this meeting.*

Draft

February 10, 2026

Dear Palo Verde Community College District Board of Trustees,

I am writing this letter to express my full support for Ms. Irma Gonzalez, Associate Dean of Counseling. I have had the pleasure of working with Ms. Gonzalez for over twenty years. Ms. Gonzalez has been a dedicated and professional Palo Verde College leader committed to the success of our Community Students, Rising Scholars, and Needles' population.

Irma grew up in Blythe and raised her family in this community. She graduated from Palo Verde High School, and she is a Palo Verde College (PVC) alumna. Prior to her current position as Associate Dean of Counseling, Ms. Gonzalez held faculty leadership positions in CTA and as Student Academic Support and Services (SASS) Division Chair for several years. Additionally, Ms. Gonzalez has served PVC in many capacities and in various duties such as Transfer Center Coordinator, Articulation Officer, Summer Bridge Program Coordinator, Puente, Upward Bound, and various Trio programs.

As the Associate Dean of Counseling, Ms. Gonzalez has been an advocate for Student Success, a positive role model for our Latino students, and a well-respected key player in our college and community. Ms. Gonzalez was instrumental in re-establishing Palo Verde College (PVC) as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). She has secured several grants providing educational opportunities for district and college students to participate in programs that will enhance their future. Ms. Gonzalez has not only established a Counseling Department, but she has also created a network of Educational Advisors who are prepared to serve the vast diversity of students' needs. Her contributions have been invaluable in Counseling, Student Services, Instruction, Administration, and to the Palo Verde Valley Community.

Irma has proven her dedication and commitment to PVC since day one. She interviewed for the counseling position on her way to deliver a child. Her loyalty to PVC is evident; She has had employment offers from other institutions; however, she chooses to work at PVC because she cares for our students and community.

As a college administrator, Irma has the responsibility to delegate job duties/assignments, evaluate job performance, and at times write up or reprimand staff for inappropriate behavior. This may cause people to judge, critique, gossip, and dislike her, for doing her job. In the twenty plus years that I've been working with Irma, she has always maintained a positive attitude, conducts herself professionally, sets a standard of Code of Ethics, respects and is respected by students, staff, faculty, administration, and community members.

I would like to quote PVC's Mission, "Palo Verde College provides opportunities for personal and professional growth to a unique community of learners in an academic

environment committed to student success, diversity, equity, and inclusion by supporting student achievement of basic skills, certificate, degree, university transfer, and career goals."

To continue providing the needs of our mission, we need Irma back. With her guidance, expertise, leadership, commitment, and with her advocacy to support Student Success, we will continue to meet our mission goals!

Respectfully,

David Silva, Counselor
Palo Verde College

**Statement by Robert Murillo**

President, Associated Student Government (ASG)

Palo Verde College

**2/10/2026**

**I submit this statement to formally document a severe and ongoing hostile and suppressive campus environment that developed after students filed grievances and raised legitimate concerns, and which has persisted due to repeated administrative inaction, favoritism, and decisions that disproportionately harmed specific student populations by Clint Cowden, Bruce Moses, Irma Gonzalez and Ger Xiong.**

**Beginning in 2024, multiple students raised serious and credible concerns regarding the conduct of Associate Dean of counseling Irma Gonzalez. These concerns were brought forward through formal grievances, meetings with administrators, and informal reports. Despite the seriousness and consistency of these complaints, the college administration failed to meaningfully respond, investigate, or take corrective action.**

**A central reason students believe no action was taken is that Associate Dean Irma Gonzalez appeared to be protected by Vice President Clint Cowden. I, along with several other students, personally observed repeated behavior between Dean Irma Gonzalez and Vice President Clint Cowden that was uncomfortable and inappropriate for a professional setting. This included flirtatious conduct, unnecessary physical contact such as touching hands and shoulders, and an overall level of familiarity that made students and staff visibly uncomfortable.**

**In addition, Dean Irma Gonzalez consistently received special privileges and access that other deans did not. She regularly attended meetings outside the scope of her role, including meetings unrelated to Counseling and meetings addressing student concerns in which she had no direct responsibility. I as a student felt Vice President Clint Cowden allowed or facilitated her participation, reinforcing the perception among students that she was shielded from accountability.**

**When students raised grievances or concerns about Dean Irma Gonzalez, no corrective action followed. Complaints were dismissed, minimized, or quietly buried. Students were left with the clear and deeply troubling impression that no matter how serious the concerns were, nothing would happen because of her protection by senior administration.**

**This pattern of dismissing and burying student complaints created a climate where students felt their voices only mattered selectively, and that concerns about education quality, leadership conduct, or campus environment were not taken seriously. Many students stopped coming forward. Others expressed that the motivation to speak up had been extinguished. Several students who raised concerns have since graduated believing that no accountability would ever occur. Students openly stated that it felt as though Dean Irma Gonzalez wielded more power than campus leadership, including the college president.**

**In addition to these concerns, students observed deeply troubling and inequitable decision-making under Ger Xiong, Dean of Student Services and Bruce Moses, President/Superintendent. Bruce allowed in open board meeting for Ger to cut programs without making students first. Most notably, the Puente Program, which primarily serves**

**Latino and first-generation college students, was cut and eliminated, while the Umoja Program was retained and supported.**

**With Puente i felt admin supported one program and didn't give Puente no support and the aid they needed but yet Umoja was preserved. From a student perspective, this decision had a disproportionate and harmful impact on Latino students, particularly given the demographics of Palo Verde College and the critical role Puente played in academic support, transfer preparation, and cultural affirmation and support by HSI.**

**The elimination of Puente—while maintaining Umoja—sent a powerful and damaging message that support for Latino students was expendable. This decision reinforced feelings of exclusion, inequity, and unequal treatment. Students raised concerns about this outcome, yet administration failed to engage in meaningful dialogue, reassessment, or corrective action.**

**Following the filing of grievances—whether related to Dean Irma Gonzalez, program eliminations, or broader student concerns—the campus environment became increasingly hostile toward students who spoke up. Students felt ignored, labeled as disruptive, or treated as if they were the problem for raising concerns. This created a chilling effect, where students feared retaliation or negative consequences simply for advocating for their education and campus climate.**

**Over time, trust in administration, shared governance, and institutional leadership collapsed. Students disengaged, withdrew from participation, and concluded that raising concerns was futile and potentially harmful.**

**Despite repeated opportunities, no meaningful changes were made to address the hostile climate, the appearance of favoritism, the elimination of Puente, or the suppression of student concerns. Administrative inaction allowed this environment to persist unchecked, causing lasting harm to students and institutional credibility.**

**The institution's failure to address these issues has interfered with students' ability to participate fully and safely in educational programs, silenced legitimate student voices, and severely eroded trust in campus leadership and governance.**

**For these reasons, and based on direct observation and widespread student testimony, I formally request the Board of Trustees take immediate action, including:**

1. **Votes of No Confidence in Irma Gonzalez, Ger Xiong, Bruce Moses, and Clint Cowden;**
2. **An independent investigation into administrative inaction, favoritism, program elimination decisions, and suppression of student grievances; and**
3. **Regular, structured engagement between the Board of Trustees and ASG, including meetings at least twice per month, so that student concerns are heard directly, transparently, and without interference from administration.**

Students are asking for accountability, protection, and genuine governance oversight. We respectfully ask the Board to intervene where administration has failed and to help restore trust, equity, and a safe environment for student participation.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Murillo

President, Associated Student Government

Palo Verde College