



PALO VERDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SPECIAL MEETING/BOARD RETREAT
Tuesday, August 25, 2026

MINUTES

Meeting Begins: 9:00 a.m. | **Closed Session** to Follow Board Retreat

Meeting Location: One College Drive, Blythe, CA 92225
CL124 (Main Meeting Room) / CL119 (Breakout Room)

(This meeting was conducted in person at the Main Campus. Teleconference participation at the Needles Educational Center was not available for this meeting.)

1. OPENING OF MEETING

1.1 CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. by Board President Gloria Copple.

1.2 ROLL CALL

- **Trustees Present:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Scott Dean, Stella Camargo-Styers, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams
- **Trustees Absent:** Angel Ramirez

Administrators Present:

- Edward "Ed" Knudson, Interim Superintendent/President

1.3 FLAG SALUTE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

1.4 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Approve the Agenda for this meeting.

Moved by: Stella Camargo-Styers

Seconded by: Brad Arneson

Action: Motion Carries

Vote:

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

2. BOARD RETREAT

The Board of Trustees participated in a facilitated Board Retreat led by Dr. Douglas Houston with the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). The Board engaged in discussion regarding governance best practices; the respective roles and responsibilities of the Board and Superintendent/President; effective Board/CEO relationships and communication; strategies to support institutional effectiveness; and the onboarding of the District's incoming Superintendent/President, including discussion regarding communication, working relationships, and the appropriate timing and process for establishing future goals and priorities.

The PVC Board Retreat Handout and additional reference materials distributed to the Board during the retreat are attached to and incorporated into these minutes as Attachments A-E.

Attachments:

- [Attachment A – PVC Board Retreat Handout – 8.25.26](#) 
- [Attachment B – ACCJC Action Letter – 3.23.26](#) 
- [Attachment C – District Response to Action Letter – 7.31.26](#) 
- [Attachment D – ACCJC Standards & Policies in Question](#) 
- [Attachment E – ACCJC Standard 4](#) 

3. HEARING OF CITIZENS - CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

3.1 PUBLIC COMMENT ON CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

There were no public comments offered regarding the items on today's Closed Session agenda.

4. RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION

The Governing Board recessed to Closed Session at 3:24 p.m.

4.1 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE APPOINTMENT (GOVERNMENT CODE § 54957(b)(1))

5. RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION

The Governing Board reconvened to Open Session at 6:29 p.m.

5.1 REPORT ON ANY ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION

Board President Gloria Copple reported that the Board met in Closed Session to interview three finalists for the Superintendent/President position. The Board has selected a candidate that the District will enter into negotiations with immediately. When negotiations are completed and a final selection is finalized, the successful candidate will be announced.

6. CLOSING OF MEETING

6.1 ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.



Scott Dean, Board Clerk

Minutes approved at the September 8, 2026, Regular Board Meeting

Minutes prepared by Naomi Alaniz, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/President and Board of Trustees. These minutes are a summary of reports, discussions, and actions taken at this meeting. Audio/video recordings of Board of Trustees meetings are available on the District's website for public review and may be consulted for a more complete record of meeting discussions.



PALO VERDE COLLEGE

WHERE KNOWLEDGE TAKES ROOT AND OPPORTUNITY GROWS

Board Retreat

Doug Houston, ACCT
August 25, 2026

1

Why are we here today?

ACCT's Board Services

- Board Retreats & Workshops
- Executive Searches
- Board Self Evaluations
- Presidential/Chancellor Evaluations



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PVC Board Retreat - preparation

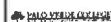
- PVC awarded complimentary ACCT Board Retreat (Oct 2025):
- Emails & Meetings with former S/P, Interim S/P & Ms. Alaniz
- Reviewed PVC Board 2024/2025 Self-Evaluation
- Reviewed ACCJC Complaints
 - ACCJC Letters (1/23/26 & 2/2/26);
 - PVCCD Responses (2/23/26 & 3/8/26);
 - ACCJC Action Letter 3.23.26
 - PVCCD Response/Special Report – 7.31.26
- Reviewed PVCCD ISER – August 2026
- Today we will focus on the ACCJC Action Letter & Special Report
 - Board Role, esp with regard to ACCJC Standard 4
 - Prepare to onboard new S/P



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ACCJC Action Letter & Special Report



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ACCJC Standards and Policies in Question

- Standard 4.3: The institution's decision-making structures are used consistently and effectively. Institutional decision-making practices support a climate of collaboration and innovation that advances the mission and promotes successful outcomes for all students.
- Standard 4.5: The governing board selects and evaluates the institution's chief executive officer (CEO). The governing board gives the CEO full authority to implement board policies and ensure effective operations and fulfillment of the institutional mission.
- Standard 4.6: The governing board functions effectively as a collective entity to promote the institution's values and mission and fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities. The governing board demonstrates an ability to self-govern in adherence to its bylaws and expectations for best practices in board governance. (ER 7)

ACCJC Letter 3.23.2026



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ACCJC Standards and Policies in Question - Continued

- *Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 4:* The institution has policies to ensure academic honesty, policies to assure integrity in the hiring processes, and policies and procedures to prevent conflict of interest throughout the organization, including governing board decision-making and contracting, and policies that provide due process protections. Such policies are reviewed regularly and are widely available to institutional staff, students, governing board members and the public. The institution is able to provide evidence that it upholds its policies.
- *Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 7:* The institution establishes a governance process and policies to receive and address complaints regarding questionable accounting practices, operational activity which is a violation of applicable law, rules, and regulations, or questionable activities which may indicate potential fraud, waste, and/or abuse. The process shall allow for the confidential and anonymous submission of complaints.

ACCJC Letter 3.23.2026

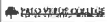


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With respect to the PVCCCD Board, ACCJC asked:

- Standard 4.3: Do Administrative and Board processes, deliberations, and decisions support a climate of collaboration and innovation that advances the mission and promotes successful outcomes for all students?
- Standard 4.5: Does the board appropriately delegate authority to the College CEO to implement board policies and ensure effective operations and fulfillment of the institutional mission?
- Standard 4.6: Does the Board follow its established Board Policies and Administrative Procedures in order to ethically function as a collective entity in the best interest of the institution and independent of undue influence? Does the Board follow documented procedures for self-governance, and does it appropriately address behavior that does not align with its policies?



ACCJC Letter 3.23.2026

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What would make today a success?

Proposed outcomes:

- Review ACCJC Accreditation
- Discuss ACCJC focused questions
- Review Board Roles in Institutional Governance:
 - Roles, Ethics, Standards of Good Practice,
 - Board/Trustee Team Skills & Conflict Resolution,
 - Strengthening Board/President Relationship
 - Preparation to onboard new Superintendent/President

Is there anything else you would like to accomplish?



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... but first, let's get to know each other

- Break into groups of two each
- Interview each other = answer questions:
 1. Why are you on the NPC Board?
 2. What specific concerns or vision do you have for PVC's future?
 3. What are your top three priorities for the PVC Board
- Agree on top 3 priorities as group
- Report out:
 - Introduce each other to the rest of board (answers to Q1 & Q2)
 - List group's top 3 Board priorities



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Report Out

PAUL D. SYMONS COLLEGE

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Accreditation & ACCJC

PAUL D. SYMONS COLLEGE

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Accreditation is ...

- A uniquely American system of quality assurance.
- A program by which education institutions provide public accountability.
- A peer-review process whereby institutions are evaluated against standards of best educational practice.
- Not a mechanism to enforce State or Federal Regulations ...
... but:
CA public funding,
student course degree and certificate transfer, and
eligibility for student financial aid
all depend on an institution's accreditation.

Note:
Accreditation
sanctions, including
the loss of
accreditation, are
rarely for academic
or student support
shortcomings.

Colleges lose
accreditation for
governance and/or
fiscal shortcomings.

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Regional Accreditation

There are seven regional accreditors recognized by CHEA (Council for Higher Education Accreditation)

Legend:

- NEASC: New England Commission on Higher Education
- WASC: Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- SACS: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
- MSCHE: Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- HECI: Higher Education Council of the Midwest
- NCA: North Central Association of Colleges and Universities
- NWAC: Northwest Association of Colleges and Universities

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ACCJC Accreditation

- Eligibility Requirements
- Accreditation Standards
- Institutional Policies
- Review Cycle
 - Institution Self Evaluation
 - Comprehensive Evaluation
 - Commission Action (& Recommendations)
 - Mid-term Reflection

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The Accreditation Cycle

ACCJC Accreditation Handbook October 2025, p. 14

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Governing Board role in Accreditation

Governing boards are ultimately responsible for educational quality and monitoring of institutional performance, including student success, planning, implementation of plans, and participation in accreditation processes. The institution's governing board should be kept informed of the progress of the self-evaluation process. When the self-evaluation has been completed, the Board should have an opportunity to read the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report prior to its submission to ACCJC. The Board must sign the ISER's certification page to certify that there has been broad involvement in the process and that, to the best of its knowledge, the ISER accurately represents the nature and substance of the institution (see Section 3.2 of this *Handbook* for more detail).

ACCJC *Accreditation Handbook* October 2025, p. 20

PAUL VANDERKAM

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Break

PAUL VANDERKAM

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Role of Board & Board Members
and Board/CEO Relations

- A Review -

PAUL VANDERKAM

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Board & Member Roles *

- Individual Member Role in Governing Board
- Member/Board Role with College President
- Member/Board Role with College & Staff/Administration



* Drawn largely from ACCT's
TRUSTEESHIP IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A Guide for Effective Governance

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Reflection

What does “effective” *Trusteeship** look like?



* I will use “Trustee” and “Board member” interchangeably.

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What does effective Trusteeship look like?



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Board Role and Individual Member Role in Board

- Board Role vs Individual Trustee Roles
- Board Member as Elected Official in local Government
- Board Member as Community & State Leader

 PALO VERDE COLLEGE

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PVC Board Role – BP 2200

The Board is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities to:

- Represent the public interest
- Establish policies that define the institutional mission and set prudent, ethical and legal standards for college operations
- Assure the Board operates in an open, accessible, welcoming spirit, and maintains an anti-racist culture
- Establish policies that ensure the District operates in an anti-racist manner
- Hire and evaluate the Superintendent/President
- Delegate power and authority to the chief executive to effectively lead the district
- Assure fiscal health and stability
- Monitor institutional performance and educational quality
- Advocate and protect the District

 PALO VERDE COLLEGE

PVC Board Policy 2200 – Board Duties & Responsibilities
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PVC Board Member Role – BP 2715

The Board maintains high standards of ethical conduct for its members. Members of the Board are responsible to:

1. Devote time, thought, and study to my duties as a Palo Verde College Board Member so that I may render effective and creditable service.
2. Work with my fellow Board Members in a spirit of harmony and cooperation in spite of differences of opinion that may arise during vigorous debates of points of issue.
3. Base my personal decisions upon all available facts in each situation; vote my honest conviction in every case, unswayed by partisan bias of any kind, abide by and uphold the final majority decision of the Board, and speak with one voice once a Board decision is made.
4. Remember at all times that as an individual, I have no legal authority outside the meetings of the Board, and conduct my relationships with college staff, students, and local citizenry, and all media of the community on the basis of this fact.
5. Be aware that I am responsible to all citizens of the District, and not solely to those who elected me. The authority delegated to me by the voters must be exercised with as much care and concern for the least influential as for the most influential member of the community.
6. Resist every temptation and outside pressure to use my position as a community college Board member to benefit either myself or any other individual or agency apart from the total interest of the Palo Verde Community College District.

 PALO VERDE COLLEGE

PVC Board Policy 2715 – Code of Ethics / Standards of Practice 24

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PVC Board Member Role – Continued

7. Recognize that it is as important for the Board to understand and evaluate the educational program of Palo Verde College as it is to plan for the business of college operations.
8. Bear in mind under all circumstances that "The governing Board delegates full responsibility and authority to the CEO to administer board policies without board interference and holds the CEO accountable for the operation of the district/system or college, respectively." (Accreditation Standard IV.C.12)
9. Welcome and encourage the active cooperation by citizens, organizations, and the media of communication in the District with respect to establishing policy on current college operations and proposed future developments.
10. Maintain the confidentiality of closed sessions and recognize that deliberations of the Board in closed session are not mine to release or discuss in public without the prior approval of the Board by majority vote.
11. Avail myself of opportunities to enhance my potential as a Board Member through participation in educational conferences, workshops, and training sessions offered by local, state, and national organizations, and be informed about issues affecting community colleges at the state and national levels.
12. Strive step by step toward ideal conditions for the most effective community college Board service to my community in a spirit of teamwork and devotion to public education as the greatest instrument for the preservation and perpetuation of our representative democracy.



PCV Board Policy 2715 – Code of Ethics / Standards of Practice

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Board Member as an Elected Official in local Government

- You are elected to a Local Government established by CA Statute
- Govern ethically and without conflict of Interest
 - Govern transparently on behalf of the electorate (Open Meeting laws)
 - Govern in accordance with local, State and Federal laws
 - Govern in accordance with appropriate accreditation requirements
 - Govern through effective policies & delegation of authority



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Board Member as Community & State Leader

- Stay current; commit to continuing education
 - Educate yourself and others about community needs
 - Represent community interests in decision-making
 - Be visible in the community
 - Secure support from local leaders
 - Advocate with community, state and nationally
- Note: individual members do not speak for the Board or the College; only the Chairperson and the President have this authority.



ACCT - TRUSTEESHIP IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A Guide for Effective Governance

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Reflection

What does an effective board look like? How can individual members contribute to Board success?

How can the PVC Board improve as a team?

How can PVC Board Members improve as local and state leaders?



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Board / Member Role with President

a.k.a “Board/CEO Relations”



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PVC Role of Superintendent/President – BP 2430

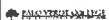
The Board delegates to the Superintendent/President the executive responsibility for administering the policies adopted by the Board and executing all decisions of the Board requiring administrative action. The Board gives the Superintendent/President full authority to implement board policies and ensure effective operations and fulfillment of the institutional mission.

The Superintendent/President may delegate any powers and duties entrusted to him/ her/them by the Board including the administration of colleges and centers, but will be specifically responsible to the Board for the execution of such delegated powers and duties.

The Superintendent/President is empowered to reasonably interpret board policy. In situations where there is no board policy direction, the Superintendent/President shall have the power to act, but such decisions shall be subject to review by the Board. It is the duty of the Superintendent/President to inform the Board of such action and to recommend written board policy if one is required.

See Administrative Procedure 2430

PVC Board Policy 2430 – Delegation of Authority to Superintendent/President



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PVC Role of Superintendent/President – Continued

The Superintendent/President is expected to perform the duties contained in the Superintendent/President job description and fulfill other responsibilities as may be determined in annual goal-setting or evaluation sessions. The job description and goals and objectives for performance shall be developed by the Board in consultation with the Superintendent/President.

The Superintendent/President shall ensure that all relevant laws and regulations are complied with, and that required reports are submitted in timely fashion.

The Superintendent/President shall make available any information or give any report requested by the Board as a whole. Individual trustee requests for information shall be met if, in the opinion of the Superintendent/President, they are not unduly burdensome or disruptive to District operations. Information provided to any trustee shall be available to all trustees.

The Superintendent/President shall act as the professional advisor to the Board in policy formation.

See Administrative Procedure 2430

PVC Board Policy 2430 – Delegation of Authority to Superintendent/President



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Board/CEO Relations

- Conduct the search & employ the CEO
- Establish expectations for CEO performance
- Delegates authority to CEO as Board's only employee
- Support the CEO
- Evaluate the CEO
- Foster a strong board/CEO partnership

ACCT - TRUSTEESHIP IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A Guide for Effective Governance



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Individual Board Member role with CEO

- With the Board, set the policy direction for the college/district
- With the Board, delegate full responsibility to the CEO
- With the Board, hold the Superintendent/President accountable
- Do not bypass/work-around the Superintendent/President
 - It undermines the Board's duty to set policy direction
 - It undermines the CEO's delegated authority
 - It undermines the Board's ability to hold the CEO accountable

ACCT - TRUSTEESHIP IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A Guide for Effective Governance



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Individual Board Member role with CEO

- The CEO (Superintendent/President) is the Board's only employee
- The CEO takes direction from the Board as a whole
Individual Board Members have no authority
- Board Members support the S/P through counsel and advocacy
Keep the S/P informed ("no surprises")
- The S/P supports Board Members through counsel and advocacy
Keep the Board & Members informed ("no surprises")
- With the Board, support the CEO's continued professional growth

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In short ...

The Board is *generally* responsible for "the WHAT."

The CEO is *generally* responsible for "the HOW."

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GOVERNANCE

CONSULTATION

ADMINISTRATION

Statutory
Fiduciary
Policy Making
Direction
Deregulation
Oversight/monitoring
Support and Protection
Allocation of Resources
Set the tone

Strategic Planning
Advocacy

Administration
Management
Day-to-day guidance

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Effective Board Leadership

ACCT - TRUSTEESHIP IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A Guide for Effective Governance

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College Boards lead through policy & delegated authority

College Boards govern* by:

- Setting and oversee strategic direction (i.e. strategic plan)
- Setting & overseeing policy
- Fulfilling fiduciary oversight
- Employing, delegating authority to, and supervising the CEO

* College boards act as a unit. Individual board members do have the authority to direct the activities of the CEO or the college/district; only the Board as a whole (i.e. a majority vote) has the authority to do so.

ACCT - TRUSTEESHIP IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A Guide for Effective Governance

ACCT - TRUSTEESHIP IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A Guide for Effective Governance

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Effective Board Meetings

- Does the agenda reflect a collaboration between the Board and the CEO?
- Do Board members understand how to get an item onto the agenda?
- Are agendas available in ample time to review before meetings and do board members come prepared to discuss key items?
- Do board agendas and supporting materials enable the board to monitor policy and progress on stated annual goals?
- Are staff presentations helpful and informative, of appropriate length, and focused on what trustees need to know?

ACCT - TRUSTEESHIP IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A Guide for Effective Governance

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Effective Board Meetings (cont'd)

- Do board members have ample time to discuss and ask questions on complex proposals?
- Do board members discuss and interact during meetings?
- Does the board focus on policy versus operations?
- Does the board focus its time on big-picture issues for the future?
- Does the board spend its time well during meetings?

PMCA STRATEGIC PLAN 2016

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Effective Board Meetings - Dialog

- Be prepared
- Be engaged
- Be respectful
- Be candid
- Be reflective
- Be supportive
- Think independently; be prepared to act collectively

PMCA STRATEGIC PLAN 2016

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Small Group Reflection

Break into two groups of four

What does "effective" look like for the Board, for individual Board Members and for Board/CEO relations?

How can the PVC Board improve in its functioning as Governing body?

PMCA STRATEGIC PLAN 2016

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Report Out

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Lunch Break

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ACCJC Letters & Focused Questions

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ACCJC Letter 3/23/2026

"Upon consideration of the responses provided [in PVC responses dated 2/23/2026 and 3/8/2026], the [ACCJC] Executive Committee determined Palo Verde College did not supply sufficient evidence to determine compliance with the Accreditation Standards and Commission Policies noted above and acted to **Require a Special Report, due no later than August 1, 2026, to coincide with the submission of the College's Institutional Self-Evaluation Report.** The Commission further instructs the comprehensive peer review team, scheduled to convene Fall 2026, to focus attention on the following standards and corresponding focused questions: ..."

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ACCJC Focused Questions

- Standard 4.3: Do Administrative and Board processes, deliberations, and decisions support a climate of collaboration and innovation that advances the mission and promotes successful outcomes for all students?
- Standard 4.5: Does the board appropriately delegate authority to the College CEO to implement board policies and ensure effective operations and fulfillment of the institutional mission?
- Standard 4.6 (ER 7): Does the Board follow its established Board Policies and Administrative Procedures in order to ethically function as a collective entity in the best interest of the institution and independent of undue influence? Does the Board follow documented procedures for self-governance, and does it appropriately address behavior that does not align with its policies?

 PALO VERDE COLLEGE

ACCJC Letter 3.23.2026 47

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ACCJC Focused Questions - Continued

- Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 4: Do the institution's policies and procedures effectively prevent conflict of interest in governing-board decision making? Do the institution's policies and procedures effectively provide due process protection to employees, as appropriate?
- Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 7: Does the college effectively implement policies and procedures to address complaints regarding questionable accounting practices or activities to control potential fraud, waste, and/or abuse of fiscal resources?

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ACCJC Letter 3.23.2026 48

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Small Group Work

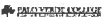
- Break into two groups of four
- Review and discuss Question 1 (Standard 4.3)
 - Does PVC do this? How do we know?
 - What policies are in place?
 - How do they function in practice?
 - Have we evaluated their effectiveness? How do we if not?
 - What evidence can be found? What evidence do we lack?
 - What can be improved?
- Report out



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Report Out & Discuss



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Break



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Small Group Work

- Same two groups of four
 - Review and discuss Questions
 - Group 1 = Question 2 (Standard 4.6)
 - Group 2 = Question 3 (Standard 4.5)
 - Does PVC do this? How do we know?
 - What policies are in place?
 - How do they function in practice?
 - Have we evaluated their effectiveness? How do we if not?
 - What evidence can be found? What evidence do we lack?
 - What can be improved?
- Report out

PVCCCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Report Out & Discuss

PVCCCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Onboarding the next PVCCCD Superintendent/President

PVCCCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Successful CEO Onboarding



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Small Group Work

- Same two groups of four
- Discuss onboarding new Superintendent/President
 - Establish early – strong relationship with Board Chair/Exec Committee – How?
 - Foster Board/CEO Team – How?
 - Introduce Superintendent/President to region, key community leaders – How?
 - Support S/P conducting assessment of institution – How long?
 - Support S/P forging relationships with governance colleagues, faculty, staff, students, regional leadership & key stakeholders – How?
 - Conduct Board planning retreat to set S/P goals – When? Facilitated?
- Report out



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Report Out & Discuss



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Wrap-up

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Take-Aways / Follow-up

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My suggestions for next steps

- Schedule another retreat, shortly after new S/P starts
- Begin **onboarding*** of new Superintendent/President
- **Conduct*** 2025-26 Board Self-Evaluation, informed by ACCJC concerns and ISER
- Identify Board attributes to sustain and establish **Board goals**** for improvement
- Direct new CEO to develop a **plan** for Board goals to be incorporated into CEO's goals for 2026-27(+)
- Use subsequent Board Retreats to **implement** and **monitor** the plan

* Consider working with consultant.

** Board goals, not individual Trustee goals.

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Did we accomplish these?

- Review ACCJC Accreditation
- Discuss ACCJC findings & focused questions
- Review Board Roles in Institutional Governance:
 - Roles, Ethics, Standards of Good Practice,
 - Board/Trustee Team Skills & Conflict Resolution,
 - Strengthening Board/President Relationship
 - Preparation to onboard new Superintendent/President

Is there anything else you wish we had discussed?



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Comments / Questions?



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Thank you

Supporting materials can be found at:

Association of Community College Trustees
<http://www.acct.org/resources>

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Supplemental Material - Accreditation in ACCJC

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ACCJC Accreditation

- Eligibility Requirements
- Accreditation Standards
- Institutional Policies
- Review Cycle
 - Institution Self Evaluation
 - Comprehensive Evaluation
 - Commission Action (& Recommendations)
 - Mid-term Reflection

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The Accreditation Cycle



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ACCJC Accreditation Handbook October 2025, p. 14

Eligibility Requirements

- In order to apply for eligibility, the institution must completely meet all Eligibility Requirements. Compliance with the criteria is expected to be continuous and will be validated periodically, normally as part of every institutional self study and comprehensive evaluation.
- Institutions that have achieved accreditation are expected to include in their self study reports information demonstrating that they continue to meet the eligibility requirements.



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Eligibility Requirements

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Authority | 12. General Education |
| 2. Operational Status | 13. Academic Freedom |
| 3. Degrees | 14. Faculty |
| 4. Chief Executive Officer | 15. Student Support Services |
| 5. Financial Accountability | 16. Admissions |
| 6. Mission | 17. Information and Learning Resources |
| 7. Governing Board | 18. Financial Resources |
| 8. Administrative Capacity | 19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation |
| 9. Educational Programs | 20. Integrity in Communication with the Public |
| 10. Academic Credit | 21. Integrity in Relations with the Accrediting Commission |
| 11. Student Learning and Achievement | |



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Accreditation Standards

- Standard 1: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness
- Standard 2: Student Success
- Standard 3: Infrastructure and Resources
- Standard 4: Governance and Decision-making



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Accreditation Standard 1

Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

The institution has a clearly defined mission that reflects its character, values, organizational structure, and unique student population. The mission outlines the institution's explicit commitment to achievement for all students and serves as a guiding principle for institutional planning, action, evaluation, improvement, and innovation.



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Accreditation Standard 2

Student Success

In alignment with its mission, the institution delivers high-quality academic and learning support programs that engage and support students through their unique educational journeys. Academic and learning support programs promote success for all students, and the institution evaluates student learning and achievement data to inform improvements and advance successful outcomes.



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Accreditation Standard 3

Infrastructure and Resources

The institution supports its educational services and operational functions with effective infrastructure, qualified personnel, and stable finances. The institution organizes its staffing and allocates its physical, technological, and financial resources to improve its overall effectiveness and promote success for all students. The institution actively monitors and assesses resource capacity to inform improvements to infrastructure and ensure long-term health and stability.



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Accreditation Standard 4

Governance and Decision-Making

The institution engages in clear and effective governance practices that support the achievement of its mission. Governance roles and responsibilities are delineated in widely distributed policies, and institutional decision-making processes provide opportunities for meaningful participation by relevant stakeholders.



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Governing Board role in Accreditation

Governing boards are ultimately responsible for educational quality and monitoring of institutional performance, including student success, planning, implementation of plans, and participation in accreditation processes. The institution's governing board should be kept informed of the progress of the self-evaluation process. When the self-evaluation has been completed, the Board should have an opportunity to read the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report prior to its submission to ACCJC. The Board must sign the ISER's certification page to certify that there has been broad involvement in the process and that, to the best of its knowledge, the ISER accurately represents the nature and substance of the institution (see Section 3.2 of this *Handbook* for more detail).

ACCJC Accreditation Handbook October 2025, p.20



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March 23, 2026

Dr. Bruce Moses
Superintendent/President
Palo Verde College
1 College Dr.
Blythe, CA 92225

Dear Dr. Moses:

The Executive Committee of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) has reviewed complaints regarding Palo Verde College received on January 11, January 25, and January 29, 2026. The Committee also reviewed the college's letters of response to these complaints dated February 19, 2026 and March 8, 2026.

The purpose of this review was to determine whether the College adequately addressed concerns raised regarding Palo Verde College's continued compliance with the following Accreditation Standards and Commission Policies:

Standard 4.3: The institution's decision-making structures are used consistently and effectively. Institutional decision-making practices support a climate of collaboration and innovation that advances the mission and promotes successful outcomes for all students.

Standard 4.5: The governing board selects and evaluates the institution's chief executive officer (CEO). The governing board gives the CEO full authority to implement board policies and ensure effective operations and fulfillment of the institutional mission.

Standard 4.6: The governing board functions effectively as a collective entity to promote the institution's values and mission and fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities. The governing board demonstrates an ability to self-govern in adherence to its bylaws and expectations for best practices in board governance. (ER 7)

Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 4: The institution has policies to ensure academic honesty, policies to assure integrity in the hiring processes, and policies and procedures to prevent conflict of interest throughout the organization, including governing board decision-making and contracting, and policies that provide due process

protections. Such policies are reviewed regularly and are widely available to institutional staff, students, governing board members and the public. The institution is able to provide evidence that it upholds its policies.

Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 7: The institution establishes a governance process and policies to receive and address complaints regarding questionable accounting practices, operational activity which is a violation of applicable law, rules, and regulations, or questionable activities which may indicate potential fraud, waste, and/or abuse. The process shall allow for the confidential and anonymous submission of complaints.

Upon consideration of the responses provided, the Executive Committee determined Palo Verde College did not supply sufficient evidence to determine compliance with the Accreditation Standards and Commission Policies noted above and acted to **Require a Special Report, due no later than August 1, 2026, to coincide with the submission of the College's Institutional Self-Evaluation Report.** The Commission further instructs the comprehensive peer review team, scheduled to convene Fall 2026, to focus attention on the following standards and corresponding focused questions:

Standard 4.3: Do Administrative and Board processes, deliberations, and decisions support a climate of collaboration and innovation that advances the mission and promotes successful outcomes for all students?

Standard 4.5: Does the board appropriately delegate authority to the College CEO to implement board policies and ensure effective operations and fulfillment of the institutional mission?

Standard 4.6: Does the Board follow its established Board Policies and Administrative Procedures in order to ethically function as a collective entity in the best interest of the institution and independent of undue influence? Does the Board follow documented procedures for self-governance, and does it appropriately address behavior that does not align with its policies?

Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 4: **Do the institution's policies and procedures effectively prevent conflict of interest in governing-board decision making? Do the institution's policies and procedures effectively provide due process protection to employees, as appropriate?**

Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 7: **Does the college effectively implement policies and procedures to address complaints regarding questionable accounting practices or activities to control potential fraud, waste, and/or abuse of fiscal resources?**

Information gathered from the special report and through the comprehensive peer review process will assist the Commission in determining continued compliance with the above noted Accreditation Standards and Commission Policies.

The Commission requires you disseminate this Action Letter to all campus constituencies and the public by placing copies on the College website within seven business days of your receipt. Please note that in response to public interest in accreditation, the Commission requires institutions to post current accreditation information on a web page located no more than one click from the institution's home page. In keeping with ACCJC policy, the Commission action will also be posted on the ACCJC website within 30 days of the date of the Commission's action.

If you have any questions about this letter or the Commission's action, please feel free to contact Dr. Mac Powell or the vice president assigned as liaison to your institution.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a series of connected loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mac Powell, MBA, Ph.D.
President

A handwritten signature in dark ink, featuring a large, circular initial 'K' followed by the name 'Burke' in a cursive script.

Kathleen F. Burke, Ed.D.
Chair

Cc: Ms. Sandra Robinson, Accreditation Liaison Officer



PALO VERDE COLLEGE

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July 31, 2026

Dr. Mac Powell, President
Dr. Kathleen Burke Chair
ACCJC (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges)
428 J Street, Suite 400
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Action Letter, March 23, 2026

Pursuant to your letter of March 23, 2026, attached is evidence of policies and procedures of a foundation for compliance with Standards 4.3, 4.5, and 4.6 including ER Items 4 and 7.

Standard 4.3: Do Administrative and Board processes, deliberations, and decisions support a climate of collaboration and innovation that advances the mission and promotes successful outcomes for all students?

Standard 4.5: Does the board appropriately delegate authority to the College CEO to implement board policies and ensure effective operations and fulfillment of the institutional mission?

Standard 4.6: Does the Board follow its established Board Policies and Administrative Procedures in order to ethically function as a collective entity in the best interest of the institution and independent of undue influence? Does the Board follow documented procedures for self-governance, and does it appropriately address behavior that does not align with its policies?

Regarding compliance with Standards 4.3, 4.5, and 4.6 the district has been out of compliance beginning in 2023 and remaining through May 2026. Beginning in 2022, the membership of the Board of Trustees began to fracture and significant executive leadership turnover at the college began.

A chronology of the Board and College leadership turnover and upheaval is attached as evidence of the disruption to normal and consistent operations of the district during the period 2022-2026. This resulted in a perfect storm of a lack of training for the Board:

- There was no onboarding for new Board members leaving Board roles unclear and uncertain.
- The Board became split and did not act as a single Board, but rather two different units.

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ONE COLLEGE DRIVE BLYTHE, CA 92225 | WWW.PALOVERDE.EDU | 760-921-5499



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- The death of the two senior members of the Board, and the resignation of another left vacancies to be filled outside the regular election cycle. Filling these vacancies caused greater division on the Board.
- Elections have been held since, and appointees remained as incumbents.
- The turnover for Executive leadership at the college, at times without full Board agreement, caused parallel distrust among staff and the Board, resulting in members of the Board becoming activists in monitoring the operations of the college.
 - Specifically, the Board directed personnel actions around the recommendations of the CEO.
 - Pattern of infighting among Board members.
 - Directed the daily actions of staff.
 - Directed disciplinary actions such as administrative leaves, dismissals, and refusal to support appointments.
 - Directed the production of reports and data of college operations without requesting such through the CEO.
 - A myriad of hostile environment, retaliation and discrimination complaints have followed; within staff and against Board members. These are currently under investigation.

The following are the steps the Board has taken, voluntarily since receiving the action letter from the Commission in March of 2026.

- May of 2026 the Board hired an external, experienced, retired CEO to direct the operations of the college.
 - CEO working with the Board President on Brown Act requirements and conducting Board meetings efficiently and effectively.
 - CEO working with Board members on appropriate Board roles
 - CEO opening regular and consistent communication with Board members
 - CEO meets regularly with Board members to restore trust.
 - CEO communicates with the Board on the importance of compliance with Commission standards and impact on the college.
- ACCT has been commissioned to conduct a comprehensive search for the next permanent CEO. ACCT is guiding the institution through the process. As of this writing, the pool of applicants is of sufficient size that selecting a new CEO for a September 2026 start is probable.
- ACCT has been engaged and has scheduled a Board working study session and retreat for August 25, 2026, for Board training on Board roles, specifically Standard 4, and onboarding a new CEO.
- Four seats of the Board are up for election in the November General Election at least one incumbent is not seeking reelection.



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SUMMARY FOR STANDARD 4

Until just the past few years, Palo Verde College had a history of compliance with Standard 4, practicing appropriate Board roles and in supporting the authority of the CEO. Unusual circumstances impacted that compliance, but the Board is taking positive steps to correct the situation.

The extensive turnover of Board members, without effective onboarding and orientation, produced a Board split incapable of achieving consensus. This resulted in a catastrophic turnover of Executive leadership both in the CEO and Vice-Presidency roles, also without proper onboarding and orientation, creating an environment of distrust, ineffective communication, and low morale across the entire institution.

The steps being taken by the Interim CEO, and ACCT consultants in the CEO search process, Board study sessions, and the onboarding of a new CEO in September of 2026, will reinforce the need for change and renew compliance with Standard 4 and relevant eligibility requirements.

Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 4: Do the institution's policies and procedures effectively prevent conflict of interest in governing-board decision making? Do the institution's policies and procedures effectively provide due process protection to employees, as appropriate?

Palo Verde Community College District (PVCCD) has established a comprehensive framework of Board Policies (BP), Administrative Procedures (AP), and governance documents that support institutional integrity, ethical conduct, and accountability. The District's governance structure includes policies addressing conflicts of interest, delegation of authority, ethics, collegial governance, whistleblower protections, nepotism, purchasing, accreditation, and public transparency. Together, these policies establish clear expectations for ethical decision-making by trustees and employees while reinforcing compliance with California law and ACCJC standards.

To evaluate institutional compliance with the Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 4, the College established an ad hoc Workgroup comprised of representatives from key administrative and governance areas:

- Jaclyn Randall, Administration- Needles Center (Lead)
- Elena Rodriguez, Administration – Human Resources
- Alejandro Clark, Management – Adult Education
- Stephen Ebel, Management- Institutional Research
- Kaylene Elliott, Faculty

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- Eric Taurtala, Classified Staff – Basic Needs
- Sierra Berryman, Student

Evidence reviewed demonstrates that the District has recently updated several key conflict of interest policies, including AP 2710 Conflict of Interest and AP 2712 Conflict of Interest Code, through College Council and Board review. Additional supporting evidence includes annual Form 700 Statements of Economic Interests, the Board of Trustees Handbook, Trusteeship Skills documentation, Independent Citizens' Bond Oversight Committee Bylaws, and the ACCJC Peer Review Team Report. Governing Board meeting minutes also demonstrate implementation of these policies through trustee recusals from agenda items involving potential conflicts of interest, providing evidence that the policies are actively followed during Board deliberations.

The District likewise maintains policies and procedures that provide employees and students with due process protections. These include grievance procedures, discipline and dismissal procedures for academic and classified employees, claims against the District, workplace violence prevention procedures, sexual assault protections, administrator retreat rights, recruitment and hiring procedures, and collective bargaining agreements. Together, these policies establish formal processes for grievances, investigations, disciplinary actions, appeals, and employee rights.

The institutional review also identified opportunities for continuous improvement. Several policies would benefit from routine review cycles, updated procedural language, clearer communication to employees and students, additional accompanying administrative procedures (such as for nepotism), and broader dissemination through employee handbooks, student handbooks, contracts, websites, and annual communications. Specifically, a recommendation is to tag APs dependent on bargaining units to ensure the procedures are reviewed and updated simultaneously when the agreements are renewed. These follow-up actions will further strengthen institutional transparency, employee awareness, and compliance with ACCJC standards while reinforcing the District's commitment to institutional integrity and ethical governance.

While the District has established BPs and APs to prevent conflicts of interest and to ensure due process protections, they are not always being followed. In addition to regular review of BPs and APs, we need to ensure proper training for a variety of stakeholder groups to ensure future compliance and consistent application of these rules.



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Conflict of Interest in Governing Board Decision Making

Policy	Reviewed	Evidence	Follow-up	Timeline
AP 2710 Conflict of Interest	College Council (11/19/24); Board Information (12/17/24)	ACCJC Peer Review Report; Board Handbook; Trusteeship Skills; Provisional Trustee Application	Continue regular policy review and reinforce trustee ethics training.	Fall 2026 and ongoing
AP 2712 Conflict of Interest Code	College Council (11/19/24); Board Information (12/17/24)	California Form 700 filing requirements and public search portal	Continue annual Form 700 compliance monitoring.	Ongoing
BP 2710 Conflict of Interest	Revised – 8/9/22	Governing Board policy	Review and update to maintain compliance with state law.	Fall 2026
BP 2715 Code of Ethics/Standards of Practice	Revised – 11/12/24	Governing Board ethical standards	Continue trustee ethics education.	Fall 2026, ongoing, August 2026 ACCT training
BP 3050 Institutional Code of Ethics	Revised – 10/28/08	Board of Trustees Handbook	Reinforce employee awareness through orientation and annual training. Review/update policy.	Fall 2026, ongoing
BP 7700 Whistleblower Protection	Revised-05/13/14	Board policy	Promote reporting procedures and protections.	Ongoing
BP 7310 Nepotism	Revised-12/17/24	District policy	Develop an accompanying Administrative Procedure describing implementation and complaint process.	Spring 2026, ongoing
AP 2430 Delegation of Authority to Superintendent/President	Reviewed (06/2021)	ACCJC Peer Review Team Report; Board & CEO Roles document	Continue periodic review.	Summer 2026, ongoing



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Due Process Protections for Employees

Policy	Reviewed	Evidence	Follow-up/Internal Recommendations	Timeline
BP 7360 Discipline and Dismissals – Academic Employees	Revised-4/28/09	Board Policy	Review for compliance with current law and bargaining agreements. Update.	Fall 2026
AP 7360 Discipline and Dismissals – Academic Employees	Revised-4/28/09	Administrative Procedure	Review, update, and provide employee communication on an annual basis. Periodic review.	Fall 2026
BP/AP 7365 Discipline and Dismissals – Classified Employees	Revised-10/27/09	Board Policy, Administrative Procedure, CSEA Contract	Review and update procedures and clearly communicate employee due process rights on an annual basis.	Fall 2026
AP 3810 Claims Against the District	Revised-10/08/19	Administrative Procedure and Verified Claim Form	Update form, add review date, and make fillable. Provide link on Human Resources/Employee resource webpage.	Spring 2026
BP 3810 Claims Against the District	10/13/19	Board Policy	Review/update. Conduct routine review and communicate procedures annually.	Spring 2026
Workplace Violence Plan (BP/AP 3510)	BP-12/11/20 AP 11/10/20	Board Policy and Administrative Procedure	Update contact information, review procedures regularly, and distribute annually to employees.	Spring 2026
BP 3540 Sexual and Other Assaults on Campus	4/16/26	Board Policy	Continue annual communication and policy review.	Ongoing
AP 7250-1 Academic Administrators Retreat Rights	Revised-4/28/09 Reviewed-5/16/23	Administrative Procedure	Update terminology and include information in administrator onboarding materials.	Spring 2026
AP 7250-0 Educational Administrators Recruitment and Hiring	2/11/14	Administrative Procedure	Review, update. Continue regular policy review.	Fall 2026
BP/AP 5530 Student Rights and Grievances	4/14/26	Student grievance procedures	Continue regular review and increase visibility through Student Handbook, website, and campus communications.	Ongoing



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Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 7: Does the college effectively implement policies and procedures to address complaints regarding questionable accounting practices or activities to control potential fraud, waste, and/or abuse of fiscal resources?

PVCCD recognizes the importance of maintaining strong internal controls and reporting mechanisms that support ethical conduct, fiscal accountability, and public trust. The District is committed to ensuring that employees, students, and community members have access to clear and effective processes for reporting concerns related to questionable accounting practices, financial misconduct, fraud, waste, abuse, or other violations of institutional policies and standards.

As an immediate step toward strengthening its reporting framework, the District has developed and implemented a reporting form that is accessible through the Palo Verde College website. The form provides individuals with a direct method for reporting concerns and allows reports to be submitted anonymously. The availability of an anonymous reporting option is intended to reduce barriers to reporting and encourage individuals to come forward without fear of retaliation or adverse consequences.

To further evaluate institutional compliance with the Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 7, the District established an ad hoc Workgroup comprised of representatives from key administrative and governance areas:

- Ger Xiong, Administration – Student Support Services (Lead)
- Eddie Ramirez, Faculty (Co-lead)
- Nancy Hale, Management - Administrative Services & College Advancement
- James Thomas, Administration - Administrative Services and College Advancement
- Christina Dollinger, Management - Financial Aid

The Workgroup was charged with reviewing existing policies, procedures, and reporting practices to determine whether current mechanisms adequately support the identification, reporting, investigation, and resolution of concerns involving potential fraud, waste, abuse, or questionable accounting practices.

The Workgroup assessed the District's existing whistleblower and complaint procedures. The review identified several areas where improvements are needed to align institutional practices with best practices for accountability, transparency, and ethical oversight. Specifically, the Workgroup determined that current Board Policy (BP) 7700 does not explicitly reference complaints involving fraud, waste, or abuse of fiscal resources. While the policy addresses whistleblower protections generally, it does not clearly identify financial misconduct as a reportable concern or provide sufficient guidance regarding the reporting and investigation of such allegations.



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The Workgroup also identified limitations within Administrative Procedure (AP) 7700. The current procedure discourages anonymous reporting, which may unintentionally deter individuals from reporting concerns. Additionally, AP 7700 does not provide an independent reporting pathway when allegations involve senior institutional leadership, including the Superintendent/President, a Vice President, and/or a governing board of trustee(s). The absence of an independent reporting mechanism could create perceived or actual conflicts of interest and reduce confidence in the integrity of the complaint process.

To address these findings, the Workgroup recommends a comprehensive revision of BP/AP 7700. The proposed revisions will:

- Explicitly define and address complaints related to fraud, waste, abuse, questionable accounting practices, and the misuse of District resources.
- Strengthen protections for individuals who report concerns in good faith.
- Affirm the District's support for anonymous reporting and clarify that anonymous complaints will be reviewed and evaluated to the extent possible.
- Establish clear reporting channels and responsibilities for receiving, documenting, and investigating complaints.
- Provide independent reporting options when allegations involve senior administrators or members of the governing board.

In addition to revising institutional policies and procedures, the workgroup recommends that Palo Verde College explore the implementation of an external third-party hotline and reporting platform related to fraud, waste, and abuse. This independent reporting mechanism will provide employees and other stakeholders with a secure and confidential avenue to report concerns regarding financial misconduct, ethical violations, fraud, waste, abuse, or other compliance-related matters. The use of an external reporting service will help ensure impartial intake and review of complaints while enhancing confidence in the integrity of the reporting process.

Recognizing that effective policies must be supported by ongoing education and awareness, the District will also implement annual whistleblower and ethics training for Trustees, administrators, and supervisors. The training will focus on reporting obligations, ethical responsibilities, protection from retaliation, fiscal stewardship, and the procedures for responding appropriately to complaints. Through regular training, the District seeks to foster a culture of accountability, transparency, and ethical decision-making across all levels of the institution.

Furthermore, the Workgroup recommends PVCCD to develop a formal complaint management framework that clearly outlines each stage of the process, including complaint intake, documentation, investigation, findings, corrective action, resolution,



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and, when appropriate, notification to the Board of Trustees. The framework should establish timelines, identify responsible parties, and provide guidance for record retention and reporting. Standardizing these procedures will promote consistency in handling complaints and strengthen institutional oversight.

The District anticipates these actions will significantly enhance its ability to detect, investigate, and address concerns involving fraud, waste, abuse, and questionable accounting practices. By strengthening reporting mechanisms, clarifying institutional policies, expanding training opportunities, and implementing independent reporting options, PVCCD is reinforcing its commitment to ethical conduct, fiscal responsibility, transparency, and continuous improvement. These efforts will help ensure that the District maintains effective safeguards for the responsible stewardship of public resources and remains aligned with the expectations outlined in the Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 7.

Timeline for Recommended Action Items

Action Item	Constituency Group	Date
Review and revise Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 7700 Whistleblower Protection	Full Administrative Council, Academic Senate, College Council	December 2026
Form a complaint management framework	Administrative Advancement, Human Resources	December 2026
Implement annual whistleblower and ethics training for the governing Board of Trustees, administrators, and supervisors.	Administrative Advancement, Human Resources, Office of the President	January 2027
Explore the implementation of an external third-party reporting platform/hotline related to fraud, waste, and abuse	Executive Cabinet, Administrative Advancement, Human Resources	January 2027
Explore request for proposal (bids) for external reporting platform	Administrative Advancement	June 2027

Sincerely,

Ed Knudson
Interim Superintendent/President
Palo Verde College

ACCJC Standards and Policies in Question

(per ACCJC Letter 3.23.2026)

1. Standard 4.3: The institution's decision-making structures are used consistently and effectively. Institutional decision-making practices support a climate of collaboration and innovation that advances the mission and promotes successful outcomes for all students.

Questions: **Do Administrative and Board processes, deliberations, and decisions support a climate of collaboration and innovation that advances the mission and promotes successful outcomes for all students?**

2. Standard 4.5: The governing board selects and evaluates the institution's chief executive officer (CEO). The governing board gives the CEO full authority to implement board policies and ensure effective operations and fulfillment of the institutional mission.

Questions: **Does the board appropriately delegate authority to the College CEO to implement board policies and ensure effective operations and fulfillment of the institutional mission?**

3. Standard 4.6: The governing board functions effectively as a collective entity to promote the institution's values and mission and fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities. The governing board demonstrates an ability to self-govern in adherence to its bylaws and expectations for best practices in board governance. (ER 7)

Questions: **Does the Board follow its established Board Policies and Administrative Procedures in order to ethically function as a collective entity in the best interest of the institution and independent of undue influence? Does the Board follow documented procedures for self-governance, and does it appropriately address behavior that does not align with its policies?**

4. *Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics*, Item 4: The institution has policies to ensure academic honesty, policies to assure integrity in the hiring processes, and policies and procedures to prevent conflict of interest throughout the organization, including governing board decision-making and contracting, and policies that provide due process protections. Such policies are reviewed regularly and are widely available to institutional staff, students, governing board members and the public. The institution is able to provide evidence that it upholds its policies.

Questions: **Do the institution's policies and procedures effectively prevent conflict of interest in governing-board decision making? Do the institution's policies and procedures effectively provide due process protection to employees, as appropriate?**

5. *Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics*, Item 7: The institution establishes a governance process and policies to receive and address complaints regarding questionable accounting practices, operational activity which is a violation of applicable law, rules, and regulations, or questionable activities which may indicate potential fraud, waste, and/or abuse. The process shall allow for the confidential and anonymous submission of complaints.

Questions: **Does the college effectively implement policies and procedures to address complaints regarding questionable accounting practices or activities to control potential fraud, waste, and/or abuse of fiscal resources?**

ACCJC Standard 4 – Governance and Decision-Making With Review Criteria and Suggestions for Evidence

The institution engages in clear and effective governance practices that support the achievement of its mission. Governance roles and responsibilities are delineated in widely distributed policies, and institutional decision-making processes provide opportunities for meaningful participation by relevant stakeholders.

4.1. The institution upholds an explicit commitment to principles of academic freedom, academic integrity, and freedom of inquiry. (ER 13)

Review Criteria

- The institution communicates its commitment to principles of academic freedom and freedom of inquiry to relevant stakeholders, including students.
- The institution communicates clear expectations for academic integrity and freedom of inquiry to relevant stakeholders, including students.
- The institution follows clearly communicated procedures for addressing instances of academic dishonesty and violations of its principles of academic freedom and freedom of inquiry.

Possible Sources of Evidence Could Include:

- Policies, procedures, employee/student handbooks, and/or similar documents outlining the institution's commitment to academic freedom and academic integrity
- Policies, procedures, employee/student handbooks, sample syllabi, and/or similar documents showing how the institution communicates expectations for academic integrity
- Policies, procedures, employee/student handbooks, sample syllabi, and/or similar documents showing how the institution communicates the consequences for academic dishonesty

4.2. Roles, responsibilities, and authority for decision-making are clearly defined and communicated throughout the institution. The institution's structure for decision-making provides opportunities for stakeholder participation and ensures the consideration of relevant perspectives.

Review Criteria:

- Structures for decision-making are appropriate for the institution's mission and organizational structure.

- Procedures for institutional decision-making are documented and widely available to relevant stakeholders.
- Roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for participation in decision-making are clearly defined.

Possible Sources of Evidence Could Include:

- Written documents (policies, procedures, handbooks, etc.) outlining role and practices for institutional decision-making
- Decision-making committee charters, bylaws, or other documentation of committee charge
- Decision-making committee meeting minutes and agendas
- Examples of a structure and or decision that has advanced the mission
- Examples of decision-making processes involving different institutional constituency groups

4.3. The institution's decision-making structures are used consistently and effectively. Institutional decision-making practices support a climate of collaboration and innovation that advances the mission and promotes successful outcomes for all students.

Review Criteria:

- The institution holds itself accountable for implementing its decision-making practices consistently to ensure inclusion of appropriate stakeholders and shared understanding of decisions.
- Decision-making practices result in decisions that support institutional innovation and advance the mission of the institution.
- The institution evaluates its decision-making practices and makes improvements when needed to improve effectiveness.

Possible Sources of Evidence Could Include:

- Periodic assessment of structures and processes
- Work accomplished using decision-making structures and processes to support the mission
- Examples of ideas that have been advanced through the decision-making structures and processes and implemented, with documented result(s)/outcome(s)
- Minutes/reports tracking the progress of ideas from inception to implementation, including documented result(s)/outcome(s)
- Reports of regular evaluation of decision-making policies/procedures and documented result(s)/outcome(s)
- Structures/processes illustrate accountability and action

4.4. Acting through policy, the governing board takes responsibility for the overall quality and stability of the institution, and regularly monitors progress towards its goals and fiscal health. (ER 7)

Review Criteria

- The institution has appropriate policies that delineate the governing board's accountability for academic quality and achievement of successful outcomes for all students.
- The governing board regularly reviews key indicators of student learning and achievement and institutional plans for improving academic quality and successful outcomes for all students.
- The institution has a policy manual or other compilation of policy documents that delineates the governing board's role and responsibility in ensuring the financial stability of the institution.
- The governing board regularly reviews key fiscal information and documents regarding the stability of the institution.
- The governing board has a system for evaluating and revising its policies on a regular basis.

Possible Sources of Evidence Could Include:

Policies that describe the authority and responsibilities of the board

- Board meeting minutes demonstrating regular review of key indicators of student learning and achievement and institutional plans for improving academic quality
- Board meeting minutes demonstrating regular review of key fiscal information and documents regarding the stability of the institution
- Policy and/or procedure for review of board policies
- Minutes or other documentation showing regular review of board policies

4.5. The governing board selects and evaluates the institution's chief executive officer (CEO). The governing board gives the CEO full authority to implement board policies and ensure effective operations and fulfillment of the institutional mission.

Review Criteria

- The governing board sets clear expectations for regular reports on institutional performance from the chief administrator.
- The governing board has policies outlining the delegation of administrative authority to the institution's chief administrator.
- The governing board adheres to its policies for delegation of administrative authority to the institution's chief administrator.

Possible Sources of Evidence Could Include:

- Board policies or processes for selection and evaluation of the chief administrator
- Policy outlining delegation of authority from the governing board to the chief executive officer

4.6. The governing board functions effectively as a collective entity to promote the institution's values and mission and fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities. The governing board demonstrates an ability to self-govern in adherence to its by laws and expectations for best practices in board governance. (ER 7)

Review Criteria

- The institution's governing board outlines its expectations for working as a collective unit in support of the mission.
- The governing board demonstrates the ability to act in the best interest of the institution, independent from undue influence.
- Once a collective decision has been reached, board members, individually, demonstrate their support for board policies and decisions.
- The institution's governing board has documented procedures for self-governance and/or addressing behavior that does not align with its policies.
- The governing board improves its own effectiveness through orientations, professional development, and regular board self-evaluation.

Possible Sources of Evidence Could Include:

- Policy or bylaws that describe the ways in which the board may make decisions or act
- Evidence of votes or other board actions taken to promote the institution's values and missions
- Results from board evaluations (if applicable)
- Bylaws, policy, and/or procedures for conducting board evaluations
- Completed board evaluations
- Agenda and/or presentations from new board member orientations and ongoing trainings

Required Documentation—Governance and Decision-Making:

Within the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, the institution will provide narratives and a variety of evidence sources to describe and demonstrate alignment with each Standard. Institutions must also include documentation of the required items below.

This documentation can be included as supporting evidence for the Standard narratives if appropriate, or they may be provided as stand-alone files. Peer Review Teams will confirm these items during the comprehensive review process using a checklist.

4i. Governing board policies/procedures for selecting and regularly evaluating its chief executive officer

4ii. Documentation or certification that the institution's CEO does not serve as the chair of the governing board

(ER 4)

4iii. Governing board policies/procedures/bylaws related to Board Ethics

4iv. Governing board policies/procedures/bylaws related to conflict of interest