



**PALO VERDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
SPECIAL MEETING/STUDY SESSION  
Tuesday, May 27, 2025  
Open Session 4:00 p.m.  
One College Drive, Blythe, CA – CS 209  
(Livestream held at PVC Needles Center, 725 W. Broadway, Needles, CA)**

**1. Opening of Meeting**

**1.1 Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Board President Stella Styers.

**1.2 Roll Call**

Trustees Present-Main Campus: Stella C Styers, Angel Ramirez, Brad E Arneson, George W Thomas,  
Trustees Present-Needles Educational Center: Gloria A Copple, Jon E McNeil, Glenda K Williams  
Administrators Present: Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent/President, Clint Cowden, Asst. Supt./V.P. of Instruction and Student Services, Stephanie Slagan, Asst. Supt./V.P. of Administrative Services and College Advancement

**1.3 Flag Salute**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**1.4 Approval of Agenda**

Approve the Agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Angel Ramirez, second by Brad E Arneson.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yes: Stella C Styers, Gloria A Copple, Jon E McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad E Arneson, George W Thomas, Glenda K Williams

**1.5 Announcement of Recusal From Agenda Items**

No recusals were declared.

**2. Hearing of Citizens on Agenda Items**

**2.1 Members of the public have this opportunity to directly address the Board on agenda items. Persons wishing to address the Governing Board under this item should fill out a Speaker Request Form available at the reception table. Each speaker will be allowed a maximum of five (5) minutes per topic. Fifteen (15) minutes shall be the maximum time allotment for public speakers on any one subject regardless of the number of speakers at any one board meeting.**

There were no public comments offered regarding the items on tonight's agenda.

**3. Presentations**

**3.1 Overview of Budget Criteria**

Stephanie Slagan, Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Administrative Services and College Advancement, presented an overview of the College's budgeting process and principles. She explained that the budget is guided by the College's mission, values, and planning documents, including the Comprehensive Educational Plan and the

Superintendent/President's goals.

Ms. Slagan reviewed the composition of the Budget and Planning Committee, the district's budgeting principles (transparency, participation, balanced and comprehensive planning), and key budgeting guidelines. She outlined the types of costs—fixed, soft, and discretionary—and discussed how one-time funds are prioritized through a budget enhancement process based on alignment with institutional goals and student success metrics.

The presentation also included an overview of the Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF), budget planning factors from the Chancellor's Office, and updates from the May Revise, including a 2.3% COLA for 2025-26 and an increase in base growth funding to 2.35%. She noted upcoming deferrals of May and June state payments to the next fiscal year.

Ms. Slagan also reported the following state-mandated financial reporting deadlines, noting that all deadlines are established by California Education Code:

- July 1: Tentative budget due to the County Office of Education
- September 15: Adopted budget must be made available for public inspection
- September 30: Final adopted budget must be made public
- October 10: Annual financial and budget report due to the Chancellor's Office
- December 31: Annual audit report due to the Chancellor's Office

Following the presentation, Ms. Slagan responded to questions from members of the Board of Trustees:

- **Trustee Styers** asked for clarification regarding the December deadline mentioned in the presentation. **Ms. Slagan** explained that December 31 is the deadline for submitting the College's annual audit report to the Chancellor's Office. The audit process begins in the summer with the closing of the books and a midterm audit. Once the books are finalized for the 2024-25 fiscal year, auditors return to conduct the final review, after which the completed audit is submitted. She emphasized that financial reporting deadlines are mandated by Title 5 and Ed Code, and failure to meet them can result in serious consequences such as delayed payroll due to the absence of an approved operating budget. While exceptions have been made during emergencies, such as wildfires or COVID-19, compliance is generally non-negotiable.
- **Trustee McNeil** asked why the technical experts who serve as resource members on the Budget and Planning Committee are not granted voting rights. **Ms. Slagan** explained that the voting membership is limited to one representative from each participatory governance group to ensure balanced representation. Including all resource members as voting participants would result in a disproportionate number of administrators on the committee. However, she noted that the technical experts actively participate in meetings, provide essential input, and are valued members of the committee, even though they do not vote.

### 3.2 Overview of Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) Draft

Mr. Clint Cowden provided an overview of Palo Verde College's 2025–2033 Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and its alignment with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Vision 2030. He stated that the purpose of the presentation was to share key findings from the plan, outline the strategic direction for the next eight years, and identify next steps for implementation and Board engagement.

Mr. Cowden emphasized that the CEP was developed through a shared governance process that included participation from faculty, staff, students, administrators, and community partners—including many of the same individuals who participated in the hiring of the current Superintendent/President. This inclusive approach ensured that the plan is data-informed, student-centered, and reflective of the diverse perspectives of the College community.

The planning process officially began in September 2024 with the formation of a task force. Internal and external scans followed, with stakeholder engagement and data review taking place in January 2025. Drafts were reviewed by governance groups in March, culminating in the final version presented at this meeting. Mr. Cowden noted that this timeline demonstrates the College's commitment to a transparent and collaborative planning process.

He clarified what the CEP is—and what it is not. The CEP is a strategic planning document that will guide the institution through 2033. It aligns local goals with the Chancellor's Vision 2030 and serves as a tool for integrated planning, budgeting, and evaluation. It is a dynamic roadmap designed to inform institutional priorities and resource allocation over the next eight years.

Mr. Cowden also emphasized that the CEP is not a course catalog, facilities layout, or one-time strategic document. Rather, it is a living plan that will evolve as the needs of students and the College community continue to change.

Mr. Cowden continued by explaining the five strategic goals of the Comprehensive Education Plan:

- **Goal One:** Expand and maintain access to a diverse community population by increasing engagement and inclusion through strategic outreach and collaborative partnerships. Our first strategic goal focuses on expanding access by strengthening dual enrollment with our K-12 partners, offering short-term and hybrid courses in rural communities, and increasing access points for adult learners and re-entry students.

- Goal Two: Foster an environment that promotes academic, career, and personal growth through a culturally responsive, collaborative, multi-constituent approach. This goal emphasizes creating a supportive and inclusive environment that helps students succeed academically, professionally, and personally. Key efforts include implementing guided pathways, enhancing student support services, and using strategic scheduling to improve enrollment and equity outcomes.
- Goal Three: Build and maintain trust, transparency, and communication with internal and external stakeholders through data-informed decision-making and inclusivity. Building institutional trust is essential. We will implement regular reporting, public-facing dashboards, and transparent decision-making processes. The CEP aligns reporting timelines with accreditation and program review to reinforce accountability.
- Goal Four: Focus on industry, student, and community priorities and continually evaluate program relevancy and applicability for student success. Ensuring our programs remain relevant means regularly updating curriculum to meet labor market demands and incorporating employer input. We will evaluate underperforming programs for possible phase-out while expanding high-impact pathways.
- Goal Five: Develop and maintain a collegewide strategic planning process that guides organizational structure and budgeting through collaborative and inclusive participation. This goal focuses on strengthening our integrated planning process to align institutional priorities, budgeting, and organizational structure. A key part of this work includes revising AP 2510 to better connect planning, resource allocation, and evaluation—grounded in continuous improvement and inclusive governance.

Ms. Sarah Frid explained that Administrative Procedure (AP) 2510 governs the College’s districtwide and cross-constituency committee structures. It outlines the composition of key committees such as the Budget Committee, Strategic Planning Committee, and College Council. She noted that the College is reviewing AP 2510 to identify opportunities for improvement, with the goal of enhancing integration across committees and reducing siloed operations.

Mr. Cowden noted that while it is possible to check off tasks as completed, it is equally important to ask whether those actions are effective. “Are we doing it—and is it working?” he asked, highlighting the need for intentional reflection. Mr. Cowden stressed that the focus should be on how information is gathered, communicated, and used to drive improvement. The goal, he stated, is not just to complete a process, but to engage in continuous improvement by examining whether meaningful change is occurring as a result.

Mr. Cowden explained that the next portion of the presentation would focus on the “big picture.” He noted that some of the content was included to ensure that external accreditors are aware that key information has been communicated to the Board.

Mr. Cowden provided an overview of Palo Verde College’s regional footprint, noting that the District spans more than 4,600 square miles across two counties. Key population centers include Blythe and Needles, along with service to CDCR facilities and tribal lands. He emphasized that the region faces significant challenges, including extreme rurality, limited broadband access, and long travel distances. The area is designated by the federal government as both medically and educationally underserved, highlighting the critical need for strong outreach and support services.

He noted that the community is predominantly Hispanic/Latino, comprising over 60% of the population. While the median age in the region is higher than the statewide average, a high birth rate among Spanish-speaking households points to a growing and increasingly diverse K-12 population in the coming years. This data informs the College’s program development and student support strategies. Additionally, nearly one-third of adults in the region do not have a high school diploma, and 36% of households speak a language other than English at home. These factors highlight the importance of strong adult education programs and English learner pathways to support access and success in post-secondary education.

Mr. Cowden addressed local enrollment trends, noting a decline in student populations at both Needles Unified and Palo Verde Unified School Districts. He explained that while dual enrollment initiatives have helped offset the impact of local population loss, there are still opportunities to strengthen career-focused pathways at the high school level. Aligning secondary education with the College’s programs will better prepare students for both workforce entry and transfer. He also noted the importance of incorporating the Cal-GETC and the new common general education pathway, emphasizing that dual enrollment should support not only career pathways but transfer pathways as well.

Mr. Cowden discussed regional workforce priorities, highlighting projected growth in sectors such as healthcare support, transportation and logistics, early childhood education, and public safety. He noted that local employers continue to report shortages in skilled trades and medical assistance roles. These labor market trends underscore the need for short-term, applied Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that can address immediate employment demands. Mr. Cowden pointed out a current mismatch between regional job growth and the training programs available, emphasizing that Palo Verde College must expand its offerings in high-need, high-growth areas. The College’s goal is to close these gaps by providing short-term certificates and targeted CTE pathways that align with both student aspirations and local employer needs.

Mr. Cowden reported on recent enrollment trends at Palo Verde College. He noted that the College's unduplicated headcount increased from 6,434 in 2021 to 8,176 in 2023–2024, reflecting a strong post-COVID rebound. He stated that Palo Verde College is among the institutions that have successfully navigated the challenges of the pandemic. However, he emphasized that much of this growth has been driven by enrollments in the Fire Science program and CDCR-related offerings. Mr. Cowden also pointed out that the College's total Full-Time Equivalent Students (FTES) now exceeds the state-funded cap. While this reflects the success of expanded outreach efforts, he cautioned that the College must now focus on "smart growth" to ensure sustainability and strategic resource alignment moving forward.

Dr. Bruce Moses asked Mr. Cowden to provide additional details regarding the College's FTES cap, current status, and future projections.

Mr. Cowden responded that in recent years, Palo Verde College has averaged approximately 200 Full-Time Equivalent Students (FTES) over its state-funded cap. For the current year, he estimated the College would be about 30 FTES over the cap. He noted that, as previously referenced by Ms. Slagan, Palo Verde College experienced a 6.12% increase in FTES—one of the highest growth rates in the state according to recent Chancellor's Office data.

Based on statewide trends, Mr. Cowden projected that the College will reach a funded cap of 3,000 FTES within three years. While there are options to accelerate that growth, he cautioned that doing so could result in the College serving more students than it receives funding for. He recommended that the District aim to remain slightly above the funded cap, but avoid exceeding it by a significant margin in order to ensure financial sustainability.

Trustee McNeil asked whether it is true that the Chancellor's Office will sometimes provide funding for students enrolled beyond a college's state-funded cap.

Mr. Cowden responded that while over-cap funding has occurred in the past, it is less common now—especially for districts with already high enrollment caps. He advised that the District should not plan or budget with the expectation that such funding will occur. "If we're over by 1 or 2%, it's nice if it happens," he said, "but if we're significantly over, as we have been in the past, I would caution against relying on it."

Trustee McNeil stated that, in the past, the state would calculate not only individual college enrollments but also total enrollment across the state. If there were any remaining funds, they would be reallocated to cover the over-cap.

Mr. Cowden provided a general overview of how FTES funding is determined. He explained that, typically, Chief Instructional Officers describe the process this way: the Chancellor's Office receives a budget allocation from the Governor, based on a projected number of students across the system. That total dollar amount is then divided by the total anticipated FTES statewide, which determines the per-FTES funding rate. This calculation can shift from year to year based on enrollment and available state funding.

Mr. Cowden noted that the possibility of receiving additional funding for over-cap enrollments was more frequently discussed in the period following COVID-19, when many larger districts were falling short of their FTES targets. At that time, some reallocation of funds became possible. However, with more students now returning to college, larger districts are once again meeting or exceeding their targets. As a result, the likelihood of receiving over-cap funding is decreasing. He added that while there may be some growth in overall system funding, colleges may also see a slight reduction in the FTES reimbursement rate moving forward.

Trustee Styers asked where the funds for FTES come from.

Mr. Cowden responded that the funding comes from the Chancellor's Office. He noted that while the annual allocation is not a large surplus, it has consistently increased year over year. However, he added that there is ongoing discussion that this trend may not continue and that funding levels could dip slightly in the future. He remarked that Chief Business Officers (CBOs) are typically better equipped to address detailed funding questions than Chief Instructional Officers (CIOs).

Ms. Stephanie Slagan provided further clarification. She explained that the concern is not whether the state will fund growth, but rather whether it will fund the deficit factor. When there isn't enough funding to fully cover all FTES across the system, the state applies a deficit factor equally to all districts to ensure fairness. She noted that deficit factors are applied at different stages of the budget process—P1, P2, and typically reconciled by the following February during recalculation.

Ms. Slagan warned that if colleges across the state continue to grow and there is insufficient funding to support that growth, a deficit factor will be applied. In such cases, while the FTES may be earned, districts may receive a reduction in funding—sometimes in the range of \$1 to \$2 million—due to the deficit factor. She emphasized that this creates a delicate balancing act between instructional planning and budget management. She also cautioned that if the College reaches 3,000 FTES, it could impact eligibility for the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) program and increase the risk of triggering a deficit factor, further reinforcing the need for careful, strategic growth.

Dr. Moses explained that Sarah, Sam, and Clint have been working collaboratively to identify how the College can grow in a more intentional and strategic way. The focus, he said, is on increasing enrollment among local learners in Blythe and Needles, rather than relying primarily on growth in CDCR or Fire Science programs. While those programs can generate additional enrollment, they do not provide the same long-term institutional benefit.

He emphasized that the development of short-term certificates, enhanced dual enrollment opportunities, and guided pathways are central to this strategy. He stated that the goal is to build sustainable and meaningful growth by establishing new programs—such as those recently brought to the Board for approval—that serve the local community and align with student and workforce needs. This approach, he noted, will result in growth that is more beneficial for the College in the long run.

Mr. Cowden explained that 47% of students are enrolled in Fire Science courses, and 36% are enrolled at California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) facilities. Additionally, 17% of students are participating through on-campus and dual enrollment programs. Understanding these segments, he said, allows the College to better tailor academic programs, student support, and services.

As the College moves into the strategic planning phase, Mr. Cowden noted that it will be important to assess these enrollment segments and set intentional goals for future growth. He emphasized that expanding the 17% local and dual enrollment segment emerged as a clear priority during the CEP development process—aligning with Dr. Moses’s earlier comments on focusing on local learners.

Mr. Cowden added that this is not simply a case of “all ships rise with the tide.” Instead, strategic decisions must be made to shift the College’s direction intentionally. The CEP now provides a guiding framework to evaluate how the institution can grow local enrollment while also maintaining the financial benefits and stability provided by the Fire Science and CDCR programs.

Trustee Styers inquired whether the College is setting up booths for graduating high school seniors to visit the campus and ask questions.

Ms. Frid responded to Trustee Styers question by noting that juniors and seniors from Palo Verde High School were on campus on May 1. She added that PVC faculty and staff also visited PVHS to assist students with completing their CCCApply applications and FAFSA forms. Ms. Frid explained that there has been a coordinated effort to align high school registration with educational planning for Palo Verde College, in order to present the process to students in a more holistic and less confusing way.

She clarified that while the College has not set up traditional outreach booths, there has been close coordination with PVHS to support student transitions to PVC. She also acknowledged that, due to general end-of-year burnout, the focus of outreach efforts was shifted earlier in the month to maximize engagement.

Dr. Sam Robinson added that outreach efforts have also been taking place in Needles. She shared that Student Services organized a visit last week, bringing a group of staff to Needles High School to provide similar support. Mr Cowden noted that, while he did not have the exact figures on hand, Ger had informally reported via email that Palo Verde College had engaged with approximately 96–98% of PVUSD seniors, guiding them through the CCCApply process. He added that outreach efforts in Needles reached approximately 88% of seniors, based on the data he had seen.

Mr. Cowden emphasized the importance of early engagement, recognizing that many students at this time of year are focused on college acceptance announcements and planning to attend four-year institutions. He acknowledged that PVC may not be every student’s first choice, but noted that reality often sets in when students face unanticipated challenges, such as covering housing deposits or utility costs. He stressed the importance of making sure students know that Palo Verde College is there to support them and is a reliable safety net

Mr. Cowden reported on improvements in course success rates. He noted that the College has seen year-over-year increases in course success rates, which he credited in large part to the dedication of faculty and the effectiveness of ongoing equity-focused interventions. He highlighted a particularly notable outcome: students enrolled through CDCR now achieve success rates equal to or exceeding those of on-campus students. This, he stated, is a strong indicator that the College’s equity efforts are working.

Mr. Cowden referenced the recent recognition the College received through the Dr. John W. Rice Award, emphasizing that the College’s approach to serving Rising Scholars and CDCR students is not just about access or compensation—it’s about ensuring student success. He shared that Academic Senate President Sarah Frid reviewed each course syllabus to ensure alignment with academic standards and student expectations, describing the syllabus as a kind of contract between the faculty member and the student. He concluded by acknowledging the behind-the-scenes work being done across departments to support these outcomes, noting that it continues to push the institution forward.

Ms. Frid provided clarification specifically regarding correspondence courses. She stated, "I just want to clarify—this is just for the correspondence courses." She explained that, because students in these courses do not have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions of their instructors in real time, it is especially important that course materials provide clear, high-quality instructions and guidance. She noted that feedback has been given to instructors to help ensure students are not left confused, and that this effort is in direct response to student feedback. She added that the College looks forward to continuing improvement in this area.

Mr. Cowden reported on trends in degrees and certificates awarded. He noted that since 2021, Palo Verde College has seen a steady increase in the number of degrees and certificates conferred. The growth in certificate programs reflects the College's alignment with labor market demands, particularly in fields such as business, administration of justice, and nursing. These areas have shown strong growth, and the College anticipates continued expansion in similar high-demand programs.

Mr. Cowden also highlighted progress within the Rising Scholars Program, noting that the average number of units taken by students has increased from three to over six units. He emphasized that this is a significant momentum builder—students who take more classes are more likely to complete their degrees. Although the College is currently serving fewer prison facilities, the depth of support provided to Rising Scholars has improved, enabling students to complete certificates in a shorter timeframe.

Mr. Cowden outlined the College's program strategies, which are categorized into three tiers of investment:

1. Low-Cost Refreshes – These are targeted improvements to stable programs that require minimal investment. He cited Business and Computer Information Systems (CIS) as examples, where small adjustments or enhancements can lead to meaningful improvements without significant cost to the District.
2. Moderate Investments – Programs such as Welding and Nursing fall into this tier. While these areas require more substantial resources, they are already established at the College. The focus here is on continuous improvement to meet industry needs and student demand.
3. Large-Scale Investments – This tier involves launching new programs that require significant resources and Board support. Examples include Commercial Truck Driving and Dental Assisting.

Mr. Cowden emphasized that as the College moves forward, faculty will continue to evaluate program needs and opportunities, and updates and information will be brought to the Board.

Ms. Frid offered a faculty perspective on the program strategies outlined in the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). She emphasized that the recommendations in the CEP are not intended to be prescriptive or viewed as a demand. Rather, the information is meant to support informed, institution-wide decision-making focused on how best to serve students. Speaking from her role as a Business faculty member, Ms. Frid stressed the importance of approaching these recommendations with humility and a willingness to reflect on how program changes can better align with student needs and post-graduation employment opportunities.

She acknowledged that while many of the proposed strategies focus on Career and Technical Education (CTE) areas, the broader goal is to ensure students are connected to real, tangible outcomes. She noted that continuing with longstanding practices simply because they are familiar may not always be in students' best interests, and that some level of discomfort or disruption may be necessary to facilitate meaningful change.

Ms. Frid also pointed out an interesting dynamic—lower-cost program refreshes may actually be harder to gain buy-in for, because they often require existing programs to change. In contrast, high-investment initiatives may be easier to support, as they are often viewed as new efforts rather than changes to current faculty work.

Ms. Frid emphasized that the data presented in the CEP represents a shared foundation across the institution. "This is new, base information that everyone is using," she said. "We're not using different metrics for different people—Stephanie isn't getting a different set of information than my Business division." She stated that this level of transparency and consistency is part of what makes the CEP process transformational for the College, noting, "We've never had this before. It's never been this tangible."

Trustee Styers asked whether faculty have been providing feedback on the Comprehensive Education Plan. She inquired if the response has been generally positive or if there has been any pushback.

Ms. Frid responded that there has not yet been extensive, in-depth discussion across the Academic Senate as a whole, largely due to the Senate meeting only once per month and the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) not yet being formally adopted by the District. However, she shared that in informal conversations with faculty, there has been a strong sense of optimism and engagement.

She noted that faculty have expressed excitement about the opportunity to align budget resources and institutional support with initiatives that previously felt too risky to pursue—despite their potential benefits for students. Others have commented on how valuable it is to see localized labor market data presented in a more meaningful way, beyond broad county-level reports that do not fully reflect the unique contexts of Blythe or Needles.

Ms. Frid stated that the CEP is already encouraging deeper conversations among faculty. She believes the plan should help inform program reviews, curriculum revisions, and broader planning discussions. While it won't be the sole factor in decision-making, it adds a much-needed layer of data and strategy to help guide those decisions.

She concluded by stating that the CEP process is helping build faculty confidence, reinforcing the idea that the institution is unified in its goals. "It shows we're not competing with each other," she said. "A 'yes' in one area doesn't mean a 'no' or a dropped commitment somewhere else. It gives us a sense that we're truly working together with shared priorities and transparency."

Trustee Styers added that she believes the CEP also gives faculty a sense of hope, as it allows them to grow professionally alongside the growth of the District.

Ms. Frid reflected one of the goals in the CEP and noted that faculty on the committee were especially vocal—something she was told is not always typical—about the importance of evaluating not only new opportunities, but also existing programs that may no longer be serving the College effectively. She emphasized that the institution cannot do everything, and that this is a shift from past messaging where there was an expectation to meet all demands—whether that meant serving an unlimited number of CDCR institutions, expanding correspondence education, increasing dual enrollment, or growing community outreach in both Blythe and Needles—all without clear prioritization or additional resources.

She explained that the CEP helps provide direction and acknowledges that the College must be strategic in its choices. "There's no way we can do everything in here," she said. "This isn't about doing it all—it's about having good options and using this information to make informed decisions about where we can make the greatest impact."

Trustee Styers commented that the Comprehensive Education Plan is a good plan and provides some direction for where the College wants to be.

Mr. Cowden addressed the need for transparency and difficult decision-making as part of the College's strategic planning. He noted that, in alignment with Accreditation Standard V, the College must engage in open and transparent conversations about program sustainability. He acknowledged that, as Ms. Frid previously mentioned, some of the more challenging discussions will likely center around low-cost program refreshes—because they involve changes to existing programs, which can be harder to accept than launching entirely new ones.

Mr. Cowden shared that both faculty and staff were actively involved in the planning process and voiced the need to explicitly state that some programs may need to be phased out. He emphasized that in order to grow enrollment among local learners, the College may need to scale back in areas like Fire Science and Rising Scholars, at least in terms of percentage of total enrollment. He reiterated that there is no "magic new money" and that growth will require strategic reallocation of existing resources. "If a program is no longer meeting our local needs," he said, "we may need to sunset it—even if it's something we've long valued—so that we can invest in programs that better serve our students and community."

Ms. Frid added that this type of strategic realignment is already underway. She spoke about the closing of the correspondence courses noting that the decision was made because correspondence education requires a fundamentally different instructional design—one that does not align with the needs of local students.

She noted that maintaining both models made it difficult to gather the data necessary for evaluating worthwhile pathways and aligning programs with industry needs. She explained that the Business department is one of the College's highest degree-producing programs, with the majority of enrolled students coming from CDCR institutions. However, the department is staffed by only three full-time faculty members. This creates a catch-22: how can the College continue to meet its obligations to incarcerated students while also expanding services to the broader community?

She noted that the solution lies in program refresh strategies, including the development of noncredit offerings and short-term certificates that better align with both student and labor market needs. Ms. Frid emphasized that any changes will be implemented gradually. "This is not going to be a fast-moving train," she said.

Trustee Thomas asked if the College currently has the teaching staff needed to support the diverse range of subjects being discussed. He referenced the earlier example of the Business department, noting that it has high student demand but only three full-time faculty. He inquired about how the College plans to build a more diverse instructional staff.

Ms. Frid responded by sharing her perspective on staffing and curriculum development. She stated that, from her point of view, the College should start with student-centered curriculum and programming, and then specifically recruit and create a staffing plan based on what students need. She explained that, in the Business department, they currently rely on about 15 adjunct instructors, but almost all of them are not local.

She noted that this reflects a broader trend across the District—there is a challenge in finding local individuals who meet minimum qualifications or who are a good fit for teaching, particularly in more diverse instructional fields. Ms. Frid stated that this is something the College needs to grapple with and plan for. She emphasized the need to use the Comprehensive Education Plan as a launch point for determining a plan on how to budget for and recruit.

Mr. Cowden noted that, in addition to what programs the College offers, it is equally important to consider how those programs are delivered. Referencing an earlier point made by Ms. Frid, he stated that one of the biggest challenges facing rural colleges in California is meeting the same operational requirements as institutions in urban areas—despite having fewer resources and more logistical barriers.

He cited the nursing program as a prime example, explaining that rural colleges are held to the same standards and staffing ratios, which puts them at a significant disadvantage. While the College may not be able to control all regulatory constraints, Mr. Cowden suggested that alternative delivery models—such as expanding online instruction—could help broaden access, both for students and for potential instructors.

Mr. Cowden praised Ms. Frid's emphasis on the need for a clear staffing plan, noting that good ideas must be supported by practical implementation strategies. "We can talk about good ideas all day long," he said, "but we also need to ask: what's the reality? What happens when we don't get our first or second choice candidate? How do we move forward?" He stressed the importance of planning for contingencies and being intentional in how the College approaches program growth.

Ms. Frid outlined the College's process for developing new academic programs. She explained that the process typically begins at the division level, where a proposal is initiated. From there, the proposal moves to the Curriculum Committee and, if approved, is forwarded to the Academic Senate. During this stage, several key factors are evaluated, including whether the program will require additional resources, staffing, or facilities. If the proposal is approved by the Academic Senate, it is then brought to College Council for broader institutional review. Ms. Frid emphasized that this final step is critical to ensure that any new program is sustainable across the institution. She explained that we don't want to create a program that we can't staff or one that lacks the facilities and materials needed to deliver the curriculum effectively.

Dr. Thomas inquired about the current evaluation process for faculty, specifically referencing the tenure process. He asked whether the College still follows a tenure or 10-year evaluation model and expressed concern that if faculty are primarily responsible for evaluating one another without objective oversight, it may hinder efforts to implement broader institutional improvements. Drawing from his 40 years of experience as an educator, Dr. Thomas shared that peer evaluations can sometimes result in mutual affirmation without addressing areas for growth.

He emphasized the importance of ensuring that evaluation processes support the College's long-term goals and strategic plans, noting that improvements in this area may be necessary to fully realize the vision outlined in the Comprehensive Education Plan.

Ms. Frid responded by referencing one of the goals outlined in the Comprehensive Education Plan related to accountability. She noted that without clear accountability measures, good ideas risk becoming just "lip service." The goal, she emphasized, is not only to set intentions but to follow through in meaningful and measurable ways.

She explained that part of this work includes developing a strong Human Resources plan that clearly defines employee rights and responsibilities, while also focusing on student-centered practices. This involves identifying mechanisms to support both professional development and timely, appropriate interventions when needed.

Ms. Frid acknowledged that some elements—such as collective bargaining—fall outside the scope of Academic Senate, but she emphasized that meaningful progress requires the entire institution working collaboratively. "It takes all of us, braided together, to support these efforts," she said, adding that she fully understood the concerns Dr. Thomas raised.

Dean Robinson provided additional context on faculty evaluation and institutional accountability. She explained that the faculty evaluation process includes peer review, review by division chairs, and review by the instructional administration team—including herself and Vice President Cowden. Dean Robinson emphasized that she takes the evaluation process seriously and acknowledged it was a "culture shock" when she first joined the College, as she encountered faculty portfolios that lacked depth—some including only a single sentence in response to major prompts. This led to robust conversations with faculty about the expectations for meaningful self-assessment, especially in relation to tenure and ongoing evaluations.

She also shared that division chairs have historically felt disempowered in holding faculty accountable—for example, when faculty failed to respond to scheduling requests or submit course materials. Dean Robinson stated that she has been actively supporting division chairs, reinforcing their authority, and encouraging a culture that places students at the center of all decisions.

In terms of accountability, she noted that the College has begun tracking and sharing data related to student grievances and petitions each semester. As one example, she highlighted a disparity where a part-time faculty member received nearly 30 grievances in one semester compared to a full-time faculty member who had only one—clearly indicating an issue that needed to be addressed.

Dean Robinson also shared that she recently completed 42 part-time faculty evaluations and expressed pride in the division chairs who approached the process seriously and constructively. She noted that the tone of evaluations was supportive and aimed at continuous improvement, not punishment.

She addressed updates to the program review process. As a participant in program review discussions, she emphasized the importance of aligning questions with each department's function and making them more relevant. Previously, all programs—academic, administrative, and operational—were answering the same questions, which were not always meaningful or applicable. She stated that the College is now working to revamp program review to better reflect institutional mission alignment, hiring needs, student learning outcomes, and student-centered practices.

Trustee Thomas emphasized the importance of honesty—not only in the evaluation process, but across all college operations. He shared a personal anecdote from his experience in education, recalling a teacher who challenged his evaluation by saying, "I've been teaching for 40 years." In response, Trustee Thomas replied, "No, you've been teaching for one year and repeating it 40 times." He used this example to highlight his point.

Mr. Cowden explained that the Comprehensive Education Plan recommends the development of short-term, stackable credentials. He noted that these credentials can be implemented within Career Technical Education (CTE) programs, but also have relevance for general education pathways, such as the Cal-GETC certificate. The idea, he said, is to give students the opportunity to earn meaningful credentials as they move through their programs—so instead of leaving with "some college and no degree," they can earn a degree or certificate at each stage.

Mr. Cowden emphasized that these stackable programs support quick entry into the workforce and serve as gateways to longer educational pathways. He stated that they are particularly valuable for Rising Scholars, adult learners, and dual enrollment students by offering more accessible and measurable skill-building opportunities. As students progress, these credentials allow them to show real advancement along the way.

Mr. Cowden noted that the Comprehensive Education Plan provides an eight-year framework. Within that framework, three strategic plans will be developed and periodically adjusted to ensure the College continues to evolve in response to the needs of students, employers, and the region.

Mr. Cowden concluded by emphasizing that transparency and accountability are central to the implementation of the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). He explained that the CEP includes annual updates to the Cabinet, Academic Senate, Board of Trustees, and other stakeholders. Progress will also be reported through public-facing dashboards. Importantly, evaluation is embedded into the College's program review process, ensuring that planning and accountability go hand in hand.

Looking ahead, Mr. Cowden stated that the focus now shifts to implementation—putting the planning into practice. Next steps include drafting the College's strategic plan, which will feature key performance indicators and measurable goals, rather than general calls to "do good work." Other priorities include updating the Student Equity Plan and preparing for the upcoming accreditation visit, including the writing of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) for ACCJC. He emphasized that all of these efforts are aligned with the Chancellor's Vision 2030 and wrap up the College's work on the Vision for Success goals.

Mr. Cowden stressed that Board support is critical to the success of this plan. He called on trustees to champion investment in high-demand programs, help secure resources for facilities, and advocate at the state level on behalf of rural-serving institutions like Palo Verde College. "Your leadership ensures that this plan doesn't just sit on the shelf, but truly transforms our region," he said.

He closed by reaffirming that the CEP is grounded in shared governance and expressed gratitude for the Board's alignment and support. "Your continued investment in this plan," he said, "is truly an investment in Palo Verde College. Thank you again for being part of this process and for listening today."

Following the conclusion of his presentation, Mr. Cowden opened the floor for further questions and discussion.

Trustee McNeil thanked Mr. Cowden and all involved for the detailed presentation. He stated that the question he was most interested in had already been addressed—specifically, whether the College would be receiving an action plan that clearly outlines who is responsible for each item, the associated timelines, and the corresponding budget. He noted that it appears Appendix D of the CEP may serve as the framework for that action plan and asked for clarification, confirming that a more detailed action plan is expected to be presented in the fall.

Mr. Cowden responded that the strategic plan will be the next major step. He explained that the plan will include the development of key performance indicators (KPIs) to help measure progress over a three-year period. Because the strategic plan is created through shared governance, it will not include specific budgets but will instead guide planning and resource alignment across the institution.

He noted that while the CEP serves as the overarching framework, there is a separate internal spreadsheet that breaks down the plan into more detailed components. This includes tracking approximately 20 specific activities over the eight-year period outlined in the CEP. As the College moves forward, this tool will help monitor progress across multiple years.

Mr. Cowden added that the strategic plan will focus on establishing measurable goals. For example, if currently 17% of the College's students (not FTES) are local learners, the strategic plan may set a goal to increase that figure to 22% over the next three years. Appendix D, he confirmed, outlines the key themes that emerged from the CEP process and serves as a roadmap that will inform and shape the forthcoming strategic plan.

Trustee McNeil added, "Yeah, but to flesh that out—kind of like you're doing MBOs, Measurable Behavioral Objectives. Is that where you're going?"

Mr. Cowden responded that, yes, the College will be developing measurable goals—likely referred to as key performance indicators (KPIs). These KPIs will be displayed on public-facing dashboards, each with associated actionable items to help track progress. He noted that this approach will make it easier for different campus groups to engage with the data and understand institutional priorities.

He added that, as Ms. Frid previously mentioned, having clear KPIs will also support important conversations across the institution—from staff and faculty to administration. For example, if there is a goal to increase the percentage of local learners, it opens up necessary discussions about whether resources are being adjusted accordingly. At the same time, it helps highlight the trade-offs: if one area grows, such as local learner enrollment, other areas—such as ISA or Rising Scholars programs—may see a reduction due to state-imposed enrollment caps.

Trustee McNeil commented, "Got it—very way overboard on you. You answered the question five minutes ago." Referring to page 125 of the Comprehensive Education Plan, he noted that it discusses a new organizational structure. He pointed out that the previous interim superintendent had also spent a significant amount of time focusing on organizational structure and observed that it appears this group is going to explore that area further. "That's interesting, and I would agree with that," he said, adding that he finds the current structure very complex and is curious to see what will be brought forward in the fall. Trustee McNeil also mentioned page 123, adding, "I know that Brad would be interested in having an additional center."

Dr. Moses responded to Trustee McNeil's comment, stating, "So to comment on that, Jon, remember—a lot of this work came from early focus groups that took place last year." He explained that some of the items in the plan, such as those related to organizational structure, came out of the community forums and internal forums held the previous year. "These are not items that are saying move forward and do this in the future," he said.

Dr. Moses referred to item 10B in the plan, which includes updating operational processes, reviewing hiring practices, removing structural barriers to attract a more diverse applicant pool, and improving textbook distribution for both local and Rising Scholars. "We've already done that," he said, emphasizing that while these items are listed in the document, many have already been implemented or are currently in progress. "So that's not to say this is something that's going to happen in the next 12 months—some of these things have already taken place."

Trustee McNeil stated, "What I understand is that this process, in the fall, we're going to get a first look or evaluation of kind of where we are on achieving some of these things. And what I mean by achieving is—where we're putting them in line, making some of the things happen." He added that, as previously mentioned, this plan serves as a launch point, so not everything will happen.

Mr. Cowden responded, "Yes—and again, if you look at what Dr. Moses is saying, if you look at the title of Appendix D—Themes and Recommendations from the Focus Groups." He explained that the appendix is intended to openly and transparently reflect what participants shared during the focus group sessions.

Trustee McNeil responded, "I didn't get that. I thought that the committee decided that these were things they wanted to put into the report."

Mr. Cowden clarified, "No—this is gathering all of the different focus group information and putting it into the document. That's why it's in the appendix and not in the primary functions or the main body of the report."

Trustee McNeil stated, "That's good. I was very concerned about the ghost reference on page 124 under Institutional Culture." He then referenced item 9A, reading, "Create a more welcoming, engaging college culture atmosphere for students," and noting that the first bullet states, "Move from a ghost campus to having more students on campus."

Dr. Moses responded, "That was the recommendation that came out of the focus groups. And I think, through the presentation, you've heard a consistent through line—that we want to serve more local learners, we want to serve more adult learners. And through that, the new design, focusing on short-term certificates and credentials, will increase traffic flow and create more activity on campus." He continued, "Again, these are things that came out of the focus groups. These are things that were said some time ago, but they ultimately informed the overall plan you see on pages 124–125."

Trustee McNeil asked Ms. Alaniz to record Dr. Moses's comments in the minutes.

Trustee McNeil stated, "I liked what you said, Bruce. I liked what you said about being more inclusive—I liked that a lot. I didn't like the ghost comment."

Mr. Cowden added, "Just as a comment, the next steps and implementation plan is actually on page 30."

Ms. Frid added, "Mr. McNeil, Just as a comment, the next steps and implementation plan is actually on page 30."

Trustee McNeil responded, "I saw that. I was just commenting that we want this to be a very positive document—and it is a very positive document. I just saw that and didn't like it so much—calling our campus a ghost campus."

Ms. Frid responded that part of the intent was to acknowledge where people feel the College has missed the mark and to incorporate as much of their language as possible so they can see themselves reflected in this public-facing document. "I kind of don't see this as positive or negative—it's neutral information," she said. "And we have a lot of different directions we can go with it. We have a lot of opportunity here."

She agreed with Trustee McNeil's concern, adding, "I think taking that criticism—that we don't have a lot of people on campus, and that we'd like to increase foot traffic—we can use this plan to help mitigate that concern."

Trustee McNeil stated, "So what Bruce said—he said that in a different way that was very positive. I liked what he said, and that'd be great to drop that in. But I'm not trying to change the report—I'm just commenting on these things."

Trustee McNeil shared concerns specific to the Needles community. He noted that there is a "new, big upheaval" beginning to surface in Needles—one he anticipates will become more public—but clarified, "It's not coming from John McNeil, as you're going to think." He explained that across the river in Arizona, local high school students are graduating with a large number of dual enrollment classes completed. This development is gaining attention in the media and local discussion groups, creating concern in Needles, where a comparable program has not yet been established.

Trustee McNeil acknowledged that the Comprehensive Education Plan includes a section addressing dual enrollment, which he views as a positive step. He encouraged the team to highlight this when visiting Needles, noting that many residents view dual enrollment as a form of college scholarship. "Here they are, across the river in Arizona, getting a college scholarship because of that," he said.

He emphasized that the people of Needles are deeply invested in having a real college experience in their community. He reminded the group that the Needles Center was built with an \$18 million investment and remains on the local tax rolls. "They're very concerned about whether they'll have a college experience," he said, pointing out that the plan references multiple times the goal of providing that experience and offering classes in Needles.

Trustee McNeil stated, "I know, Dr. Sam Robinson, you said that you're not going to put any classes here, except for phlebotomy. That's not out in the public yet, but it will be—I don't need to advertise it." He concluded by stating that the community is eager to have classes offered at the center and added, "It'll be good PR for us to talk about what we discussed here tonight in Needles."

Trustee McNeil added one final comment regarding the Board meeting scheduled for October 14th in Needles. He noted that the date falls during the community's fall break, when schools are closed and many residents leave town. "I should have caught this earlier," he said, "because we had the exact same problem last year." He requested that the Board consider moving the meeting to November to avoid scheduling conflicts during the break.

Dr. Moses responded to clarify a point made earlier by Trustee McNeil. "John, I just wanted to make a correction here," he said. "I don't think Dr. Robinson said that we would not have classes at Needles—I think that may be a miscommunication." He added that, based on Dr. Robinson and Ms. Frid's presentation last month, that interpretation did not seem accurate. "I don't think that's what we heard," he said. "I don't think that's correct."

Trustee McNeil replied, "Good, because I haven't said that to anybody—and I don't want any of that getting out here. It'd be a revolt."

Dr. Moses responded, "But where did you hear that from, John? Dr. Robinson is sitting here now, and I don't think she said that. I believe what she actually showed us was a schedule—an expanded schedule of courses and modalities that will be offered at the Needles Center this fall, which is much more than has been offered in the past."

Trustee McNeil stated, "That's terrific—good communication coming from your office and from all the people in Blythe. It is well received here."

#### **4. Action Items**

##### **4.1 Approval of Agreement for Consultant Service with Kyle Crider**

Approve the Agreement for Consultant Service with Kyle Crider.

Motion by George W Thomas, second by Brad E Arneson.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yes: Stella C Styers, Gloria A Copple, Jon E McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad E Arneson, George W Thomas, Glenda K Williams

##### **4.2 Approval of Agreement with Modern Campus for Connected Curriculum and Catalog Software and Services**

Approve the Agreement with Modern Campus for Connected Curriculum and Catalog Software and Services.

Motion by Jon E McNeil, second by Brad E Arneson.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yes: Stella C Styers, Gloria A Copple, Jon E McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad E Arneson, George W Thomas, Glenda K Williams

##### **4.3 Excusal of Student Trustee Nya Jones from May 13, 2025, Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees**

Approve the excusal of Student Trustee Nya Jones from the May 13, 2025, Regular Meeting for compensation purposes.

Motion by Brad E Arneson, second by George W Thomas.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yes: Stella C Styers, Gloria A Copple, Jon E McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad E Arneson, George W Thomas, Glenda K Williams

#### **5. Closing of Meeting**

##### **5.1 Possible Future Agenda Items**

Trustee McNeil requested that the Board discuss the possibility of changing the date of the October 14, 2025, Board meeting at the Needles Center. He proposed moving the meeting to November 11, 2025, and asked that the item be placed on a future agenda for Board discussion.

##### **5.2 Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 5:38 p.m.

*Bruce Moses*

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

##### **Minutes approved at June 10, 2025, 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.*






# 5.27.25 PVCCD BOT Special Meeting Minutes

Final Audit Report

2025-06-11

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