



PRESS RELEASE

Contra Costa Community College District
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Contra Costa Community College District Announces Finalists for Permanent Chancellor

MARTINEZ, California – The Contra Costa Community College District (4CD) announced the selection of three finalists for the next permanent Chancellor. The finalists are Dr. Santanu Bandyopadhyay, Dr. Carlos Cortez, and Mojdeh Mehdizadeh.

On Monday, November 6, 2023, beginning at 9:00 AM, public forums will be held in person at the District Office, streamed via Zoom, and recorded. The public forums are scheduled for one hour each, and are open to the community, students, faculty, and staff. A detailed public forum schedule, links to the forums, and information on how to submit a question to be asked, are available on the 4CD website at www.4cd.edu.

For those who are unable to join the November 6, 2023, public forums, links to the recordings will be made available on the 4CD website, along with an online survey to provide feedback on the candidates. The feedback will be shared with the Governing Board for their consideration.

On Wednesday, November 8, 2023, the Governing Board will meet to discuss final candidates and consider the appointment of the next Chancellor. At their regularly scheduled public meeting on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, the Governing Board is expected to appoint the next permanent Chancellor.

More information on the three finalists is provided below.



Dr. Santanu Bandyopadhyay has been a transformational leader in multiple community college districts in California. He served as the President of Columbia College and Modesto Junior College (MJC), both within Yosemite Community College District (YCCD) from July 2018 to January 2023. He is currently serving as the Interim President of Woodland Community College since January 2023. As the Executive Vice President at Cypress College from July 2013 to July 2018, Dr. Bandyopadhyay was responsible for both instructional programs and student services.

A first-generation immigrant, Dr. Bandyopadhyay earned his Master's of Business Administration and Doctor of Philosophy degrees at Ohio University after a successful career in teaching and market research in India. He moved from Ohio to Southern California in 2009 to take up the position of Director of Institutional Research and Planning at Cypress College. At Ohio, he served as Director of Institutional Research at Zane State College and Budget and Policy Analyst at Ohio University.

Dr. Bandyopadhyay has demonstrated success in the areas of innovative use of technology to improve teaching and learning; partnership development with educational institutions, businesses and industries; bond-funded construction projects; labor negotiations; and fundraising. He has a successful record of advocacy and collaboration working with legislative bodies at local and state levels. He was involved in leading national initiatives, such as, "Achieving the Dream" and "Survey of Entering Student Engagement."

Dr. Bandyopadhyay has a documented record of improving student success, with a particular emphasis on students from underrepresented minorities. Some of his recent accomplishments include serving as the sole representative from Yosemite Community College District to the Executive Committee of Stanislaus 2030 – a collaboration among government, civic, and business leaders (Stanislaus 2030); improving the scope of experiential learning at MJC in collaboration with Lemelson Foundation and MIT (Invention Education - Lemelson MIT); leading the advancement of invention education at Woodland STEM/MESA program where students earned second place in the prestigious Community College Innovation Challenge hosted by the AACC in association with the National Science Foundation; and established a DEIA committee at MJC and Columbia College to enhance equity and social justice.

Dr. Bandyopadhyay aspires to the leadership position at 4CD for the opportunity to connect with local businesses for sustainable regional economic growth, to reimagine the future of education in collaboration with campus constituencies, to improve the infrastructure to incorporate advanced instructional methodologies using bond funds, to engage a diverse community of learners through culturally sensitive curriculum, and to increase financial resources via advocacy and innovative fundraising interests.



Carlos O. Cortez, Ph.D., recently served as the chancellor of the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD), the seventh-largest community college system in the United States. In this capacity, he oversaw more than 100,000 students annually and was responsible for a \$1 billion budget. As chancellor, Dr. Cortez oversaw the reopening of SDCCD's 10 campuses following the COVID-19 pandemic, rebuilding enrollment, and restoring SDCCD's finances through careful fiscal planning and establishing new revenue streams.

Previously, Dr. Cortez served as the president of San Diego College of Continuing Education (SDCCE), one of the four colleges that comprise the SDCCD. Dr. Cortez has served as faculty at Johns Hopkins University, National University, New York University, and the University of California (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and San Diego). His research interests center on the role of educators and administrators of color in the historical development of American social welfare and education policy.

Dr. Cortez has taught consistently since 1999. He has served as an administrator for 18 years and as CEO for 13 years. Prior to leading SDCCE, he worked as the acting vice president and dean of instruction at Berkeley City College (BCC). Before BCC, he served as director of the Education Extension at the University of California, Los Angeles. He began his career in education as a Teach for America Corps member. His experience spans the public, private, and charter school sectors in Washington DC, Houston, New York City, Los Angeles, Berkeley, and San Diego. Dr. Cortez served as principal of New Village Charter School and as assistant principal of special education services at Grape Street Elementary School, both in Los Angeles. In these positions he was known for his dedication to teachers and students, the development of innovative programs and services, policy advocacy, astute fundraising, and sound fiscal management.

Dr. Cortez's educational background includes a Bachelor's degree in history and sociology from Georgetown University; a Master's degree in race and gender politics from New York University; and a Doctor of Philosophy in education policy and administration from the University of Southern California. All three degrees focus on African American Womanist political historical contributions to social welfare and education policy reform.



Mojdeh Mehdizadeh has over 30 years of experience in higher education and has served in executive leadership roles for over 20 of them. Mojdeh currently serves as Interim Chancellor for the Contra Costa Community College District (4CD) where she is responsible for assessing, planning, organizing and evaluating the resources, programs, and services of 4CD to meet the educational needs of the students and the community. In her former role as Executive Vice Chancellor of Education and Technology, she led the efforts across the colleges (Contra Costa, Diablo Valley, and Los Medanos) in educational programs, student services, workforce and economic development, information technology, international education, distance education, research and planning, and grants. Mojdeh has also served as President of Contra Costa College. In her early tenure, she taught as adjunct faculty of Speech Communications at Diablo Valley College.

Ms. Mehdizadeh completed her undergraduate general education requirements at Diablo Valley College, where she developed her understanding and appreciation of the community college system's importance in developing students for meaningful roles in their careers and the community. Ms. Mehdizadeh has been and continues to be very active in state, federal, and other organizations aimed at enhancing equitable public educational systems throughout the State. She is a passionate leader in assuring excellent and affordable post-secondary education for all students, regardless of their social and economic situation. Her participation and advocacy in this area extends to serving locally on the Board of the Richmond Promise, and in shaping the statewide directions in support of student access and success with the California Community College Telecommunications and Technology Advisory Committee, and Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Team.

Ms. Mehdizadeh holds a Master's degree in Organizational and Intercultural Communications from California State University, East Bay and a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Information Systems from San Francisco State University.

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The Contra Costa Community College District (4CD) is one of the largest multi-college community college districts in California. The 4CD serves 1.2 million residents, and its boundaries encompass all but 48 of the 734-square-mile land area of Contra Costa County. 4CD is home to Contra Costa College in San Pablo, Diablo Valley College with campuses in Pleasant Hill and San Ramon, and Los Medanos College with campuses in Pittsburg and Brentwood. The District headquarters is located in downtown Martinez. Each college is individually accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. For more information visit www.4cd.edu.

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