



## Press Release

YOSEMITE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT  
Modesto Junior College & Columbia College

No. 19-01

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Date:** January 15, 2019

**PHOTOS ATTACHED**

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### **MJC Presidential Finalists Named and Forums Announced**

MODESTO, CA – The Modesto Junior College (MJC) Presidential Search Committee has selected four finalists in the process to become the next MJC President.

The finalists (with most recent position held) are listed below:

- **Jerry Buckley, Ed.D.**

(Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Academic Affairs, College of the Canyons – Santa Clarita, CA)

- **James Houpis, Ph.D.**

(Dean of Academic Support and Learning Technologies, Skyline College – San Bruno, CA)

- **Brenda Thames**

(President, West Hills College – Coalinga, CA)

- **Jennifer Zellet, Ph.D.**

(Vice President of Instruction, Modesto Junior College – Modesto, CA)

The search committee was chaired by Dr. Stanley L. Hodges. Dr. Hodges served the YCCD as Interim Chancellor from August 2006 to July 2007 and as President of Modesto Junior College from 1987-1995. Prior to becoming MJC's President, he worked in the Agriculture Department since 1965, including three years as MJC's Chief Instructional Officer. Dr. Benjamin Duran and Dr. Guy Lease both with PPL, Inc. conducted the search. Initial interviews were completed and the names of the four finalists have been forwarded to Chancellor Henry Yong and the YCCD Board of Trustees.

Open forums for the finalists are scheduled for Tuesday, January 22, 2019 at the Yosemite Community College District Board Room, 2201 Blue Gum Ave., Modesto, CA. The forums will be held at 9:00 a.m.,

10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 1:00 p.m. Each finalist will be given an opportunity to discuss their preparation for the position, their education and leadership philosophy, concluding with a time to respond to questions from the forum attendees. The forums will be open to the public.

**Profiles:**

**Dr. Jennifer Zellet**

***(Forum date/time: January 22, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.)***

Dr. Zellet is currently the Vice President of Instruction at Modesto Junior College. Her prior work experience includes serving as Dean of Business, Behavioral & Social Sciences and Professor of English, both at Modesto Junior College; and Academic Dean, College of Arts and Sciences for Rochester College. Dr. Zellet has also worked as Peer Reviewer/Team Secretary for the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), and Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) Peer Reviewer for The Higher Learning Commission. She holds a Ph.D. in English and a Master of Letters in Scottish and Irish Studies from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Liberal Studies from Cascade College in Portland.

**Dr. James Houpis**

***(Forum date/time: January 22, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.)***

Dr. Houpis is currently the Dean of Academic Support and Learning Technologies at Skyline College. His previous work experience includes serving as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences at California State University, East Bay; Dean of Natural Sciences at California State University, Chico; Professor of Applied Ecology, Pollution Ecology and Environmental Sciences at Southern Illinois University; and, Environmental Scientist and Project Leader at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He holds a Ph.D. in Forest Science from University of California, Berkeley, a Master of Science Degree from San Diego State University, and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Sciences from University of California, Berkeley.

**Ms. Brenda Thames**

***(Forum date/time: January 22, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon)***

Ms. Thames is currently serving as President of West Hills College in Coalinga. Her prior work experience includes serving as Vice President of Instruction and Vice President of Student Services, both positions she held at Modesto Junior College; and, Dean of Counseling and Student Services at American River College. She is finishing her Ph.D. in Adult and Higher Education with an anticipated completion date of May 2019. She has Master Degrees in Social Work and Public Administration, both from the University of Southern California, and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology and Social Welfare from University of California, Berkeley.

**Dr. Jerry Buckley**

***(Forum date/time: January 22, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.)***

Dr. Buckley is currently the Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Academic Affairs at College of the Canyons, Santa Clarita Community College District. His prior work experience includes Vice President of Instruction, San Diego Miramar College; Dean, Senior Dean, and Lead Faculty at Grossmont College, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District; and Supervisor and Coordinator of Cardiac Research of Sharp Healthcare in San Diego. He holds an Ed.D. with an emphasis in Community College Leadership, a Master of Arts Degree in Biology from California State University, Fullerton, and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biological Sciences from the University of Southern California.

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