

2 Incumbents, 1 Challenger for Chaffey College



By [The Editorial Board](#), Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Posted: 10/14/15

Suddenly, out of the blue, gaining a seat on the Chaffey College District Governing Board has become hot — the thing to do for local politicians on their way up ... or down.

Two years ago, when two incumbents were up for re-election, there was just one challenger. This year, with three incumbents on the ballot, there are six challengers, including a former member of Congress and a former San Bernardino County supervisor.

This editorial board's endorsements go not to career politicians, however, but to candidates who we judge are interested in Chaffey College and in no other political perch.

The Daily Bulletin endorses incumbents Lee McDougal and Gary George and challenger Tony Martinez for Chaffey College board.

McDougal, a board member since 2000 and a retired city manager of Montclair, has a strong grasp of fiscal affairs and labor-management issues. He is pushing for the college to increase its financial reserves and its use of solar energy. He was a founder of Montclair's Online to College program that guarantees high school students who adhere to the program free tuition at Chaffey.

George, also a board member since 2000, was a driving force behind Chaffey's very successful Chino campus and a program that allows female inmates at the California Institution for Women to earn associate's degrees. He points to the college's collaboration with California Steel Industries in Fontana that brought in a \$15 million federal grant for manufacturing training as an example of Chaffey's success. And even the challengers say the college is doing quite well.

Martinez is something of a one-track candidate, but it's a good track. He's a longtime, semi-retired manufacturing manager who teaches logistics and operations management at Norco College, UC Riverside and Cal State Fullerton. He has the experience and connections to help boost Chaffey's career technical education in those areas — so vital in the Inland Empire — to the best it could be.

Incumbent Paul Gomez, a board member since 1990, has given tremendous service to Chaffey College. After 25 years, though, it's time for a newcomer to bring some new ideas to governance of the college.

This is the kind of race where none of the incumbents submitted ballot statements because the cost — more than \$8,000 — was prohibitive for them.

Ballot statements were quite affordable for retired county Supervisor Gary Ovitt and former Congresswoman Gloria Negrete McLeod, who have deep campaign pockets after years of election races. You could say they appear to be working their way back down the political ladder.

Many voters will choose Ovitt, understandably. The likable and popular former Ontario councilman and mayor was a 35-year teacher and has long and deep ties to Chaffey College, where his wife has served as Chaffey Foundation president and to which he directed county discretionary funds in the form of scholarships.

Negrete McLeod has ties there too — she served on the governing board from 1995 to 2000 before moving on to the Assembly, then the state Senate and finally to Congress in 2013, only to give up that seat to run unsuccessfully last year for the supervisor seat that Ovitt was giving up. Now she has a campaign committee for another supervisor run in 2018. Chaffey appears to be a holding pattern for her.

Shannon O'Brien has been in politics a much shorter time, but this is her fourth run for three different offices in just over two years. And she already has filed intent to run for state Senate in 2018. Enough said.

Zafar Inam, the lone challenger two years ago, is back for another try. Our board was troubled by his vague answers about his political connection to Negrete McLeod, only to have a joint mailer for the two of them show up in mailboxes two days after we met with him. His apparent deception knocked him out of the board's endorsement consideration.

The Daily Bulletin endorses Lee McDougal, Gary George and Tony Martinez for Chaffey College Governing Board.