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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **CSUSB Palm Desert Campus to graduate first cohort of master of social work students**

PALM DESERT, Calif. – For well over a century, social workers have played a critical role in uplifting individuals and communities experiencing distress, adversity and injustice. Today, social workers are at the forefront of change — providing mental health services, managing behavioral health and housing initiatives, administering safety net programs, and advocating for civil rights and social justice across the nation.

This spring, a new chapter in this proud tradition begins in the Coachella Valley, as the Cal State San Bernardino Palm Desert Campus celebrates a major milestone: the graduation of its first cohort of Master of Social Work (MSW) students. This inaugural group of highly trained professionals, many of whom are local residents, is ready to serve and make a lasting impact in communities throughout the region.

“The Coachella Valley needs compassionate, well-trained behavioral health professionals now more than ever,” said Deirdre Lanesskog, director and associate professor, CSUSB School of

Social Work. “We’re proud to be helping fill that gap through our MSW program, and we’re thrilled to see our first graduates step into this vital profession.”

The CSUSB Palm Desert Campus MSW program is made possible by a \$2.2 million grant from the California Health Care Access and Information Agency (HCAI). This funding supports the development of behavioral health workforce pipelines in areas with limited access to mental health services — of which the Coachella Valley is a prime example.

The program offers flexible options to meet the needs of working professionals in the region:

- A traditional two-year and three-year MSW degree pathway
- A one-year Advanced Standing MSW program for students with a BSW from a CSWE-accredited institution
- Evening classes designed to accommodate working students
- Scholarships of up to \$4,200 for a limited number of students, thanks to HCAI funding

The application deadline for the summer 2025 semester is May 15.

This program is for those interested in joining a profession dedicated to building healthier, safer and more equitable communities. Social workers hold diverse roles as case managers, therapists, teachers, community organizers, researchers and legislators. They make a difference in settings such as healthcare, child welfare, education, housing, public assistance and the criminal justice system.

As the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus proudly prepares to celebrate its first MSW graduating class, the university reaffirms its commitment to the wellbeing of the Coachella Valley and to expanding access to meaningful careers in behavioral and mental health.

For more information about bachelor’s and master’s degree programs in social work at the Palm Desert Campus, contact Melinda Corral, CSUSB social work outreach coordinator, at [Melinda.Corral@csusb.edu](mailto:Melinda.Corral@csusb.edu) or call 909-537-5557 or visit the [CSUSB School of Social Work website](#).

**About the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus:** The CSUSB Palm Desert Campus is dedicated to providing a transformative educational experience in the Coachella Valley. With a focus on academic excellence and community engagement, the campus offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs designed to meet the diverse needs of its students and the region.

For more information about the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, contact Mike Singer in the Office of Marketing and Communications at [msinger@csusb.edu](mailto:msinger@csusb.edu) or (760) 341-2883, ext. 78107, or visit the PDC website at [www.csusb.edu/pdc](http://www.csusb.edu/pdc).