Clarifying Board and CEO Roles & Protocols

The Board/CEO Leadership Team works best when trustees and CEOs clarify and agree on their respective roles and protocols for communication. It is always helpful to review the roles and communication expectations whenever a new CEO is hired (permanent or interim) and whenever a new trustee is seated. Following are common areas for consideration.

Many boards have adopted a set of communication protocols or expectations, either as Board Policy, or as a standard operating practice in a board handbook. In addition, common and required board policies, such as a board code of ethics, address many of the topics on this list (the policy numbers in parenthesis refer to Board Policies in the CCLC Policy and Procedure Service).

1. **Board operates only as a unit**
   - This principle is a basic tenet of effective boards, and is also a legal concept. *What does this mean to your Board, and how is it practiced and implemented?*

2. **Support for CEO/Support for the Board**
   - Public support by all trustees for the CEO upholds the Board’s fiduciary responsibility to protect the reputation of the college, and vice versa. *What does this mean to your Board?*

3. **Avoiding “surprises”**
   - A key factor in successful board/CEO relations is the idea of “no surprises.”
   - *What are current and ideal strategies for avoiding surprises between the board and CEO and among trustees?*

4. **Community connections**
   - *How should trustees respond to communications from community members? Who should they be referred to?*
   - *What is the role of trustees as ambassadors and advocates for the college? Who speaks for the board?*

5. **Communications with college employees**
   - *How should trustees respond to communications from employee groups?*
   - *How should trustees make requests of college staff?*

6. **Trustees visits on campus**
   - *What are the protocols and expectations regarding trustee visits on campus? What are the implications of trustees being on campus?*

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7. **Board delegation to the CEO (BP 2430)**
   - How does the board delegate to the CEO? Board policy and actions at board meetings are the two major ways; are there other considerations or issues? How should the CEO respond to requests from one trustee?

8. **CEO communication to trustees: how much, how often, and mode?**
   - How often would trustees like to hear from the CEO?

9. **Upholding ethics and conflicts of interest policies (BP 2715, 2710)**
   - Accreditation standards ask that boards review their code of ethics regularly, and have a policy on addressing violations. Conflict of interest training is recommended for community college boards every two years. Are there any questions or issues related to the ethics policy?

10. **Board meeting conduct and discussions**
    - What are your expectations for board meetings? Is there sufficient time to discuss issues? Is there is clear process for trustees to place items on the agenda?

11. **Maintaining civility and respect; handling conflict**
    - Civility and respect at board meetings sets a positive tone for the entire district. How does the board handle disagreements among board members?

12. **Role of board chair (BP 2210)**
    - In recent years, the role of the board chair has grown beyond chairing meetings and ceremonial duties. The chair is expected to promote effective board functioning and address any issues that might arise. What are your expectations of the board chair?

13. **The Brown Act, Confidentiality (BP’s on meetings, BP 2720)**
    - A periodic workshop with legal counsel is helpful to ensure board members are very knowledgeable about the Brown Act.

**Other?**