The Board/CEO Partnership: Making It Work!

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Dianne Van Hook, Chancellor, Santa Clarita, CCD
Who are we?
Lassen Community College

- 90th anniversary
- Susanville, CA (pop. 17,500)
- 4720 sq. miles service area
- 4586 students
- 7-member governing board
- 2 state, 1 federal prisons
- Nearest major city = Reno (85 mi.)
- Hunting/fishing (Lassen National Forest)
Who are we?
College of the Canyons

- Located in Santa Clarita, California
- Opened in 1969
- Offers nearly 150 associate degree and certificate programs
- Serves 31,000 students per year at 2 campuses, as well as online
- 5-member governing board
- 852,797 square feet (both campuses)
- 1,952 employees
- Passed 3 bonds in 15 years
BOARD + CEO

More than a RELATIONSHIP…
IT’S A

PARTNERSHIP
to help each other be
MORE EFFECTIVE
“Better is possible. It does not take genius. It takes diligence. It takes moral clarity. It takes ingenuity. And above all, it takes a willingness to try.”

Atul Gawande
Purpose of Today’s Session

To provide comprehensive information on the knowledge and skills necessary to be an effective trustee while building a strong relationship with the CEO.

- What is the big picture focus, from both the Trustee and CEO perspective?
- What can the CEO and Trustees do together?
- How do we clarify roles and expectations?
- What do we do to keep districts out of trouble!
What Do You Think?

How do you cultivate a culture of inquiry, inclusion, improvement and success?

What can we do together?

• Nurture an environment where it is safe and necessary to engage in courageous conversations about equity and student success.
• Help the institutions to thrive and become more effective
• Support student success
• Keep colleges out of accreditation trouble
Generally, What are the Characteristics of Effective Relationships?

**Principled Interaction:**
- Mutual Trust
- Sense of relationship
- No hidden agendas - Free to conflict openly/directly
- Common base of factual information (not assumptions and innuendo)
- High level of question asking and listening
- Healthy level of stress (not too low, not too high)
- Errors tolerated
- Flexible and responsive

**Structure and Context:**
- Clear understanding/acceptance of group structure
- Periodic attention to group maintenance
- Recognition/mitigation of outside forces
GOOD NEWS!

Focused, sustained efforts, targeted toward significant numbers of students, makes significant improvements in student learning and success.
Why do we think it’s not working as well as it should?

**CEO Turnover:**

58 CEOs have left their positions in the last 3 years.

- 16 CEOs have retired
- 15 CEOs are interim
- 42 have left their positions to relocate to other positions
- To date, we know that 3 more CEOs have plans to retire by August 2017.

**Accreditation findings may be rising as it relates to Trustee Behavior:**

- Before 2010, there had been a rise in colleges which had difficulty with governing board roles and responsibilities, leading to sanctions.

- Between 2010 and 2014, there was a significant drop in colleges that have difficulty with governing board roles and responsibilities that led to sanction, down to 37.5% and 6 institutions. This would imply the importance of trustee training for colleges.

- Of the 10 ACCJC member institutions on sanction as of January 2017, there are 6 institutions that included sanctions regarding issues with governing board roles. This could signify a rise in the need for trustee/CEO training.
The Board/CEO Partnership results in GREAT LEADERSHIP
Together, Trustees & CEOs provide the leadership needed to advance our colleges.

What is Leadership?

The ability to convince and inspire others to pursue a course of action

- Commitment
  - Vision
  - Meaning
  - Trust
- Credibility
  - Consistency
  - Honesty
  - Fairness
  - Accuracy
  - Activity
  - Accessibility/Results
Every **LEADER** can become better and more effective if they remember **FOUR** key statements, and **USE** them:

- I don’t know
- I need help
- I made a mistake
- I am sorry
How does the Partnership Work?

- JOINT GOALS
- DIFFERENT ROLES
- MUTUAL SUPPORT
- JOINT SUCCESS
The Role of the CEO
Know Your Role!
The CEO is the Institutional Leader

- The CEO is the key to the accomplishment of the District’s goals
- The CEO must be considered part of the Board team
- The Board delegates, supports, and evaluates the CEO
- The Board works with the CEO to provide a clear job description and performance expectations
- The Board consistently enables open communication, and provides confidence and trust
The role of the CEO: clear, consistent communication
COMMUNICATION IS KEY

- As CEO, you decide how to communicate with the Board
  - Monthly letter to the Board, weekly updates, meet individually out of the office, occasional e-mail, visits regularly
- No surprises
- Inform them on all issues whether positive or negative
- Have a set of goals for each year to share with the Board
  - The Board can add goals to your set of goals
- Always refer to the mission/vision statement of the District and state goals.
How does the CEO support the Board?
CEO ➔ Board

The CEO Supports the Board’s Role by:

- Recognizing demands of job
- Providing good environment for professional growth
- Praising in public, provide feedback in private
- Ensuring Board is represented at public events
- Helping Board members look good
- Providing feedback to board to help it perform better
CEO ➔ Board

Contributing to Board/CEO partnership
- Clear roles
- Open communication
- Mutual support

Honoring the position of Board as only employer
- Keep them informed how authority is used
- Inform all trustees equally
- Remember board is official link to community
CEO ➔ Board

Contribute to and live by policies
- Strategic direction for the institution
- What to achieve
- Parameters for college operations
- What to avoid

Contribute to and live by board’s expectations for CEO
- Job description
- Long-range priorities
- Annual priorities
CEO Responsibilities to a Board

• The CEO provides recommendations regarding polices and issues which come to the Board of Trustees
• The CEO supports the role of the Board
• The CEO avoids surprises
• The CEO asks for advice and support when he/she needs it
What do CEOs need from their Boards to be successful?

*What helps?*

*What inhibits?*
What Does a CEO Need from the Board?
What Helps?

• Clearly defined goal(s): hiring CEO, planning, Board goals
• Sense of purpose (Why are we here?) OR Why are you here? Why did you run?
• Definition of roles and responsibilities (e.g. Who will do what?)
• Willingness to view broad perspective (e.g. fiscal responsibility charts)
• Ability to place organization’s welfare above individual priorities (e.g. avoiding possible conflicts of interest)
• Willingness to communicate honestly and to disagree appropriately (e.g. code of ethics)
• Willingness to join the team and modify preconceived notions regarding trustees, staff, administration, college district (e.g. Board handbook, acquiring knowledge and background, thorough orientation)
The Board’s Support

- Supporting the CEOs role and authority
- Recognizing demands of job
- Providing good environment for professional growth, maintenance
- Praising in public, critique in private
- Monitoring Board behavior
- Directing CEO as a unit
- Supporting each other
- Avoiding surprises
CEO On-Campus Duties Are Many!

- Direct & choreograph
- Put partnerships together
- Coach/counsel
- Listen to other people
- Respond to mandates, compliance & requirements
- Balance & negotiate
- Envision & break ground
- Develop strategy
- Listen to other people
- Develop solutions
- Mentor
- Oversee day-to-day operations
- Manage risks (legal issues)
Off-Campus Duties Keep the CEO Moving!

- Plant seeds, cultivate
- Community Relations
- Advocate
- Attend events w/business partners & donors
- Manage media relations
- Market
- Fundraise
- Friend-raise
- Build relationships
- Make deals
- Create alliances
- Develop partnerships
# How do Functions of a Campus-level President and District-level Chancellor Differ?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>President (College Level)</th>
<th>Superintendent/Chancellor (District Level)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works for the Chancellor</td>
<td>Works for the Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focuses on what is</td>
<td>Focuses on what is</td>
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<td>happening at the college</td>
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<td>community and at the</td>
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<td>State/Federal levels</td>
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What Are the Differences Between a Single v. Multi-Campus District?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Single (Superintendent/President)</th>
<th>Multi (Chancellor)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simpler</td>
<td>Complicated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Few intra-college struggles</td>
<td>On-site competition and raiding of resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easier to communicate</td>
<td>People are less familiar with each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>More flexible</td>
<td>Complicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes fewer steps to get it done</td>
<td>Everything takes longer</td>
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<tr>
<td>One college one focus</td>
<td>Accountability is more difficult</td>
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<tr>
<td>No inter-campus competition</td>
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What does a CEO dread?

BOARD BEHAVIORS THAT INHIBIT CEO SUCCESS

- Failure to define mutually clear expectations of performance
- Misplaced roles and focus
- Personal or politically motivated agendas
- Undermining the CEO’s ability to run the institution
- Poor communication and trust

“It always surprises me when I see boards that don’t seem invested in the success of their CEO.”

“I was told by 4 different (well respected) CEOs that they are probably going to retire earlier than they really wanted to, and it was not because of the job— but because of their boards!”
Words don’t “mean,” actions “mean.”
Communication will vary from place to place

- Recognizes individual styles
- Provides regular updates
- Is transparent, authentic
- Is making it a two-way street
- Is honest and timely
Board members who seek open communication with the CEO by:

- Engaging in regular and equal communication (adult to adult)
- Avoiding surprises
- Providing a “heads-up” on information in the community (about the college) as soon as possible
- Striving to initiate early inquiries to CEO regarding questions on the agenda
Board members who seek open communication with the CEO by:

- Monitoring and controlling inappropriate behavior of fellow Board members
- Working to make informed, objective decisions (CEO works to supply objective information on which to base those decisions)
Why is CEO/Board of Trustees teamwork important?

From Anyone’s Perspective:

- Seeing what happens to the college’s students
- Ability to observe the effects the college has had on the community (seeing things done that meet community needs)
- Helps to build relationships with people in the community
- Provides structure so they can implement ideas and see them work
- Creates a feeling of pride
- Being a part of a focused effort to move the college forward
- Making a difference in a way no other organization can
Why is CEO/Board of Trustees teamwork important?

From a CEO Perspective:

• For counsel and support, both within the college district as well as in the community
• So that credibility is maximized for all concerned
• To motivate and inspire.
• To serve as a resource for each other
• Provides stability
• To have a safety net in which to take risks
• Key component of time management (avoid wasting time)
• No one likes surprises
• Creates a climate to develop effective strategies
In summary, the Board-CEO relationship is a PARTNERSHIP!

“Partnership” means you -
• Work as a team
• Have each other’s back
• Are candid and honest
• Are focused on defined outcomes
In summary, what does this partnership look like?

**BOARD**

1. **Delegate authority** to CEO to lead.
2. Honor the CEO as the **point of contact** for the institution.
3. Follow the rule of **“no surprises.”**
4. **Publicly support** the CEO and back his/her decisions.
5. **Fully consider** information and recommendations offered by CEO.
6. **Adhere** to standards of board **ethics**.
7. **Support** professional development for the CEO.

**CEO**

1. **Honor** the board’s **governing role**.
2. Provide comprehensive, relevant, timely **information**.
3. Follow the rule of **“no surprises.”**
4. **Publicly support** the board and its members.
5. Make recommendations that include **options and long-range implications**.
6. **Adhere** to **board policy**.
7. **Create** opportunities for trustee and board development