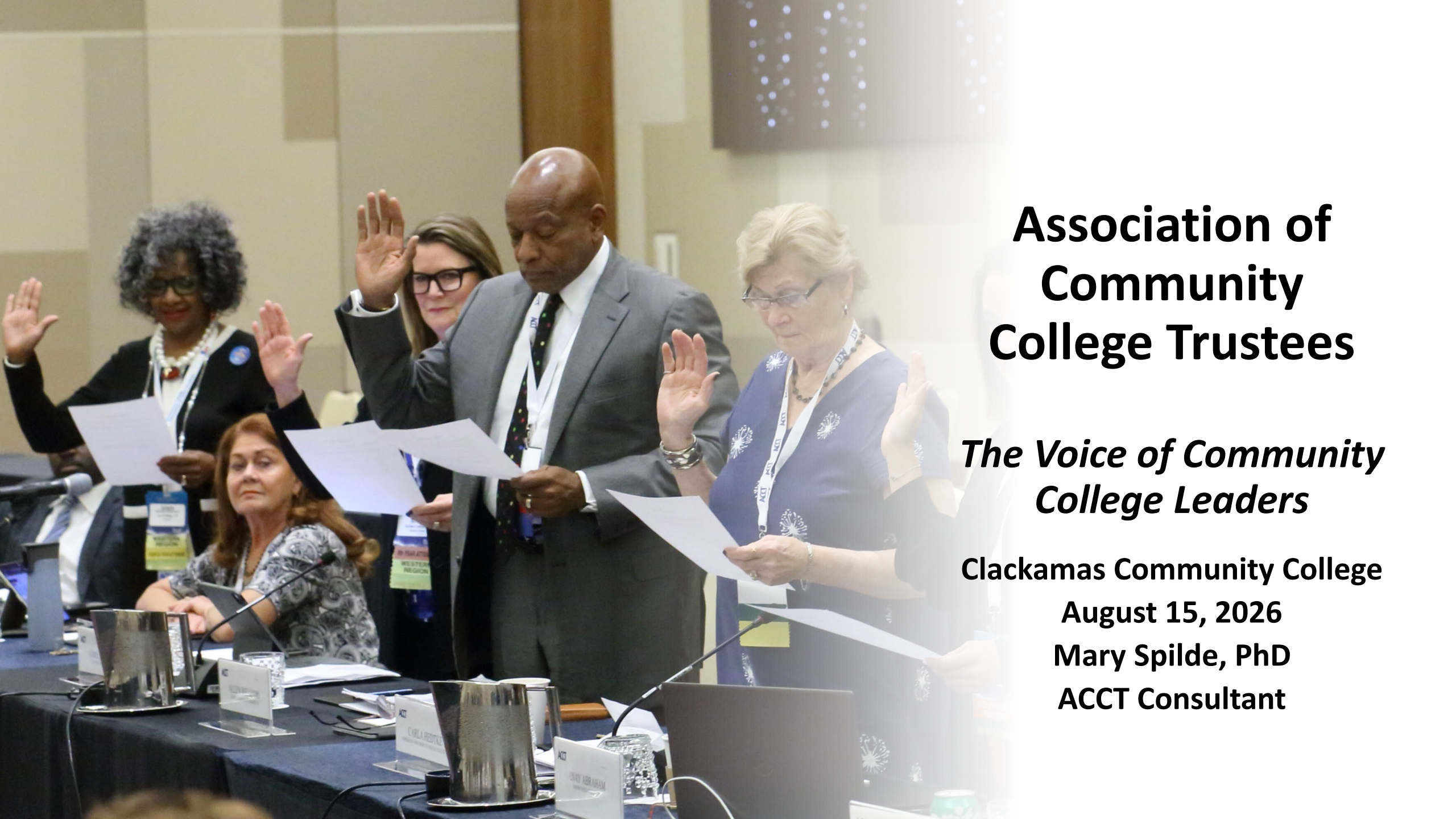




Association of Community College Trustees

The Voice of Community College Leaders

Clackamas Community College

August 15, 2026

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ACCT Consultant



Be present – engage

Listen deeply

Leave space for everyone to speak – step in/step back until everyone has a chance to speak

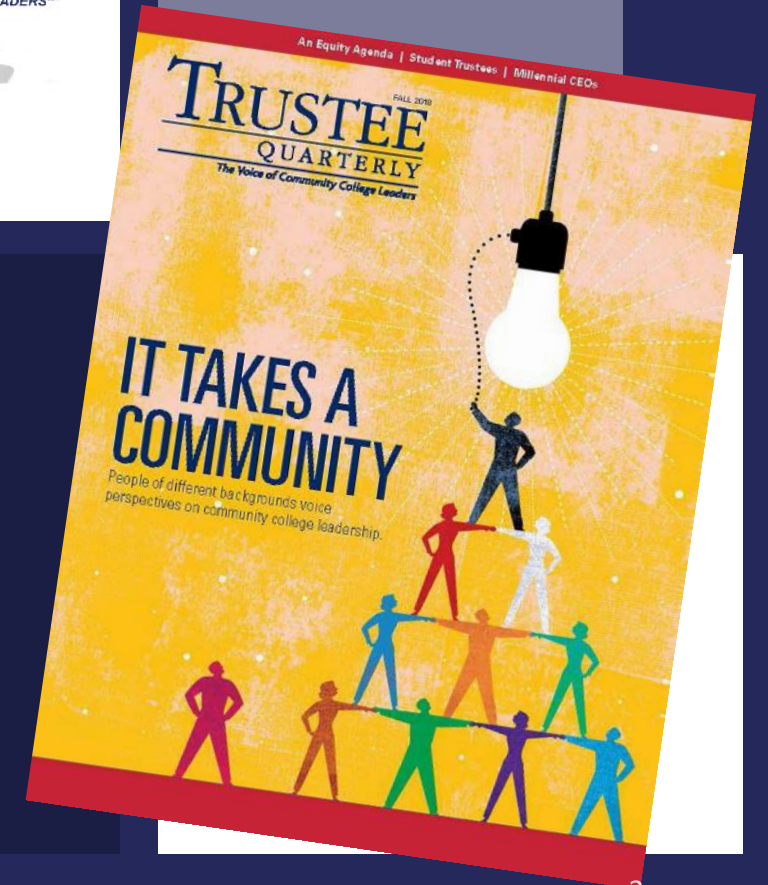
Create necessary space for courageous conversations

Speak your truth in ways that respect other's truth

Turn to wonder not to judgement

Good Governance

- Board's power comes from acting as a team
- No individual power
- Paradox of hierarchy and partnership
- Board and CEO on the same team



Governance

Statutory
Fiduciary
Policy Making
Direction
Delegation
Oversight/monitoring
Support and
Protection

Consultation

Strategic Planning
Advocacy

Administration

Administration
Management
Day-to-day
guidance

Board Governing Principles – Example

Trustees recognize that they are not involved in the day-to-day operations of the College and that individual trustees have no legal authority to commit the College in any way

For these reasons, trustees should commit to referring contacts from employees, students and community residents to the board chair or president so that an appropriate administrator with knowledge of the subject or the contact can follow up or respond accordingly.

Authority of Members
Policy Example

Board members have authority only when acting as a Board of Trustees legally in session.

No individual member of the Board of Trustees shall have the power to act in the name of the Board or the College.

Policy BB

- A. Represent the public interest; and,
- B. Establish policies that define the institutional mission and set prudent, ethical, and legal standards for college operations; and,
- C. Assure the Board operates in an open, accessible, welcoming spirit, and maintains a culture that supports Clackamas Community College's commitment to inclusivity; and,
- D. Hire and evaluate Clackamas Community College's President; and,
- E. Delegate power and authority to the President to effectively lead the college; and,
- F. Assure fiscal health and stability; and,
- G. Monitor institutional performance and education quality; and,
- H. Advocate for Clackamas Community College.

Policy BCD (excerpt)

The Board recognizes that the President and Board must function as a team to direct and manage the College and its programs effectively. Mutual trust and respect are mandatory to maintain an atmosphere in which cooperative leadership can be developed.

The President is the chief executive officer and is responsible for the professional leadership and skill necessary to translate the will of the Board into administrative action.

The President is responsible for all aspects of College operation and for the duties and powers pertaining thereto as the Board may direct or delegate, and will develop such procedures and regulations as he/she considers necessary to ensure efficient operation of the College.

Fiduciary Duties

- **Duty of Care** – make informed, prudent decisions, - engagement, attendance, informed, strategic, monitor, focus on mission
- **Duty of Loyalty** – avoid conflicts of interest – operate in the interest of the college, students and entire community -not a special interest
- **Duty of Obedience** – align with mission and laws – follow state and federal laws, system and college policies, act within the scope of these documents
- **Duty of Stewardship** – temporary stewards of college – protect, advocate, support, leave a legacy, leave it better than you found it, setting tone

Board's Role

Govern Through Policy

- Govern as a whole body, not as an individual
- Set a tone of respect and civility
- Focus on listening to and learning from the external community
- Exercise fiduciary responsibility –duty of care, duty of loyalty, duty of obedience, duty of stewardship
- Focus on strategic planning and leadership
- Focus on policy making, not administering – the **what**
- Powerfully delegate
- Publicly support the CEO
- Hold the CEO accountable through monitoring
- Provide a contract with the CEO
- Hire and evaluate the CEO
- Monitor successes & deficiencies of college
- Know the financial status of the college

Trustee Swim Lane

- Board Policy Development
- Policy Driven Governance/Decision making
- Establishing Strategic Direction
- Financial Oversight
- CEO Selection and Evaluation
- Fiduciary responsibility
- Care, Loyalty, Obedience, Stewardship
- Responsible to public owners
- Set the tone
- Chair represents Board to public
- Delegates to CEO only
- Never surprise the CEO – heads up on questions
- Strong communication to CEO
- Does not micromanage the CEO
- Performance monitoring of CEO
- Notifies CEO if contacted by employees and/or on campus
- Engages in continual professional development
- Engages in goal-based self evaluation
- Collaborate to set Board goals
- Focus on Board goals

CEO Swim Lane

- Organizational policy development
- Operational decision making
- Establishing and leading the Strategic Plan
- Financial Management to achieve objectives
- Employee selection and evaluation
- Responsible for risk and transparency of work
- Responsible to Board as a body
- Set the tone
- Carries out Board directives and related work
- Never surprise the Board
- Strong communication to Board
- Never manages upward to Board– advisor, resource
- Evaluated according to policy/desired outcomes/goals
- Establishes robust shared governance/input processes
- Engages in professional learning
- Provides reasonable progress data to Board
- Notifies the Board on urgent matters of impact
- Keeps Board informed of significant or changing issues
- Focuses on college goals in alignment with strategic plan
- Collaborates to create agenda

Policy Categories

- Outcome or Results Policies – (the “what”) The “means” the “how” by which these policies are achieved is the work of the administration, faculty and staff
- Executive Limitations Policies define the boundaries or parameters for the President and employees within which they must work
- Governance Process – roles and responsibilities of the board
- Board-Staff Relationship Policies describe the delegation to and accountability of the CEO



Board Power

- The board's power lies in its policy making role, strategic direction to President and oversight
- If the board believes the college is moving in the wrong direction that can be rectified through developing new policy or adding executive limitations

Policy Example

The formulation and adoption of written policies and resolutions shall constitute the basic method by which the Board exercises leadership in the governance of the College.

The Board shall appoint a President as its chief executive officer with full authority and responsibility for the operation of the College, in compliance with the policies and resolutions of the Board.



What is Governing through policy?

Three Principles:

- Board decisions are predominantly policy decisions - Look at all issues through a policy lens (the “what”) leaving the “how” to administration
- Policies are broad statements that set direction and standards for college operations
- Boards define and delegate – identify the direction up-front and parameters within which the staff operates



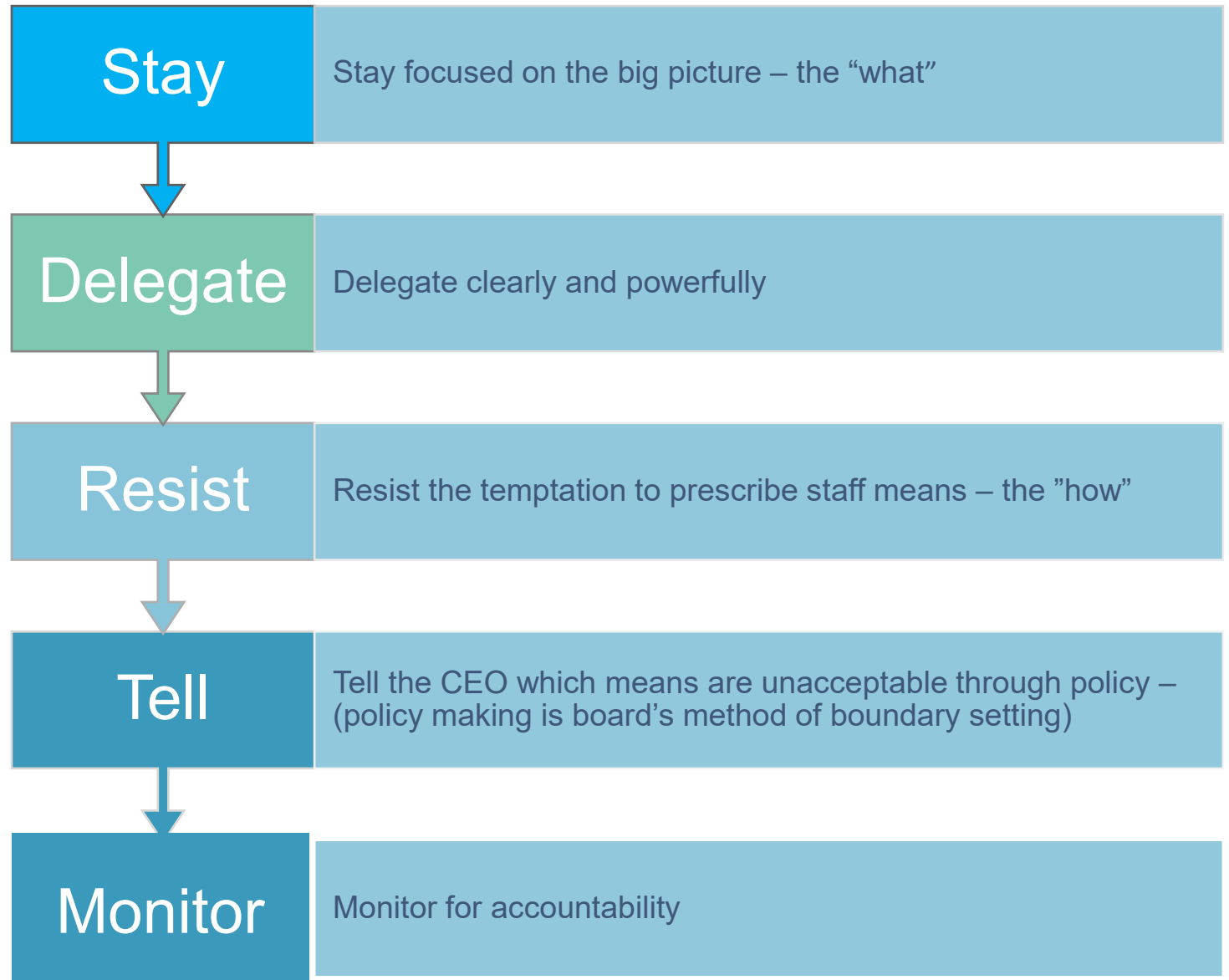
SUMMARY

- Policies are the voice of the board

- They are living statements that frame the work of the board and the staff

- Policies must be used by the board and staff – policy implications are discussed when issues are being explored

Board Role



Governance

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Fiduciary
Policy Making
Direction
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Support and
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Consultation

Strategic Planning
Advocacy

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Administration
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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Policy Example

The President of the College shall be the Chief Executive Officer **through which the Board carries out the College's mission and exercises its policies.** He/she may delegate to subordinate officers of the College such powers as may be deemed desirable to be exercised under his/her supervision and direction.

The President is the official channel to the Board for all policy, human resources, program, and budget recommendations. Within the framework of policies adopted by the Board, the President shall exercise discretionary authority in carrying out responsibilities of the position.

Policy CB

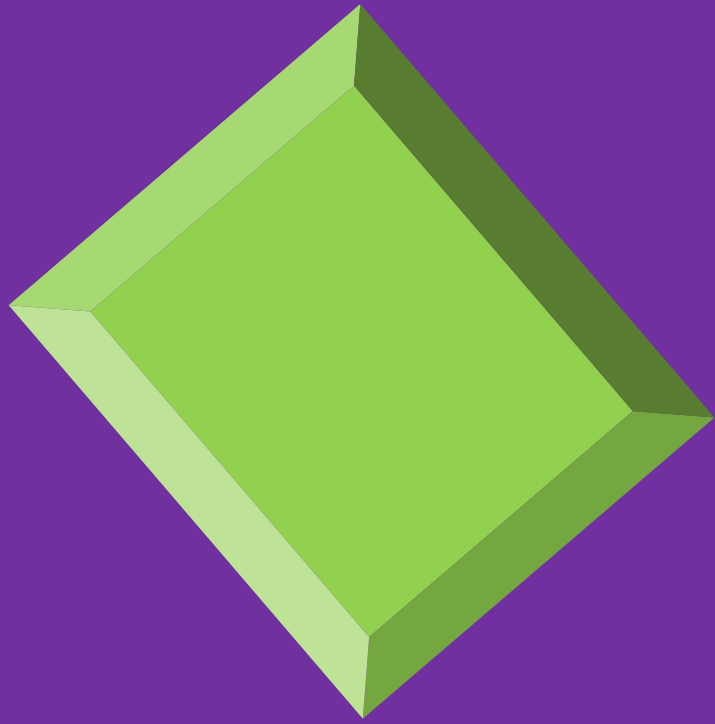
The President is the College's chief executive officer and has, under the Board's direction, general supervision of all programs, personnel and activities of the College. The President is responsible for managing the College under the Board's policies and is accountable to the Board for that management.

The President shall serve as the executive officer for the Board. The administration of the College shall be delegated to the President, who shall carry out these administrative responsibilities and functions in accordance with the policies adopted by the Board.

The execution of all decisions made by the Board concerning the internal operation of the College shall be delegated to the President who shall also perform such other chief executive administrative duties as may be assigned by the Board.

CEO's Role

- Respect the Board and its role
- Listen
- Engage the board in policy level discussions
- Make recommendations that include analysis and options
- Publicly support the board
- Adhere to board policy
- Facilitate trustee involvement in community and college
- Do not ask to make decisions without advance preparation
- Provide all board members with same information
- Treat all equally
- Respect time
- Stay out of board politics
- Keep Board informed of financial condition of college
- **Manage/administer all aspects of the operations of the college within policy framework**



Board-CEO Partnership

Communication

- Open, appropriate and even-handed
- Explore issues to achieve mutual understanding
- Provide the board with comprehensive, relevant, timely information (clarify what information is needed to inform board's decision making)
- Commit to protocol for connecting with internal stakeholders
- Share concerns with the CEO
- No surprises
- Sounding board
- Exhibit mutual respect and support



Policy BG Board-Staff Communications

The Board desires to maintain open channels of communication between itself and the staff. The basic line of communication will, however, be through the President.

Staff Communications to the Board All formal communications or reports to the Board or any Board committee from staff members will be submitted through the President. This procedure will not be construed as denying the right of any employee to address the Board about issues which are neither part of an active administrative procedure, nor disruptive to the operation of the College. In addition, this procedure does not restrict protected labor relations communications of bargaining unit members. Staff members are invited to Board meetings, which provide an opportunity to observe the Board's deliberations on matters of staff concern.

Board Communications to Staff All official Board communications, policies and directives of staff interest and concern will be communicated to staff members through the President. The President will provide appropriate communication to keep staff fully informed of the Board's priorities, concerns and actions.

Visits to Campus Campus visits by Board members will be regarded as informal expressions of interest in College affairs and not as “inspections” or visits for supervisory or administrative purposes. Official visits by Board members will be carried on only under Board authorization and with the full knowledge of staff, including the President and other supervisors

Communication Best Practice

Board communicates all requests for information through the CEO/Chair

Communication with individual employees/groups must begin with the Board Member indicating that any information shared will be shared with the CEO

The CEO/Chair must communicate (and not just good news) to the entire board

Policy BDDH

Comments Regarding Staff Members

A person speaking during the designated portion of the agenda for public may offer objective criticism of College operations and programs. The Board will not hear comments regarding any individual College staff member. The Board chair will direct the speaker to Board Policy KL - Public Complaints for consideration of a legitimate complaint involving a College staff member. A commendation involving a staff member should be sent to the President, who will forward it to the employee, their supervisor, and the Board.

Clarity, clarity, clarity

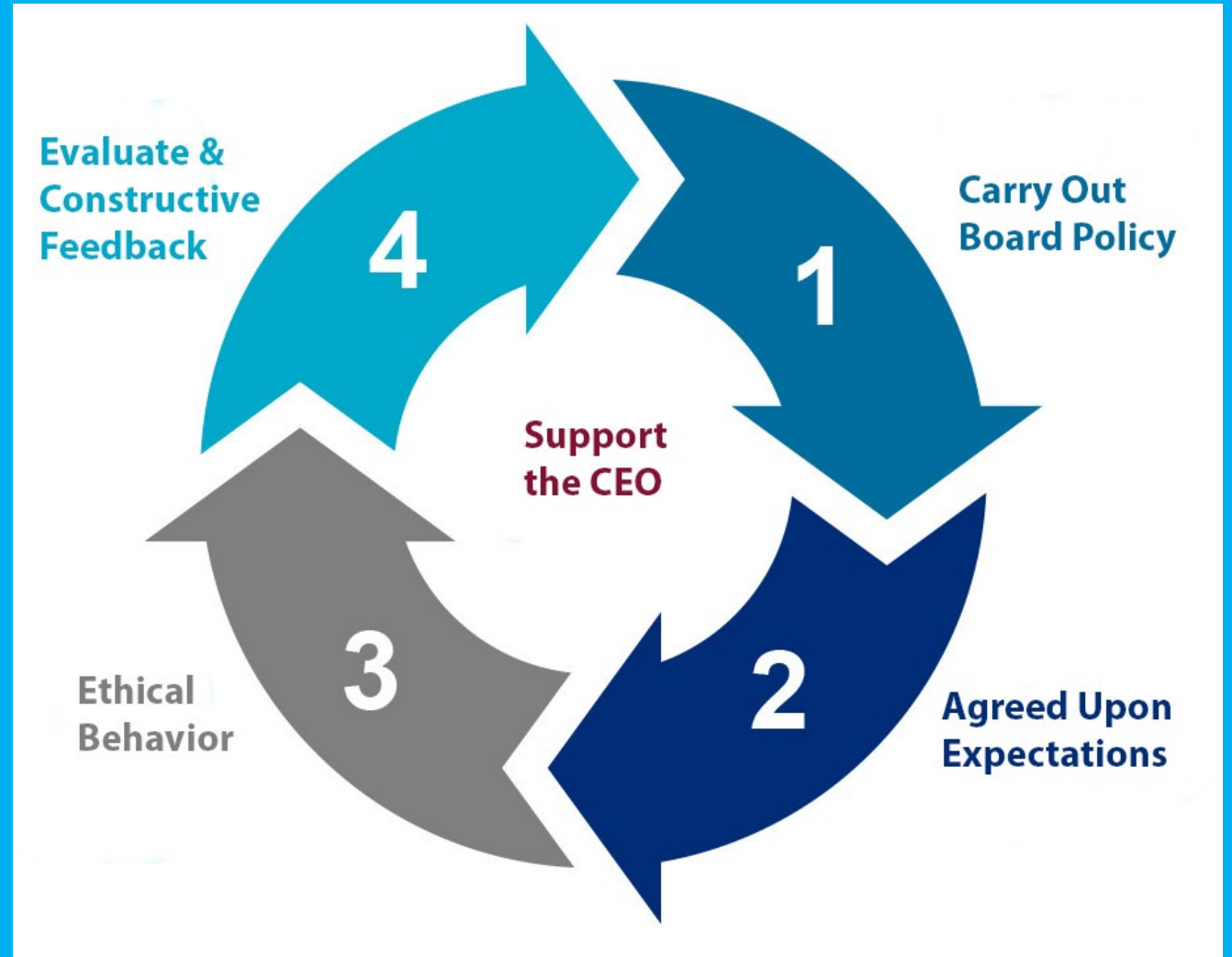
A trusting relationship among
board members and with the CEO

Vigorous debate...but once vote
taken -speak with one voice

Enhanced dialogue, consultation,
advice seeking and giving

**What does it look
like on the ground?**

CEO AND BOARD AS A TEAM





“As a board member, you have an investment and a responsibility for your CEO’s wellbeing — as a human being, and as a partner to their professional wellbeing,” Del Carlo told trustees at the 2025 ACCT Leadership Congress (see p. 20). “We need to invite candid discussions to ensure their needs are being met.”



Case Study # 1

Faculty Contact



- ISSUES:
 - Faculty not going through proper channels
 - Faculty circumventing the President
 - May be perceived as making promises
 - Puts board member at risk – possible legal liability
- 



Case Study # 2

Internal Complaints



•ISSUES:

- No longer an employee – now a trustee with different role and responsibility
- Fiduciary Responsibility
- Must follow internal procedures for complaints
- Legal and liability risks if do not follow processes
- No individual power to fix complaints
- Must let people know you will share with President or designee



Purpose of Committees

In community college governance, committees of the Board of Trustees help the board do its work more effectively by focusing on specific areas, conducting detailed review, and bringing recommendations to the full board. Committees typically do **not** make major

policy decisions on their own unless specifically authorized by law or board policy; instead, they support informed decision-making by the full board.



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Governance Principles for Committees

Effective board committees generally:

- Have a clearly defined charge and scope
- Focus on governance and oversight rather than day-to-day administration
- Work collaboratively with the college president and administration
- Report findings and recommendations to the full board
- Operate transparently and in compliance with open meetings laws when applicable
- Avoid becoming decision-making bodies that bypass the authority of the full board



Why Committees Matter

Committees allow trustees to:

- Study complex issues in greater depth
- Make better-informed decision
- Use trustees' expertise effectively
- Improve board efficiency during regular meetings
- Strengthen accountability and oversight

For community college boards, the most important distinction is that committees **support governance** by gathering information, asking questions, and developing recommendations, while the **full Board of Trustees retains ultimate responsibility and authority for governing the institution.**



Advantages of Board Committees

1. Allow Deeper Review of Complex Issues
2. Improve Board Efficiency
3. Develop Trustee Expertise
4. Enhance Oversight and Accountability
5. Support Board Leadership Succession
6. Encourage Trustee Engagement



Disadvantages of Board Committees

1. Risk of Creating a "Two-Tier" Board
2. Potential for Decisions to Be Made Before the Board Meeting
3. Can Lead to Micromanagement
4. Increased Time Commitment
5. Staff Burden
6. Duplication of Effort
7. Committee Silos

Emerging Governance Trend: Fewer Standing Committees

Many high-performing community college boards have moved away from numerous standing committees and instead use:

- Committee-of-the-whole structures
- Temporary task forces
- Ad hoc committees for specific issues
- Strategic study sessions

The rationale is that all trustees benefit from hearing the same information and participating in the same discussions

What the Experts Say

Organizations such as the Association of Community College Trustees generally emphasize that committees should:

- Support—not replace—the work of the full board.
- Have clearly defined charges and authority.
- Focus on governance and oversight rather than operations.
- Report regularly and transparently to the full board.
- Be evaluated periodically to determine whether they continue to add value.

Key question

Do our committees improve the quality of governance enough to justify the additional time, complexity, and staff support they require?



If committees are primarily reviewing information that every trustee must ultimately understand anyway, a committee-of-the-whole approach may be more effective. If the college faces significant financial, governance, facilities, or compliance challenges, well-structured committees can strengthen oversight and decision quality.

For many community college boards, the strongest model is a limited number of strategically focused committees with clearly defined responsibilities, rather than a large committee structure that mirrors the administrative organization of the college.

Setting the Tone



Governance Drives
Culture—Whether
Intentional or Not

41

Boards don't manage daily operations—but they **signal what matters**
What trustees prioritize (metrics, risk, innovation) becomes what leadership emphasizes
Culture is shaped as much by **what boards reward and question** as by formal strategy

- 👉 If the board focuses only on compliance, the institution becomes compliance-driven
- 👉 If the board emphasizes learning and impact, the institution becomes adaptive

Boards Influence Leadership Behavior

Presidents and senior teams respond to:
What boards **ask about regularly**
What boards **reward or challenge**
What boards **tolerate**

Examples:

If trustees ask only for **risk mitigation**, leaders avoid experimentation

If trustees ask about **student impact and learning**, leaders prioritize innovation

- 👉 Board behavior directly shapes executive behavior—and cascades throughout the

Why Trustees Should
Avoid Asking Questions
in an Accusatory Way

1. It Shuts Down Honest Dialogue

Accusatory questions signal:

“You did something wrong”

“You need to defend yourself”

The result:

Leaders become guarded

Information gets filtered

Problems are softened or hidden



You get **less truth, not more accountability**

2. It Creates a Culture of Fear

Boards set the emotional tone of the organization.

If questioning feels like interrogation:

Leaders avoid risk

Staff avoid raising issues early

Innovation slows down



Why Trustees Should
Avoid Asking
Questions in an
Accusatory Way

43

3. It Drives Defensive, Not Strategic Thinking

When leaders feel attacked, they shift from: **Learning mode** → **Protection mode**

Instead of:

- Exploring root causes
- Identifying better solutions

They focus on:

- Justifying decisions
- Managing perception

👉 The conversation becomes about **being right**, not **getting it right**

4. It Undermines Trust Between Board and Leadership

Effective governance depends on:

Transparency

Mutual respect

Shared purpose

Accusatory tone erodes all three:

Leadership withholds information

Board assumes the worst

Relationship becomes transactional

👉 Without trust, governance becomes oversight—not leadership



Why Trustees Should
Avoid Asking
Questions in an
Accusatory Way

5. It Prevents Early Problem-Solving

In healthy organizations:

- Issues surface early
- Small problems are addressed quickly

In accusatory environments:

- Issues are delayed or hidden
- Problems grow larger before reaching the board

👉 You end up dealing with **crises instead of course corrections**

6. It Conflicts with the Board's Strategic Role

Trustees are not investigators—they are:

Strategic partners System stewards Thought partners

Accusatory questioning pulls the board into:

- Operational critique and hindsight judgment

Instead of:

- Forward-looking guidance

- System-level improvement



What to Do Instead:
Ask Good Questions

Shift from **judgment** → **curiosity**

Instead of:

- “Why didn’t this work?”
- “Who approved this?”
- “Why wasn’t this handled earlier?”

Try:

- “What were the assumptions going in?”
- “What are we learning from this?”
- “What barriers are getting in the way?”
- “What support do you need from the board?”

Bottom Line

The tone of your questions determines the quality of your answers.

If trustees want:

- Transparency
- Innovation
- Early problem-solving

They must create conditions where leaders feel safe to:

- Tell the truth
- Admit uncertainty
- Learn out loud

1 Establish Clear Roles and Boundaries:

Trustees should focus on governance and policy-making, leaving operational and management responsibilities to the CEO, while supporting their leadership.

2 Maintain Open and Regular Communication:

Foster transparency and trust through frequent, respectful dialogue with the CEO, ensuring alignment on Board goals and priorities.

3 Provide Constructive Feedback:

Offer regular guidance and evaluation based on performance metrics and mutual goals, delivering constructive input that supports the CEO's growth and effectiveness.

4 Offer Advocacy and Support:

Actively advocate for the college in the community, with legislators, and among stakeholders, reinforcing the CEO's efforts to secure resources and build partnerships.

5 Demonstrate Trust and Confidence:

Empower the CEO to make decisions and implement the board's vision without micromanaging, showing confidence in their expertise and leadership.

6 Commit to Professional Development:

Engage in training and learning opportunities that strengthen the board's understanding of effective governance and support a productive partnership with the CEO.

Board Commitments for a Solid Partnership in **6 Ways**

1

Foster Open Communication:

Keep the board informed with regular updates on institutional performance, challenges, and opportunities, ensuring transparency and building trust.

2

Respect Governance Roles:

Honor the board's authority in policy-making and strategic oversight, while clearly defining and maintaining the CEO's operational leadership responsibilities.

3

Seek and Value Input:

Actively listen to the board's perspectives and incorporate their guidance into decision-making, demonstrating respect for their expertise and role.

4

Provide Strategic Leadership:

Present well-researched recommendations and actionable plans that align with the college's mission and the board's strategic goals, positioning the institution for success.

5

Be Accountable:

Deliver results aligned with the board's vision, sharing progress through regular performance reports and being responsive to constructive feedback.

6

Engage in Professionalism and Trust- Building:

Cultivate a respectful, collaborative relationship with trustees, ensuring that mutual respect and shared commitment drive the partnership.

President's Commitments for a Solid Partnership in 6 Ways