

Proposal - BOE Policy Review including Cougar Pause Review

## **Proposal for Enhancing the Board Policy Review Process through the Cougar Pause Framework**

To: The Clackamas Community College Board of Education

From: Casey Layton, Chief Culture and Impact Officer, Kattie Riggs, Executive Assistant to the Board, and Christina (Tina) Francisco-Evans, Coordinator - Leadership, Ed & Advocacy for Progress (LEAP)

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Subject: Integrating the "Cougar Pause" for a More Intentional and Effective Policy Review Process

### **I. Executive Summary**

This proposal outlines a strategic initiative to enhance the Community College Board of Education's (BOE) policy review process by integrating the "Cougar Pause" framework. Our objective is to create a more robust, transparent, and values-aligned policy environment. The updated process will specifically focus on ensuring policies are trauma-informed, uphold our college values, maintain compliance with all relevant regulations, and reduce ambiguity, thereby mitigating confusion and supporting a more effective shared governance structure. This collaborative effort will primarily center on the Board of Education.

### **II. Current Opportunity and Rationale**

The current policy review process, while functional, presents opportunities for enhancement. Policies can sometimes lack explicit consideration for trauma-informed practices, may not consistently reflect evolving college values, and can contain "grey areas" that lead to varied interpretations and potential inconsistencies in application. Furthermore, with the establishment of new shared governance structures and ongoing changes in state, federal, and accreditation compliance requirements, there is a clear need for a modernized process that proactively addresses these complexities and weaves in social empathy.

Implementing the "Cougar Pause" offers a structured approach to address these challenges, fostering a more deliberate and comprehensive review that supports the BOE in its critical oversight role.

### III. Proposed Solution: Implementing the "Cougar Pause" Framework

We propose to integrate the "Cougar Pause" — a proven planning and reflection tool designed to encourage thoughtful, intentional decision-making — into the core of our Board Policy Review Process. This integration will transform the review from a procedural task into a strategic opportunity for continuous improvement and alignment.

Key Stakeholders Centered in this Process:

- The Board of Education
- College President
- The Vice Presidents
- The Executive Assistant to the President and Board Recorder

How the "Cougar Pause" will be Applied:

1. Introduction to the "Cougar Pause": We will begin by formally introducing the Board of Education to the "Cougar Pause" framework. This initial session will provide a foundational understanding of the tool, its principles, and how it can be leveraged to enhance strategic planning and decision-making, setting the stage for its application in policy review.
2. Facilitated Process Redesign: As facilitators, we will guide the Board of Education, Vice Presidents, and the BOE Administrative Assistant through a collaborative redesign of the policy review process. Crucially, the "Cougar Pause" methodology itself will inform *how we work together* to revise the process. This ensures that the new process is not only informed by the "Cougar Pause" but is also built through a "Cougar Pause"-like reflective and intentional approach, fostering collective ownership and understanding.
3. Development of a Comprehensive Policy Review Rubric: A cornerstone of this updated process will be the creation of a detailed rubric. This rubric will serve as a standardized tool for all policy reviewers, guiding their assessment against key attributes:
  - a. Trauma-Informed: Does the policy consider potential impacts on individuals with trauma histories and promote healing-centered approaches?
  - b. Upholding College Values: Does the policy explicitly align with and reinforce the stated values of our community college?
  - c. Clarity and Consistency: Is the language clear, concise, and free from "grey areas" that could lead to misinterpretation or inconsistent application?

- d. Gender-Affirming Language: Does the policy use inclusive, respectful, and gender-affirming language throughout?

This rubric will empower reviewers to systematically evaluate policies, ensuring consistency and thoroughness in every review cycle.

#### **IV. Anticipated Benefits of the Enhanced Process**

By adopting this "Cougar Pause"-informed approach, we anticipate the following significant benefits:

- Values Alignment: Every policy will be scrutinized to ensure it actively supports and reflects the college's core values.
- Enhanced Clarity and Consistency: The reduction of ambiguous language will lead to clearer expectations, more consistent application of policies, and reduced confusion for all stakeholders.
- Trauma-Informed Environment: Policies will contribute to a more supportive and understanding college environment for students and staff.
- Social Empathy Integration: The process will embed a lens of social empathy, ensuring policies are equitable and considerate of diverse experiences.
- Improved Shared Governance: The clear, updated process will align seamlessly with the new shared governance structure, promoting more effective collaboration.
- Gender Inclusivity: The explicit focus on gender-affirming language will ensure our policies are welcoming and respectful to all members of our community.

#### **V. Anticipated Challenges and Mitigation Strategies**

We acknowledge that any significant process change can present challenges.

- Challenge: Upfront Time Investment: Revising the process will require an initial, dedicated investment of time from key stakeholders.
  - Mitigation: We will clearly communicate the long-term efficiencies and benefits that this upfront work will yield, demonstrating how it will ultimately save time and prevent future complications. We will also facilitate sessions efficiently.
- Challenge: Apprehension and Resistance to Change: Individuals may have preferences for the previous process, and change can naturally cause anxiety.
  - Mitigation: Our approach is inherently collaborative. By involving the BOE, Vice Presidents, and the BOE Administrative Assistant directly in the redesign using the "Cougar Pause," we aim to build ownership and reduce resistance. We will emphasize the positive impacts (e.g., reduced

confusion, clearer guidance) and provide ample opportunity for input, feedback, and open discussion to address concerns proactively.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Implementing the "Cougar Pause" into our Board Policy Review Process is a strategic investment in the future clarity, effectiveness, and values-driven governance of our community college. While it requires an initial commitment, the resulting policies will be more robust, equitable, and aligned with our institutional mission and the needs of our community. We are confident that this enhanced process will significantly support the Board of Education in its vital role and foster a more intentional and empathetic college environment.

We look forward to discussing this proposal further and collaborating on its implementation.