
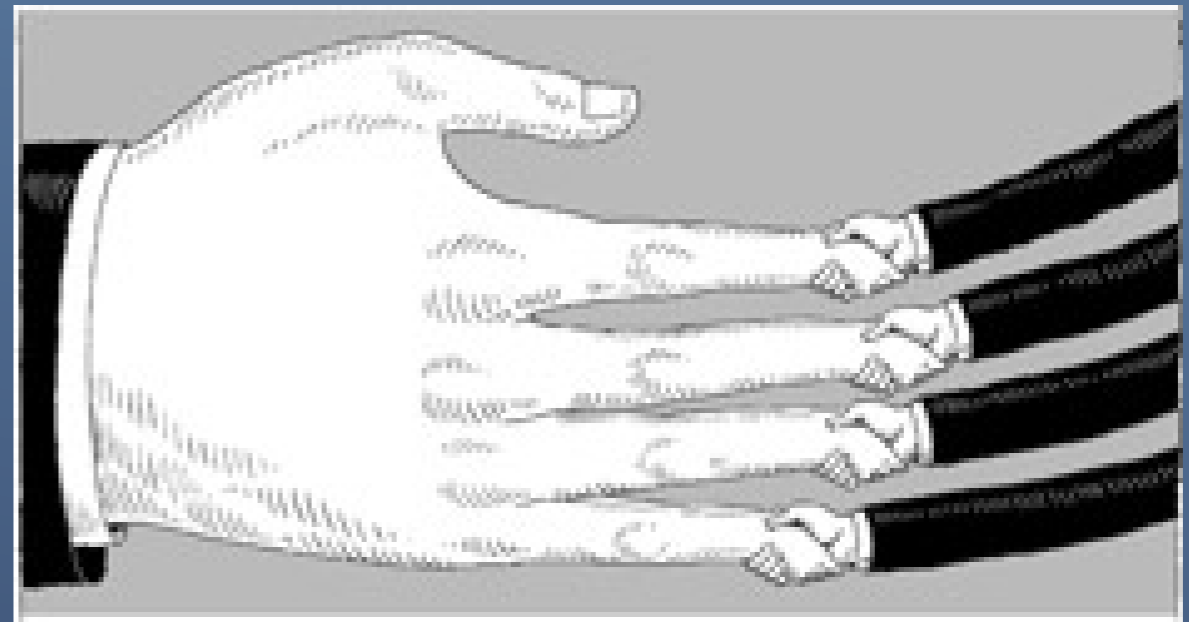


# The Board/CEO Partnership: *Making It Work!*

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Sophia Wages, Trustee, Lassen Community College



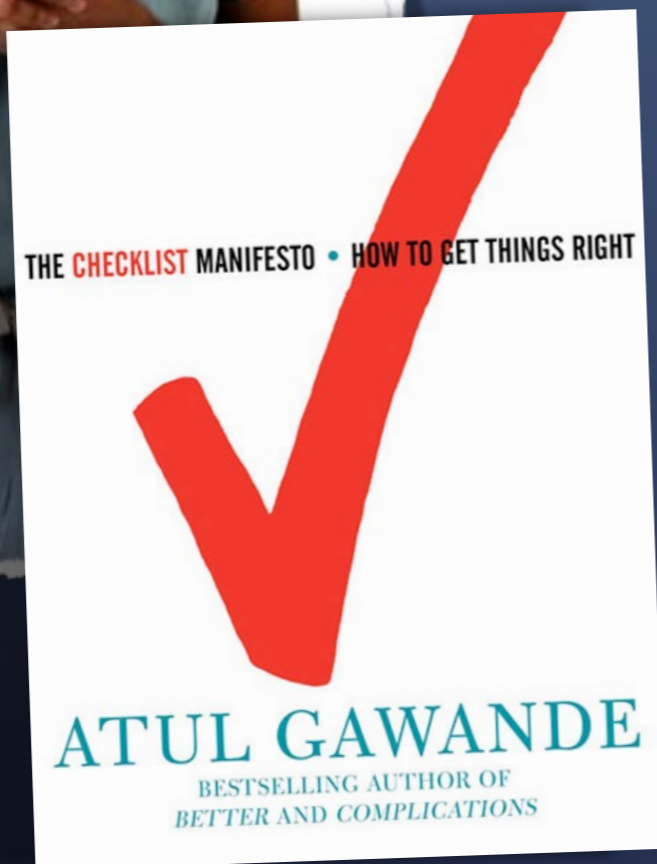
**BOARD + CEO**



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

BETTER AND COMPLICATIONS  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF  
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 relationships 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 policies 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)

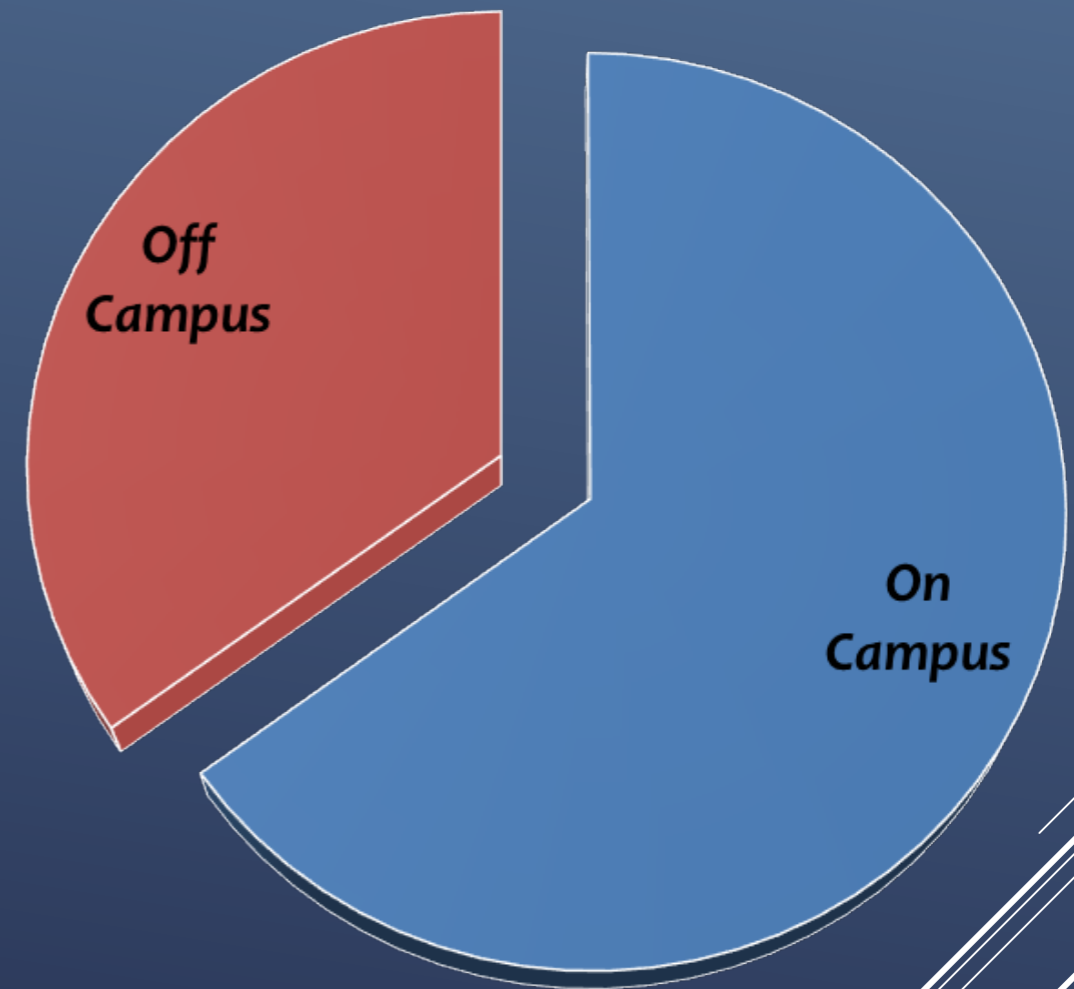


# The Board's Support

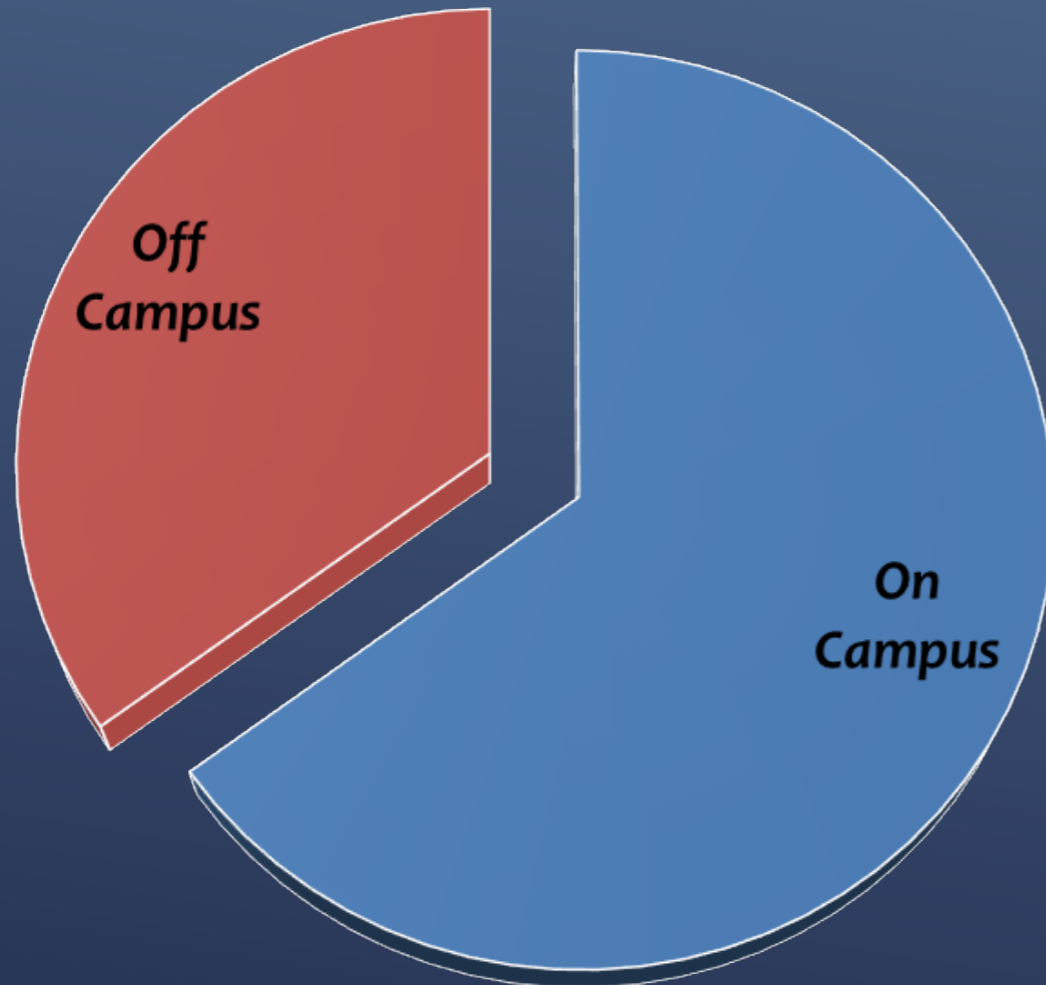
- Supporting the CEOs role and authority
- Recognizing demands of job
- Providing good environment for professional growth, maintenance
- Praising in public, critique in private
- Monitoring Board behavior
- Directing CEO as a unit
- Supporting each other
- Avoiding surprises

# 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?

President (College Level)	Superintendent/Chancellor (District Level)
Works for the Chancellor	Works for the Board
Focuses on what is happening at the college level	Focuses on what is happening on a district-wide basis, in the community and at the State/Federal levels

# What Are the Differences Between a Single v. Multi-Campus District?

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

# ***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

“Board/CEO Relationships,” Ch. 22. *Trustee Handbook (revised 2015)*– C. J. Smith, Community College League of California, [www.ccleague.org/files/public/Publications/TrustHdbkWeb.pdf](http://www.ccleague.org/files/public/Publications/TrustHdbkWeb.pdf)