

Learning Guide

for New Community College Trustees

BECOMING A MEMBER of a governing board for one of California's community college districts is an important and challenging responsibility. Successfully serving as a trustee requires dedication, time, and education. The following checklist helps new trustees learn about their unique roles and duties on the governing board.

Learn about Trustee Roles and Responsibilities

- Attend the annual Effective Trusteeship Workshop sponsored by the League. (This event has been rated by new trustees as one of the best ways to learn about their job.)
- Peruse the League's *Trustee Handbook*. Carefully read the sections on governing board responsibilities and effective trusteeship.
- Read the local district trustee handbook, if the district has one.
- Study the board's policies on the governing board, particularly the code of ethics or standards of practice for the board.
- Meet with the chancellor or superintendent/president, board chair and other members of the board to discuss trustee roles and responsibilities.
- Seek out someone from the board to use as a resource or mentor.
- Discuss with the CEO and other trustees the difference between policy making and management.
- Be aware of the legal and ethical constraints on trustees, including open meeting provisions, confidentiality, conflicts of interest, and role in collective bargaining.
- Plan to attend state and national conferences for trustees.

Learn about the District's Programs, History and Culture

- Work through the CEO to arrange to talk with key people about major programs and accomplishments of the district.
- Arrange to tour the college(s).
- Peruse the college catalog, most recent accreditation self-study and team report, key planning documents, and annual report.
- Know the district and college mission, vision, and policy goal statements, and the board's policies related to educational programs and services.
- Read about the history of the college. Plan to attend major district events, such as convocations, opening days, and graduations.
- Read about California community colleges in the League's *Trustee Handbook*.

Learn about External Trends and Issues

- Learn about local demographic and economic trends that affect the district.
- Read local newspapers and listen to the news for trends that have implications for your colleges.
- Strengthen links with key people and groups in the communities served by the college.
- Attend community events. Listen for issues that are pertinent to the college.
- Read about state legislative, fiscal, and other policy issues that affect the colleges.



Community College
League of California

Learn about District Planning Processes and Budgets

- Working through the CEO, meet with appropriate people to explore the policy goals in the strategic and master plans.
- Meet with the appropriate personnel to review the policy aspects of the budget, its parameters and restrictions, the process for developing the budget, its relationship to strategic and master plans, and how the board monitors the fiscal health of the district.
- Read the sections on policy, planning, monitoring, and fiscal responsibilities in the *Trustee Handbook*.

Learn about Board Meetings and Board Operations

- Review past agendas and minutes.
- Thoroughly read the agenda for each meeting.
- During the first few months, don't hesitate to call or meet with the CEO, mentors or other trustees, and/or the board chair before each meeting to seek clarification on agenda items.
- Become knowledgeable about basic parliamentary procedures and other practices related to participating in effective meetings.
- Be willing to observe and learn for the first few months to understand how things have been operating. Call the board chair or CEO when there are questions.
- Understand the key conditions of the Brown Act (open meetings law).

Practice Good Human Relations Skills

- Get to know other members of the board as individuals.
- Learn and respect communication protocols with other trustees, the CEO, and staff members.
- Work to be a member of the board team. Wisely contribute ideas and opinions.
- Read the sections on relations with the CEO and staff and on board effectiveness in the *Trustee Handbook*.

Rely on the Following Resources

- The Chancellor or Superintendent/President.
- The board chair and other experienced trustees.
- The Community College League of California/California Community College Trustees

Learning is never-ending. Trustees who engage in ongoing education about their roles, responsibilities, and important issues are outstanding models and policy leaders for their colleges.

