

Setting district goals: The role of the board

By Cindra J. Smith

Successful colleges and boards establish and work toward goals. There are many different types of goals and the word means different things to different people. Different types of goal-setting activities in which the board of trustees may be involved include outcome policy goals, institutional goals, annual goals and priorities, and board development goals.

Outcome Policy Goals

Effective boards of trustees state what they expect as the results of college programs and services. These expectations are stated as broad, outcome-oriented goals that describe what difference the college can make for students and community. Ensuring that outcome-oriented policy goals are developed, adopted, and achieved are some of the most powerful contributions a board can make to its community and college. Focusing on results shifts attention from “doing” to “accomplishing.”

An effective approach toward developing outcome-oriented policy goals begins by identifying what students will learn and what other clients and partners of the college will obtain as a result of attending or using the colleges’ services. Examples are:

- Students will obtain the lower division courses, knowledge and skills needed to succeed in earning a baccalaureate degree.
- Students will have the skills to enter and succeed in the workforce.
- Area businesses and industry will have training programs that produce qualified and skilled employees.
- Students will have the basic literacy skills needed to succeed in college-level courses and programs.
- Students will be able to contribute to their communities as productive, aware citizens.

Broad outcome-oriented goals are best developed through comprehensive and inclusive planning processes. The board’s role is to ensure that planning occurs, that it participates and represents community interests in the development of broad outcome-oriented goals, that outcome-oriented goals are adopted as policy, and that it then monitors institutional progress.

Institutional, Operational Goals

Comprehensive or strategic planning processes often result in institutional goals that describe what the institution intends to do. These goals identify activities designed to improve the delivery of education to students and the operations of the college and what the college needs to do in order to accomplish the outcome-oriented goals described above. Examples of institutional goals include:

- Integrate the use of technology into the curriculum.
- Improve communication and decision-making processes throughout the institution.
- Enhance the faculty, staff, and management professional development program.



Cindra J. Smith
Director of Education Services
Community College League of
California

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- Provide programs and services that meet diverse learning styles and needs of students.
- Enhance and upgrade the physical facilities of the college.

These institutional, operational goals help establish program and re-

how is student learning expected to improve? Boards send a powerful message when they ask their colleges to focus on the outcomes of college programs and services.

Annual Goals, Objectives, or Priorities

Governing boards often identify more specific annual goals, objectives, or priorities that make progress on the broad outcome and operational goals. Annual goals and priorities are the major tasks for the CEO and institution. Usually, they are established jointly by the board and CEO, perhaps in conjunction with the college leadership team. The board and CEO ask, "What specific tasks and accomplishments should be priorities in the coming year in order to make progress on the policy outcome goals?" Examples of annual objectives are:

- Develop a marketing campaign that reaches out to underserved students.
- Evaluate transfer rates and develop a plan to increase transfer success.
- Hold focus group meetings with six major area businesses to identify economic development needs.
- Complete an accreditation self-study.
- Upgrade one-third of the faculty computers. Add a new student computer lab.

Annual objectives and priorities may vary considerably from year to year. They are extremely helpful in clarifying where resources and time should be spent. They help the board, CEO, and others see the steps toward broad goals. These activity-type goals are also often the basis for the CEO's annual evaluation.

Board Development Goals

Effective boards are interested in continually improving their own performance as a governing body. Therefore, they will evaluate themselves at least annually and often will develop their own set of development goals.

Examples are:

- Each board member will attend at least one conference during this year.
- The board will discuss and revise, if necessary, the board ethics statement.
- The board will review and amend, if necessary, board policies in business services.
- The board will hold a joint meeting with the unified school board to identify and discuss common concerns.
- The board meeting format will be reviewed to ensure that adequate time is available to discuss major trends and issues.

Monitoring Progress on Goals

All goals—outcome-oriented policies, institutional goals, annual priorities and objectives, and board development goals—should be stated in such a way that they are capable of being measured. Goals are simply words unless they provide meaningful direction to the college and board and are evaluated. Monitoring progress on the goals reinforces their importance and provides accountability to the community.

Goals establish direction and priorities. Annual priorities and board development goals and objectives define steps to be taken toward achieving the broader goals. When the board adopts outcome goals as policy and then the college uses them to frame institutional strategic plans, the process helps ensure that the trustees, CEO, and college staff are working together toward common purposes.



source priorities for administrators, faculty, and staff. They help direct staff time and attention to important activities.

However, institutional goals alone are not sufficient as board policy direction. Savvy boards ensure that planning is taken one step further and explore what these activities intend to accomplish for students and the community. For instance, the boards may ask what are the expected outcomes of "integrating the use of technology into the curriculum"—

BOARD FOCUS

Board/CEO relations

Getting off to a good start means listening, then acting

By Ray Giles

What should a new CEO do to get off to a good start with the board of trustees? Meet with people, listen carefully and establish, along with the board, clear goals. That's the advise of four new California community college district chief executive officers and their board chairs.

The CEO/board relationship, says Judith Redwine, the new chancellor at State Center CCD in the Central Valley, is "like a marriage. It is important not to bury issues but to talk them through." She said she began at State Center by meeting with trustees individually and in workshops to talk about "any and all concerns, just sitting and learning what they were worried about and, in turn, sharing my sense of the issues facing the district."

The second step was to hold a retreat to set goals and develop a consensus on evaluating the chancellor. "I have to know what is important to them. I can get a long list of things that could be done to benefit the district but sooner than later I have to know which ones are important to the board."

Ron Manfredi, the board chair at State Center, says it was very important for the chancellor to make herself accessible to the total campus community in her first months on the job. The board retreat gave everyone a chance to "talk without making final decisions and to establish methodologies for lines of communication." But the most important thing the chancellor did was to make a series of recommendations related to new staff positions that "demonstrated to the Academic Senate that we are an academic institution. It was important to demonstrate very early to the board what her priorities were."

In the Bay Area, the Peralta CCD has not, according to board chair Amey Stone, reached its full potential in the past. She says, however, the new chancellor, Ronald Temple, has moved swiftly and appropriately to make sure it does in the coming years. She said the board and chancellor set goals for the district almost as soon as he arrived. By setting goals together, "we are working to ensure that the board and CEO aren't going out on their own. CEOs are vulnerable to a lot of things and to what boards expect from them. We are working to ensure that the board—not individual trustees—hold him accountable."

Chancellor Temple said it was "clear even before I began the job we needed to make a number of substantial changes and that they needed to be made earlier rather than later." A board retreat was held his first week on the job to set goals. "It's important to begin with a clear understanding of roles. Tell them who you are, what your parameters are. I wanted to be sure they understood that they needed to work through me, support my management decisions and to hold me accountable."



Ronald Temple
Chancellor
Peralta CCD



John Rodgers
Board President
Kern CCD



Richard J. Giese
President/Superintendent
Mt. San Jacinto CCD

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He also worked to establish both a personal and professional relationship with his trustees. "They've had a history of a divided board here. I wanted to find out what issues were important to each trustee and to see how those issues fit into our overall plan."

In the southern Central Valley, Walter Packard had been chancellor at Kern CCD for just two months when the board held a retreat to discuss board roles and responsibilities and its priorities. Just as important, says Packard, was the board and new chancellor getting to know each other. "When trustees are doing the difficult work of leading a district, it's real important for trustees and the CEO to see their colleagues as human beings. It helps me understand individual decision-making styles and what issues are important to each of the trustees."

Kern board chair John Rodgers agrees. "When a board is interviewing candidates for a job, it's impossible for the successful candidate to really get to know the board members. The chancellor must be able to read each trustee, know which ones

can grasp things quicker and which ones may need more attention and how we behave in public as opposed to a private meeting. That requires an effort on all our parts to spend time together talking about important issues."

In Southern California, Richard Giese spent his first few months as the new CEO at Mt. San Jacinto CCD working with the board to identify "items of interest and concern, developing specific goals and setting priorities." He held lengthy individual discussions with trustees building a working relationship and credibility. "A CEO's integrity is imperative. If they don't have confidence in you, it's a long walk down that road."

Building integrity was important because Giese came to Mt. San Jacinto after the board - on a 3-2 vote - fired the previous CEO. The board chair, Ann Motte, was in the minority on that vote. She says now that the most important thing the board did was to "get over the split. Our board was mature enough to recognize the college could not move forward with a split board."

Giese was hired on a 5-0 vote. Board chair Motte said he initiated a five-year master plan process and brought all the "warring" factions on campus together to build consensus. "We had to get beyond the past to move into the future and our new CEO has made that possible."

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David Viar, Executive Director

Ray Giles, Editor

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