

**San Joaquin Delta CCD
Board of Trustees Study Session
March 11, 2009
Facilitator: Dr. Cindra Smith**

DRAFT Informational Notes

The Board identified the following “ground rules” that would help foster positive and productive discussions.

- Show respect for each other; communicate with civility
- Be forward thinking; don’t focus on the past
- Focus on issues, not personalities
 - Don’t take comments personally
- Have an open mind to ideas and to each other
- Agree to disagree; disagree respectfully
- Be open and transparent; don’t have hidden agendas
- Stay on track
- Have fun; use your sense of humor

The discussion covered board practices and protocols that respond to two Accreditation Commission recommendations. An initial draft response was distributed for further review, and which will incorporate discussion at this board meeting:

- Recommendation 1 that the Board develops a systematic process to review and revise existing board policies and establishes and adheres to an acceptable code of ethics.
- Recommendation 2, that the Board establishes and monitors itself as a policy-making body, reaffirms delegation of operation authority to the CEO, and activity supports the authority of management

1. *Policy review process:* The President reviewed the current process of bringing the board policy manual and administrative procedures up-to-date. It was noted that the board had established target dates for completing the process, which are stated in the draft response to the Commission. Trustees discussed adopting a policy on policy-making, which would address the following parameters:

- A timeline for policy development, evaluation and review, including sunset clauses, if any
- Benchmarks or measures for evaluating policy implementation, as appropriate
- Approaches to assure that practice is in line with policy and procedures
- Reviewing and upholding delegatory language to assure that the board fulfills its policy role

2. *Code of ethics:* It was noted that the Board had approved the code of ethics at its January meeting. The board discussed how to handle instances where trustees become aware that practice(s) at the college or on the board may not follow board policy or ethics. Consensus was:

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- If students or employees contact trustees with complaints or issues, the trustee should refer the person to appropriate channels within the college and should contact the President. The President will follow-up and report back to the trustee. Trustees are not to conduct independent investigations of employee or student complaints or issues.
 - If the instance involves possible Brown Act or legal misconduct, the code of ethics calls for the Board president to refer the item to legal counsel as the first step
3. Delegation to the S/P: It was noted that board policies based on the League's subscription service include specific delegation to the S/P. As the board reviews and approves new and revised policies, trustees should ensure they understand and support such delegation. The facilitator distributed a list of protocols and practices that clarify the board roles and its delegation to the CEO (including communication, handling staff and community contacts, seeking information, setting board agendas, acting as a unit, etc.).
 4. Seeking information; asking for reports: Discussion included:
 - a. As new trustees they have many questions, and their questioning at board meetings is to foster trustee understanding of the programs and issues. Trustees were encouraged to alert the Superintendent/President about their questions prior to board meetings to ensure that staff members are prepared with appropriate information. Trustee should review the agenda to be able to seek additional information in a timely manner prior to the board meeting.
 - b. Trustees were requested to contact the Superintendent/President when requesting information out of respect for his position as the board's employee. He will facilitate contacts with other college staff and support responding to their requests. The intent is not to prevent board members from talking with staff, but to honor and reinforce delegation to the Superintendent/President
 - c. The board discussed that if a request for information involves a substantive amount of time or resources, the request may be referred to the entire board for approval, to ensure that staff time is spent on board priorities.
 - d. The board discussed the importance of seeking diverse perspectives while recognizing that their decisions may not be supported by all stakeholders. The board will continue to explore appropriate strategies to ensure they are aware of community and college interests.
 5. Board meetings and agendas:
 - a. Board meeting agendas are drafted by the Superintendent/President's office and discussed with and reviewed by the Board Chair. Any board member may

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- b. request that the S/P and the Board Chair place an item on the agenda. If the S/P and Board Chair determine that the item may not be timely, they will discuss their rationale with the requestor; however, the intent is to honor such requests.
 - c. Trustees discussed the annual calendar of regular agenda items, which are those that require board approval as well as key topics that advance district goals.
 - d. Trustees supported the earlier start time (4:00) of the board meetings. If possible, board meetings should not extend beyond three or four hours in length. The pros and cons of limiting staff reports were discussed: consensus was that it is important to be flexible and honor staff work as well as to request that staff focus their reports on key policy implications for the board. The board chair and S/P will also consider additional strategies to educate the board about college programs and services, including visits to programs.
6. College climate and culture: Board members discussed their desire to foster a collaborative, open climate at the college and to avoid the mistrust and dysfunction that occurred in the past few years. It was noted that ethical and effective board practices and a mutually supportive Board and Superintendent/President relationship would set a positive tone for the college. Board Chair Castellanos requested Trustees Brown and Simas to comprise a task force to further review policies and practices to support board effectiveness.