**Glendale College Technical Assistance**

**Final Report**

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A Confidential Report Prepared for Glendale Community College District

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**Introduction**

Following the recommendation of a technical assistance team from the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges and the Community College League of California (January 2009), Glendale College contracted Phil Maynard and John Nixon (consultants) to initiate and facilitate dialogue with college stakeholders to achieve three objectives:

(1) clarification of roles and responsibilities of all college stakeholders in participatory governance based upon the current, established framework;

(2) development of, or identification of, existing and/or potential opportunities for ongoing, open communication among all college stakeholders, resulting in an increased level of trust and mutual respect among all constituencies, grounded by the college mission statement and adopted Board Policies and Administrative Procedures;

(3) development by college constituencies of a process for ongoing evaluation of campus climate and of the efficacy of policies, procedures and practices of Participatory governance, including roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees.

To achieve the objectives, the consultants conducted interviews with 15 individuals and five groups. The interviews were with trustees, faculty, managers, and classified staff. In addition, the consultants conducted a workshop with the Board of Trustees and a forum on campus, open to all employees. The consultants wish to thank the interim college president and the president of the Academic Senate for their close and productive consultation on planning for the work, as well as all Glendale College Trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff for their openness and sincerity, making the work pleasurable, and, the consultants hope, productive for the college.

**Observations and Findings**

The report from the January 2009 technical assistance visit portrayed a college in distress, suffering from a lack of trust and a breakdown in communication among college stakeholders. With the departure of the college president and the assignment of an interim college president, which followed a change on the Board of Trustees, the climate, or at least the conditions for productive change, became more positive and remains so today. The consultants found the Board of Trustees and the leaders of constituent groups eager to engage each other in positive, productive communication, setting the stage for re-establishing trust. However, the consultants also found that the Board of Trustees and the constituent groups need to engage in self-reflection and dialogue to reach mutual understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities attendant to governance. That is to say, all college stakeholders should re-examine their beliefs and practices related to their respective roles and responsibilities, with the goal of understanding boundaries and changing practices, according to regulation, accreditation standards, and effective practice.

Positions, decisions and actions taken over the past two years by the Board of Trustees and the major college constituency groups have informed the deterioration of trust and communication, but the consultants found that all stakeholders care deeply and sincerely about the Glendale College and its mission. The desire to do better and to do what is best for students and for the college is a demonstrable motive expressed directly or tacitly by all with whom the consultants engaged.

Based on interviews and documents supplied by the college, the consultants offer the following observations and findings related to the general themes of communication, trust, and boundaries related to the roles and responsibilities of all constituent groups at the college, including the Board of Trustees, as defined by regulation, accreditation standards, and effective practice.

* All those interviewed spoke about a new start for college climate and communications and to building momentum for positive change.
* The historical narrative, beginning with President Davit and continuing with the years under President Levy, seems consistent among those interviewed, offering plausible reasons for the current state of weak communication and mis-trust.
* With the departure of President Levy, the focus of disconnection among constituencies centers on the Board of Trustees and the Faculty Guild.
* One theme inferred from the interviews is the need to define boundaries for the roles and responsibilities of the college constituencies, including the Board of Trustees, and beginning with developing mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities, as defined by statute, regulation, accreditation standards, as well as historical/cultural practice.
* An implication for the theme of boundaries is a shared understanding of the roles played by the Board of Trustees and the college President, specifically regarding (1) consistency in communications and decisions, (2) willingness to say no, when appropriate, to other constituencies, and (3) transparency in decision making.
* Relating to the issue of transparency, several of those interviewed noted that they (certainly managers as group) had little knowledge and less input into the revision of BP 8510, which defines the roles and responsibilities of college constituencies in governance. This perception among managers suggests that further, inclusive dialogue may be necessary to achieve mutual understanding.
* The consultants heard comments that the president should listen to college constituencies, noting that Interim President Lindsay has been listening, in contrast to President Levy. In addition, some commented that the constituencies must perceive that the Board will back the president and that trust among all constituencies will come through actions (by Board and President) that are consistent and fair to all.
* The theme of micromanaging by Trustees also surfaced in interviews with mangers, faculty, staff, and trustees. Two Trustees interviewed admitted to what they themselves perceived as micromanaging, noting that President Levy created a vacuum for decisions that Trustees (sometimes) filled.
* It also became clear to the consultants that trustees often act and communicate (in official capacity) as individuals, rather than as a board of trustees, which is confusing and sometimes contradictory, leading to micromanaging and inconsistent communication and direction, particularly affecting the college president. Individual trustees, in the context of college governance and decision making, do not have relationships with the college president. In the context of governance and decision making, only the Board of Trustees has a relationship with the president.
* The consultants noted that the Board is engaged in the development of Administrative Procedures. The Board of Trustees is responsible for Board Policies, and the Board delegates implementation and management of those policies to the president. Consequently, the development of Administrative Procedures, following Board Policies, is a matter of college operations and not a matter for Board approval. The Board holds the president accountable for college operations and should not engage in college operations.
* While trustees admit to behavior that is, or borders on, micromanaging, the other constituencies, often quick to accuse the Board of micromanaging, are too often engaged in direct communication with individual trustees, offering complaints or requests, which invites micromanaging by trustees. That is not to say that communication with Trustees should not occur, but Trustees and their employee constituents should recognize their respective role boundaries when engaging in dialogue. Trustees should also recognize that their policy making role is defined for the Board of Trustees and not for individual Trustees.
* The Board of Trustees and the employee constituencies should recognize that Board meetings are not participatory governance meetings for college constituencies. The Board should control its agenda, which often includes recommendations that result from acts of participatory governance, including academic and professional matters for which the Academic Senate has a special relationship with the Board. The college constituencies, including the Senate, should be available to answer questions the Trustees may have about agenda items, and, at the Board’s request, constituencies may make presentations at Board meetings. As an example of a Board meeting going awry, the consultants observed open, free dialogue between trustees, constituency leaders and staff at a Board meeting on the subject of the adopted budget that verged on (collective) bargaining in open Board session, which is indicative of what can go wrong when Board meetings are conducted as participatory governance meetings.
* The consultants also note that both meetings of the Board of Trustees and official meetings of the major constituency organizations are subject to the Brown Act and are open meetings. Constituent expectations related to attendance and participation at Board meetings also applies to attendance and participation at meetings of the constituent organizations, e.g., administrators attending meetings of the Academic Senate.
* Relating to roles and responsibilities, the Board has responsibility for hiring and evaluating the president, and it has responsibility for vetting its own agendas. The consultants noted that a proposed Board Policy on evaluation of the president stipulates that the Board will “consult” with constituencies on the evaluation, which dilutes its authority. The Board might solicit input from constituencies on the evaluation of the president, but the Board has no reason to consult with constituencies. Similarly, another proposed Board Policy stipulates that all Board agenda items “must be reviewed by the college Executive Committee.” While the intention of such language may be benign, an easy inference is that the Executive Committee has authority over the Board agenda, which it does not.
* The consultants noted that the Interim President meets individually with Board members prior to each Board meeting. Such practice could become vulnerable to accusations of a “serial” Board meeting, particularly if decisions about agenda items are either discussed or made.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Glendale College has a strong, well deserved reputation for quality programs and services that result in student success, and it is clear to the consultants that the college stakeholders are committed to the college, its mission and students. While many years of stable leadership may have masked cracks in trust and decision making, particularly in the waning years of the long serving college president, the transition to new leadership has laid bare serious fissures in relationships among the stakeholders. With the departure of the succeeding president earlier this year and the appointment of an interim president, combined with an earlier change on the Board of Trustees, the climate of the college, as reflected in more open communication among college constituencies, has improved, resulting in signs that renewed trust among stakeholders is achievable. However, the consultants conclude that sustaining the momentum and commitment to open communication, trust, and transparency in decision making is contingent upon the stakeholders first achieving a mutual understanding and acceptance of their respective roles and responsibilities, within a framework of governance that is informed by statute, regulation, standards of accreditation, and local culture. To that end, the consultants offer the following recommendations:

1. The Board of Trustees should evaluate its role and responsibilities as the governing body of the college, as informed by Education Code 70902 and ACCJC Standard IV.B. The evaluation should include consideration of the relationship between the Board and college President; the relationship of the Board to other college constituencies in the context of governance; the organization and conduct of Board meetings; the role of individual Board members in the context of governance; and the distinction between authority for policy and the delegation of operations. Self-evaluation among the Trustees should begin with acceptance of certain principles, including recognition that micromanaging is not acceptable and that individual Trustees have no policy authority and certainly no authority over college operations.
2. The Board of Trustees should delegate authority for implementing policy and managing college operations to the college president. The Board of Trustees is responsible for evaluating the President, who should work with the Board (not individual Trustees) on defining a set of measurable goals/objectives for which the Board would hold the President accountable. Appropriate goals/objectives that would form the basis for evaluation of the President should reflect implementation of Board Policy and execution of the College mission; they should not reflect tactical, operational actions.
3. Through open dialogue with college constituencies, the Board should present its collective understanding of its role and responsibilities as the governing body for the college, with the intention of achieving mutual understanding and acceptance among all constituencies of its role and conduct. Board role and responsibilities should be codified in Board Policy. The resulting Board Policies should include the roles and responsibilities of the constituency groups, as well, following statute and regulation. (And, resulting Administrative Procedures should be delegated to the college President and participatory governance, as appropriate.)
4. The college should conduct a comprehensive climate survey on a yearly basis and act on the findings through both governance and operational venues, including open dialogue among all constituencies on the survey results.
5. The Board of Trustees should conduct a yearly self-evaluation, facilitated by an outside party, with emphasis on the conclusions and actions resulting from the first recommendation, above.
6. The college constituencies should conduct open dialogue, as cited above, on the issues and behaviors cited in the “observations and findings” section of this report.