

On Being a Student Trustee

Being a student member of a California community college board of trustees is an exciting and demanding position and there is much to learn. The Community College League of California has prepared the following general highlights of roles and responsibilities for new and potential student trustees. However, practices and assumptions vary greatly from district to district—those interested in the position should talk with past student trustees, the district president or chancellor, and the chair of the board about their expectations for the position.

Qualifications

The Education Code states that student trustees must be enrolled in a college of the district for at least five semester units. Beyond these basic eligibility requirements, desired qualities are: an open mind, a desire to learn, the ability to represent the district articulately and professionally, an interest in being a member of a governing team, and the time to devote to being a trustee.

Rights

The law grants certain rights to student trustees:

- Attend all meetings of the governing board except for closed sessions.
- Be seated with the board and participate in discussion.
- Receive same materials as other board members (except for closed session materials).
- Receive mileage reimbursement to the same extent and under the same policies as other governing board members.

Privileges

Each local board may grant certain privileges, including

- Make and second motions.
- Receive compensation for board meetings.
- Advisory vote, which does not count in determining if an item passes but is logged in the official minutes.

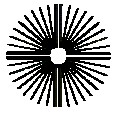
Responsibilities

The student trustee has the same general responsibilities as publicly elected trustees to be a contributing and ethical member of the board. The primary responsibility is to attend and participate in all open board meetings, which includes:

- Prepare for meetings by studying the issues and asking questions.
- Be a team member of the board unit (*no trustee has authority as an individual*).
- Influence decisions by wisely participating in discussions.

Some boards also expect student trustees to:

- Attend conferences to enhance their own learning and contributions to the board.
- Help represent the college at community events.
- Help advocate for the college at the state and national legislatures.



Learning about the Role

It is important to learn all you can about being a student trustee. Sources of information include:

- Local student trustee orientation sessions conducted by the CEO and members of the board
- Past student trustees.
- The CEO and other trustees on the board.
- The advisor for the student trustee.
- The League's Student Trustee Workshop in August.
- League's *Trustee Handbook* (provided to all district CEO offices and distributed at the August workshop).

What You Will Need to Know

You need to know about **your community**. What are the different needs in the community? Who are the different groups in the community that should be served by the college? What are the economic, social and demographic trends in your community that have implications for education?

You need to know about **the college district**. What are its mission and goals? What are the major issues facing the college? Are its educational programs meeting community needs? Is it a stable, growing organization with strong leadership?

You need to know about **the district's students**. What are the different needs of the wide variety of students that attend the college(s) in the district? Are students well-served by the college(s)? Are they succeeding?

You need to know **the board's responsibilities**. As a member of a governing board, you help ensure that the colleges you govern add value to the community. Community colleges take pride in providing access to higher education to all and creating an environment that supports and produces student learning. The board's role is four-fold:

- Create strong community linkages in order to best represent broad community interests.
- Make policies that establish the general direction for and expected results of the college's programs and services, and that establish legal, ethical, and prudent parameters for college operations.
- Hire, support, and evaluate the CEO as the district leader.
- Monitor the performance of the district to ensure that it is meeting current community needs and anticipating future trends.

Relationship with Associated Students

In some districts the A. S. president serves as the student trustee. In this case, the person is asked to balance two roles and fulfill two sets of responsibilities. When the student trustee is not the A. S. president, the student trustee should:

- Establish and maintain open communication links with A. S.
- Support the Associated Student Body as the official advocate for students. The student trustee is a member of the board, not the official representative for the students in decision-making.