CCLC 2013 Effective Trustee Workshop

January 25-27, 2013

Sacramento, CA

TRUSTEE REPORT

This annual event is an excellent environment in which to strengthen a person’s understanding of the complexities and importance of being a Community College Trustee. When I attended this conference last year, there was an enormous amount of information being provided, with little opportunity for digesting or putting in context. A year later, I came away from the conference with a renewed sense of purpose, deeper understanding of the various responsibilities, and ideas that may very well benefit our College.

The event began with an Introduction to Roles and Responsibilities session, specifically intended for new Trustees. Given this is my second year as a COM Trustee, I felt that I could benefit from attending this portion of the conference. However, with over fifty new Trustees participating in a rather small room, those of us who had already attended this segment of the training were asked to leave so the new Trustees could literally have a seat at the table!

The next morning was a session title Effective Trustee Workshop intended for all attendees (over 200 trustees, many Districts with their entire board present!) was a joint presentation by three teams of administrators, trustees and ACCJC staff. The key learning points were about what the Board is there to do for their District: define the WHAT, through effective board policy development, but not to DO. They reviewed the distinction of the “what”, through broad goals and expected outcomes, and the “how”, as developed by College staff and approved by the CEO. And the discussion regarding attention to the mission of the college, and making certain that the policies are moving the institution toward achieving the desired effectiveness to both achieve the mission and retain accreditation was pivotal to the presentation. By regularly asking ourselves “How effectively is our institution achieving its stated mission”, we will be able to consider plans for change in educational programs as we set institutional plans and goals, as well as annual and multiple year resources allocation plans (budgets).

I found it beneficial to review the importance of accreditation for our students and for the institution as a whole. The advice of making certain that the Trustees of a District focus on Mission-driven leadership, and set high expectations for performance of the Board and the institution was resonated with me. A Barbara Beno stated in her segment of the presentation, “Setting standards of excellent and measuring performance linked to the District’s goals will help meet both challenges. To perform well Trustees must be accountable as well as hold other accountable”.

Another key point was on Board Evaluation. This opportunity to establish goals and take corrective action is critical to the effectiveness of a Board. They reminded us that only the Board can regulate its members, and the critical nature of a code of ethics, with tangible policy to deal with dealing with
behaviors that violates the code. By recognizing and dealing with issues in a straightforward and ethical manner, the board can continually improve its ability to perform at the level that is expected by the community as a whole.

They also highlighted the importance of Trustee skill development on an on-going basis, which is a component of accreditation. Ongoing exposure to best practices within similar institutions can only help to improve our ability to serve. Accountability for effective stewardship in the areas of Educational Quality and Fiscal Stability resounded through the session.

The last presentation that I found to be of most value was the Role of Trustees and CEOs in Foundation Success. Fascinating statistics were presented on how to build a high performance organization, either within a College Advancement Program, or a separate Foundation, or (ideally) within a combination of the two. The most valuable take-away from the presentation was a comment by a CEO from a very high performing Foundation that noted “exciting programs begin with a strong and compelling vision laid out for the future, articulated in a way that engages the entire institution”.

I have copies of the session presentations for anyone who would like to receive them, along with some notes that I took during each session.