Carrie Mullion

From: narcisa_polonio@acct.org on behalf of Association of Community College Trustees <narcisa_polonio@acct.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2014 9:08 AM
To: Carrie Mullion
Subject: NEW! Feb 2014 Issue of Trustee Talk

February 2014

Answering your questions about issues affecting boards today

Registration Is Now Open! The 2014 ACCT Leadership Congress will take place Oct. 22 - 25, 2014 in Chicago, IL. Submit your proposal(s) for presentation by following the link below:

Register Today for the 2014 Congress! Schedule | Call for Presentations

The 2014 GLI will be held March 20 - 22 in beautiful Salt Lake City, UT.

This powerful peer-learning environment allows trustees and presidents to share perspectives, exchange ideas, gain insights, and solidify relationships to further the work of the governing board on behalf of the college.

Register Now for the 2014 GLI!

question:

Our president has received a "vote of no confidence" from the faculty. What should my board do?

answer:

In determining how the board should react to a vote of no confidence, it is important for the board to understand what a vote of no confidence means. Votes of no confidence can stem from a variety of factors, including labor disputes, fiscal constraints, disregard for the principles of shared governance, or ineffective communication, among many other issues. It is important for the board to understand that a vote of no confidence is not always calling for the removal or resignation of the president or chancellor. Rather, it can be a vote of disenchantment in some cases, or an exercise of the traditional tool used in academia by faculty to collectively express their dissatisfaction with the current leadership, or an urgent call for change. It serves as a serious wake-up call to the college.

REASONS FOR A NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE

Ineffective Leadership

MISMANAGEMENT * INCOMPETENCE * CATASTROPHE * UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR * IMMORAL BEHAVIOR * CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

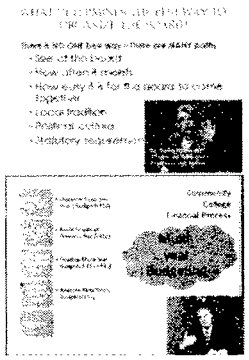
Management Disputes

LABOR DISPUTE * COLLECTIVE BARGAINING * BUDGET DEFICIT * REDUCTION OF STAFF * BOARD MANDATES

More Information

Online Trustee Webinar Series

Available topics include: Crisis Management, Running Effective Meetings, The Role of the Chair, and many more.



Webinar Registration

ACCT's live and virtual trustee education events help trustees understand their roles and responsibilities, helping boards work towards the long-term success of their institutions. For more information, visit: www.trustee-education.org

Quick Links
Find more information on the Association of Community College Trustees, including national gatherings and events, effective governance, advocacy, executive search services, publications and other resources: www.acct.org

Also visit the website of the Governance Institute for Student Success (GISS), a project designed to develop and implement a culture of evidence and accountability for student success at community and technical colleges: www.trusteesforstudentsuccess.org

Do YOU have a question for us?
Email your question to: narcisa_polonio@acct.org.
It may be featured in our next Trustee Talk monthly newsletter!

Institutional Relationships

COMMUNICATION ISSUES * LEADERSHIP STYLE * SOCIAL UPHEAVAL * DISAGREEMENT OVER PAST PRACTICES

The board should not underestimate the impact of the vote on the college. Votes of no confidence can negatively impact enrollment, bring undesirable publicity to the college, and result in a more critical public focus and scrutiny of the college. The board has the responsibility to determine if the vote stemmed from an honest desire to protect the institution and ensure the educational integrity of the college. Or whether the vote was motivated by self-interest or ego, rather than the best interests of the college and students. The board has the responsibility to gather the facts and make a determination of how to proceed in the best interests of the institution.

On a personal level, votes of no confidence can be devastating for presidents and/or boards. A vote can destroy the career of a president or chancellor and tarnish the public perception of the board. Because of these negative consequences, the president or chancellor and board need to be proactive in preventing votes of no confidence from occurring in the first place by vigilantly watching for early signs of discontent.

The board should respect and formally acknowledge the concerns expressed by the faculty, and most importantly, determine the validity of the vote and be prepared to appropriately address ineffective leadership. It is important that the board and president or chancellor not overreact and stay above the fray. The board should emphasize to all internal and external constituencies that the vote is symbolic and has no official impact, with the authority to make a decision regarding the future of the president or chancellor being solely in the hands of the board.

What to Do?

When a vote of no confidence does occur, the board must act quickly to establish the tone for the college. Above all, the board's responsibilities during this period are to work with the president or chancellor to protect the institution's assets, to maintain the trust and support of the community, and to help all constituencies focus on service to students and the community. Below are several key strategies for handling a vote of no confidence:

(1) Assess the Impact on the College

The board needs to conduct due diligence to determine the facts and assess the long-term impact on the institution before making any decisions. During this process the board should seek advice, not only from ACCT, but also from their

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public relations officer and legal advisers. To help the institution rebuild trust, the board needs to understand both the motivation behind the decision and the potential effects of the vote of no confidence.

(2) Establish a Communications Strategy
After a vote of no confidence, the board should be prepared with a basic message to be delivered by the chair of the board. This message should set a conciliatory tone that makes it possible for all parties to work for the best interests of the college.

(3) Minimize the Adverse Impact on the Institution
Both the board and the president or chancellor must play a role in damage control, as a vote of no confidence can paralyze the administration, damage the reputation of the college within the community, and deteriorate the confidence of key stakeholders.

The board must be courageous in protecting the long-term interests of the institution, and be prepared to serve as the arbitrator, unifier, or court of appeal. Legal issues need to be balanced with operational needs as well as the interests of students, and the board should think beyond the issue by helping frame a path that gets everyone past the immediate situation at hand.

Can No-Confidence Votes be Avoided?

Periods of leadership transition or disenchantment in the president or chancellor are two of the most difficult situations for a board to encounter. With a vote of no confidence, prevention is the best policy. The board should be willing to take steps to stop any occurrence that could derail the administration or hamper the institution's core mission of serving students. Proactive measures include setting clear goals and priorities with the president or chancellor, conducting regular presidential evaluations, and asking difficult questions of the president or chancellor. But if a vote of no confidence does occur, the board should be prepared to work collegially and constructively with the president or chancellor to minimize the impact of the act and keep all parties focused on the institution's mission of serving students and the community.

A vote of no confidence is a complex issue. If you would like more guidance, email narcisa_polonio@acct.org to receive a three-part series of articles on votes of no confidence as featured in the ACCT publication *Trustee Quarterly*. For confidential guidance, please call Narcisa at 202-276-1983.

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