

South Orange County Community College District 2013 Board of Trustees Evaluation

Drafted by Cindra Smith, Workshop Facilitator, based on discussions at the Board Evaluation Workshop May 18, 2013.

Participants reviewed principles that result in positive and productive meetings, including that we move through and complete the agenda, everyone has opportunity to participate, interactions are respectful, and people listen for understanding.

The facilitator and Chancellor outlined the process used to gather survey information for the 2013 evaluation. Changes from last year's process included that trustees received a summary of progress on board goals prior to completing the survey.

Employee Evaluation of the Board

Workshop participants reviewed the results of the employee evaluations of the board, including comparison with previous year's results. This year, results were presented for those employees who attended or watched at least one board meeting, as well as for all respondents. Employee comments were not available at the workshop, but will be forwarded to board members. Discussion included:

Participants noted the eight items that had over 70% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the item, including that the most respondents believe that the board understands its policy role; delegates authority to and supports the CEO, understands the budget, trustee behavior sets a positive tone for the district, and board meetings and agendas are effective. Trustees noted that the board has continued to improve over past years and that all current members contribute positively to board functioning. They discussed their role in setting fiscal policy, including the principle that basic aid funds be used only for one-time expenses, and that adequate reserves be maintained. Discussion included a possible policy parameter related to setting a prudent percentage of salaries and benefits.

Items with somewhat lower ratings were discussed, noting that the lower ratings may be due to higher rates of "unable to evaluate" as well as those who "disagree" or "strongly disagree." Members discussed reviewing the code of ethics on a regular basis, their role in monitoring implementation of institutional plans, and how to effectively oversee operations without micromanaging. They noted that employees can "invite" micromanagement when they advocate for specific actions from trustees and how to avoid that.

Board Self-Evaluation

The facilitator noted that for the first time in the past three years using this form, no trustees had "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with any item, and that there were few "neutrals;" she complimented the board on its significant progress. Trustees discussed the value of honest appraisal to help the board improve, and that the public would appreciate trustees' willingness to take a look at their own performance.

Participants reviewed the average ratings of board members' assessments of progress on board roles related to district goals. They noted that they have had a discussion of student success at virtually every board meeting. They see progress on improving the culture and support continuing efforts – the facilitator noted that the board is modeling respect, collaboration, and transparency.

Participants reviewed average scores on board effectiveness goals, noting the significant improvement related to ethics, communication protocols, and behavior during board meetings. They reiterated their commitment to faculty, staff, and student feedback and involvement in decision-making and the responsibility of constituent leaders to involve others.

Participants noted that self-ratings again improved in most areas over the past year, and that the relationship with the Chancellor is particularly strong. Significant improvements included maintaining confidentiality, expressing authority only as a unit, upholding board decisions, and board meeting conduct and discussions. They mentioned receiving comments and compliments from employees and community members about the board. Items where scores had decreased were noted, including establishing expectations to monitoring quality and institutional effectiveness and the challenge of monitoring student success.

2013-2014 Board Goals

The Chancellor discussed current and planned activities related to the district plan goals. The district is refining the planning process and further integrating the district and college plans. The board contributes to strategic plan goals through discussion at this annual workshop and board meetings. The coming year's goals include improving or addressing: mutual respect and collaboration, employee involvement in and transparency of decisions, implementing the student success scorecard and standards, addressing college readiness and partnerships with high schools, priority registration and enrollment management, strategies that serve "lifelong learners" and the Emeritus program, partnerships with business and industry, and ATEP.

The board discussed the board forums at the colleges and how to foster good attendance; consensus was to hold two per year at each college.

Recommendations for 2014 Board Evaluation Process

The board agreed with the consultant's recommendation that the 56 item survey form was no longer needed, given the board's improvement over the past three years. The criteria for the 2014 evaluation process will be board goals related to the strategic direction and board effectiveness (draft attached), as well as the items on the shorter survey form used by employees. The latter will enable the board to compare its results to those of employees.

The employee survey process will be changed so that those who do have not attended or watched a board meeting will not be asked to respond to the items, but will be invited to provide comments to reinforce the board's desire to hear from employees. In addition, the item about the chancellor's evaluation will be deleted.