

## Characteristics of an Effective Community College Trustee

### Ideal trustee skill set

- 1) **Know the community needs and trends**  
Good trustees are connected to the community. They should be aware of the business and economic dynamics within the college district and bring a perspective to the board that reflects the needs of the college's service area.
- 2) **Able to commit time and effort**  
The responsibilities of being a trustee extend far beyond one meeting a month. Trustees need to have the flexibility – and the commitment – to dedicate the time it takes to attend college functions, to study board materials, and to attend training sessions so they can be informed about the local, state and national trends impacting higher education. Trustees should be willing to commit to continuing trustee professional development.
- 3) **Proactive, visionary and future-oriented**  
Trustees need to be able to concentrate on policy issues and to set a vision for the future for the college – where it needs to be in 10 or 15-years. Trustees need to set goals to help the college achieve that vision. Trustees should not get into the “how” of achieving the goals – that is the domain of the president and staff.
- 4) **Willing to advocate for the college and its students**  
Most trustees accept their appointment to a board with a general understanding of their policy governance role, but another responsibility is to serve as a strong advocate at the local, state and national levels for their college and the system.
- 5) **Demonstrated ability to be a team player**  
A good trustee is one who has a history working well as part of a team. The power of a board rests with the five-member board acting together, not as individuals. A trustee needs to be willing to work cooperatively to help the board reach consensus and then support the decisions of the board.
- 6) **Committed to the college and serving the public good**  
A valuable trustee is committed to the role the college plays in the community and is committed to working for the good of the college and the students. A trustee should not join a board with a personal agenda or for personal gain.
- 7) **Ethical, respected leader**  
Trustees set the standard for ethical and professional conduct. A trustee's reputation will reflect on a college. A trustee should be someone who has earned the respect and trust of those who know and work with that individual and someone who will enhance the standing of the college within the community.

### Every board has unique needs

One of the strengths of community and technical colleges is the ability for colleges to be responsive to the unique characteristics of the community. A board should reflect that community. Board appointments should mirror the business and industry of the district, the ethnic diversity of the community, and the geographic regions of the college's service area.