

GOVERNING BOARD COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

In order to uphold standards of good practice that contribute to Board effectiveness, ensure the notion of the Governing Board as a team/unit, guide ethical behavior, ensure the reliability of information to be communicated, and comply with accreditation standards, the Board upholds the following communication protocols.

1. Communications Between and/or among Board Members
 - a. A majority of the members of the Governing Board shall not, outside a regularly scheduled meeting, use a series of communications of any kind, directly or through intermediaries, to discuss, deliberate, or take action on any item of business that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Governing Board. This shall not be construed as preventing an employee or official of the District from engaging in separate conversations or communication with members of the Governing Board outside a meeting in order to answer questions or provide information regarding a matter that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Governing Board, if that person does not communicate to members of the Governing Board the comments or position of any other member or members of the Governing Board.
 - b. One-way communications, from Board member to Board member(s), even regarding subject matters that fall within the jurisdiction of the District, are not a violation of the Ralph M. Brown Act, as long as there is no response.

2. Communications Between Board Members and CEO/Staff Member
 - a. Communications from individual Board members to the Chancellor/staff member (or vice versa) are not a violation of the Ralph M. Brown Act.
 - b. For the most part, communication between individual Board members and the Chancellor is appropriate, i.e., when clarification is needed regarding an agenda item.
 - c. Communications from individual Board members which are a request to the Chancellor to perform special services, provide information/special reports, etc. should be directed through the Board Chair.
 - d. Communications from individual Board members which are a request of District staff to perform special services, provide information/special reports, etc. should be directed through the Board Chair or the Chancellor, who will assign appropriate staff to address the request.
 - e. With Board approval, a Governing Board member may speak on behalf of the Board to staff members and students.

3. Public Communication by Board Members

All public communications by Board members shall recognize that,

 - a. authority rests only with the Board (the legal entity) as a whole and that no trustee has individual authority;
 - b. the Board Chair and Chancellor are delegated the general responsibility for public and media communications in order to ensure a unified voice of representation for the District;
 - c. Board members refer questions from the media to the Chancellor, Board Chair, or other designated spokesperson;
 - d. any public statements represent the Board's position as formally adopted in Governing Board meetings and/or through formally adopted policies/procedures/resolutions;
 - e. the Board may delegate specific responsibilities to Board members and will provide resources and information as needed; and
 - f. any public presentations/statements regarding the District by individual Board members shall have prior approval of the Governing Board at a Board meeting, or, if that is not possible, prior approval of the Board Chair.

4. Social Media Communications by Board Members

Board members should use caution on social media whenever board business is involved.

- a. Board members may communicate via social media to:
 - 1) ask questions;
 - 2) provide information to the public; and
 - 3) solicit information from the public regarding a matter within the subject matter jurisdiction of the board. (Government Code Section 54952.2 (b)(3).)
- b. Board members may not use social media to:
 - 1) “discuss among themselves” official business within the Board’s jurisdiction;
 - 2) Respond directly to any social media communication by a fellow board member on any issues within the Board’s jurisdiction; or
 - 3) Use digital icons that express emotions, such as “like,” “retweet,” “react,” emojis or similar formats as it pertains to issues within the Board’s jurisdiction.

5. Responding to Needs or Complaints Expressed to an Individual Board Member

- a. Listen respectfully and impartially.
- b. If the concern is not urgent or does not have policy implications,
 - 1) refer the individual or group to the appropriate college process or person;
 - 2) uphold Board policy and college procedure, with no attempt to solve the problem; and
 - 3) inform the Chancellor of the contact.
- c. If the concern is from an external group or citizen, the Chancellor and/or Board member may provide feedback to the person raising the issue, as appropriate. Any written communication will be made by the Chancellor and/or the Board President.
- d. If the concern is urgent or could have policy implications,
 - 1) refer the individual or group to the appropriate college process or person;
 - 2) uphold Board policy and college procedure, with no attempt to solve the problem; and
 - 3) inform the Chancellor.

The Chancellor will alert the Board President. Board officers, with the Chancellor, will decide how to handle the issue. Options may include communication from the Chancellor to the Board and placing the issue on a Board meeting agenda for further discussion.

5. Participation Standards

- a. Participate fully, reviewing meeting agendas and clarifying information and questions prior to meeting.
- b. Demonstrate respect and support for one another at all times.
- c. Listen with an open mind.
- d. Allow all opinions to be heard without interruption.
- e. Focus on issues, not personalities.
- f. Uphold strict confidentiality of closed session and other confidential information.

Accreditation Standard IV.C.2, IV.C.4, and IV.C.7