



Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) Community, Student and Staff Evaluation of Board of Trustees' Operations and Performance

October 2013

Background

Since 2009, the RSCCD Board of Trustees has implemented an annual review of its internal operations and performance. The Board invites community representatives, faculty/staff and students who interact with them on a regular basis to offer feedback. An online survey instrument is made available to individuals including (but not limited to) the associated student government presidents, presidents of the academic senates, the college presidents, the chancellor, vice chancellors, representatives of the District's employee unions, and community members who serve on the District bond oversight committees or foundations. The Board reviews the input prior to their own individual assessment using the same survey instrument. At the next meeting, the Board reviews its collective input and develops goals that members want to work on for the year. The following year, the Board asks the community, staff and students to reassess them so they can evaluate the degree to which their goals have been met and to continue to refine the Board's internal operations and performance, if needed.

The survey was disseminated to eighty-eight individuals; 27 surveys were completed (a 31% response rate): two students, 19 faculty/staff members, four community members, and two who did not report their affiliation with the District or its colleges. Forty-four percent of respondents reported that they regularly attend Board of Trustees meetings; 37% reported that they occasionally attend, 15% rarely, and 4% never attend.

Summary of Findings

The Board is most highly rated (100% of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree") for:

- Ensuring compliance with federal and state laws and measures for emergency response (mean rating of 1.50),
- Conducting meetings in a manner in which purposes are achieved effectively and efficiently (mean rating 1.54),
- Having a positive, cooperative relationship (mean rating of 1.55), and
- Following a procedure for annual evaluations of the chancellor (mean rating of 1.56).

The Board is rated lowest (less than 70% of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree") for:

- Acting on behalf of the entire community (mean rating of 2.39), and
- Understanding the colleges' educational programs and services (mean rating of 2.24).

Respondents were very thoughtful when given the opportunity to voice their opinions on the Board's greatest strengths, major accomplishments, and areas in which the Board could improve. There were many accolades, as well as suggestions for improvement, offered.

Comparisons with Prior Years' Findings:

In making comparisons between 2013 responses and those of the prior year, it is important to note that the number of respondents from one survey year to the next varies greatly and that percentages may fluctuate widely due to the low response counts.

The most significant increase in ratings since the prior year's survey is that Board meetings are conducted in a manner in which the purposes are achieved effectively and efficiently (+20 percentage points).

Several areas identified in the 2009 survey as needing improvement showed gains in the following year's responses and have continued those trends in the years since, including:

- Following a procedure for annual evaluations of the chancellor and using the results to strengthen the chancellor's performance and relationships,
- Maintaining confidentiality of privileged information,
- Regularly developing and reviewing goals for continuous improvement,
- Regularly seeking the opinion of the student trustee, and
- Actively participating in community activities.

The three areas that experienced the most significant decrease in ratings are:

- Reaching decisions on the basis of the study of available background data and consideration of the recommendation of the chancellor (-16 percentage points),
- Acting on behalf of the entire community (-16 percentage points), and
- Following communication procedures with staff (-14 percentage points).

Other Findings:

A significant proportion of survey respondents (over 40%) indicated "not applicable or don't know" as their responses to some questions in the areas of "board relations with the chancellor, presidents, faculty, and staff" and "board leadership, ethics, and standard of conduct." These rates have not changed significantly over the prior year's survey:

- Following communication procedures with staff (41%),
- Following a procedure for annual evaluation of the chancellor (41%),
- Completing the chancellor evaluation process and using the results to strengthen chancellor's performance and relationships (52%), and
- Keeping the chancellor informed of community contacts (63%).

A fourth issue elicited a high rate of non-responses in 2012 but dropped significantly in 2013.

- Board member participation in trustee development activities declined from a 42% non-response rate to 33% in the current year.

Attention may be needed to develop and/or promote a better understanding of these issues.

Detail of Findings

2013 Results of the Community, Student and Staff's Evaluation of Board of Trustees' Operations and Performance							
	Distribution of Valid Responses				Total # Respondents	Average Rating (excluding n/a)	Not applicable or don't know
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
	1	2	3	4			
Board Organization and Operation							
Board meetings are conducted in a manner in which the purposes are achieved effectively and efficiently.	46%	53%	0%	0%	26	1.54	4%
Board members respect each others' opinions.	36%	56%	8%	0%	25	1.72	7%
The board conducts its meetings in compliance with state laws, including The Brown Act.	46%	50%	4%	0%	24	1.58	11%
Board members understand that they have no legal authority beyond board meetings.	27%	50%	14%	9%	22	2.05	19%
Board members regularly seek the opinion of the student trustee.	32%	53%	11%	5%	19	1.89	30%
Policy Role							
Board meetings focus on policy issues that relate to board responsibilities.	33%	58%	8%	0%	24	1.75	11%
The board focuses on policy in board discussion, not administrative matters.	26%	52%	22%	0%	23	1.96	15%
The board is knowledgeable about the mission and purpose of the institution.	40%	48%	8%	4%	25	1.76	7%
The board clearly delegates the administration of the colleges to the chancellor.	29%	58%	13%	0%	24	1.83	11%
The board ensures compliance with federal and state laws and measures for emergency response.	50%	50%	0%	0%	20	1.50	26%
Strategic Planning							
The board understands the budget process.	12%	76%	12%	0%	25	2.00	7%
The board gives adequate attention to the mission, goals, and future planning of the district.	25%	58%	13%	4%	24	1.96	11%
The board regularly develops and reviews goals for continuous improvement.	27%	59%	14%	0%	22	1.86	19%
The board has adopted a planning and evaluation process which assures that the educational needs of students and the community are effectively and efficiently met.	27%	54%	19%	0%	26	1.92	4%
The board understands the colleges' educational programs and services.	16%	52%	24%	8%	25	2.24	7%
The board is appropriately involved in defining the vision and goals of the district.	35%	52%	13%	0%	23	1.78	15%
The board understands the financial audit and accepts responsibility for implementation of its recommendations.	33%	63%	4%	0%	24	1.71	11%
The board understands the fiscal condition of the organization and provides fiscal oversight to assure the financial stability of the district.	31%	54%	15%	0%	26	1.85	4%
The board understands the accreditation process and accepts responsibility for implementation of its recommendations.	16%	72%	8%	4%	25	2.00	7%

**2013 Results of the Community, Student and Staff's Evaluation of
Board of Trustees' Operations and Performance**

	Distribution of Valid Responses				Total # Respondents	Average Rating (excluding n/a)	Not applicable or don't know
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
	1	2	3	4			
Board Relations with the Chancellor, Presidents, Faculty, and Staff							
The board reaches decisions on the basis of the study of available background data and consideration of the recommendation of the chancellor.	30%	70%	0%	0%	22	1.91	19%
The board keeps the chancellor informed of community contacts.	30%	70%	0%	0%	10	1.70	63%
The board follows a procedure for annual evaluations of the chancellor.	44%	56%	0%	0%	16	1.56	41%
The board understands the difference between its policy and oversight roles and the roles of the chancellor and staff.	10%	67%	24%	0%	21	2.14	22%
The board and chancellor have a positive, cooperative relationship.	45%	55%	0%	0%	20	1.55	26%
The board understands its role and that of the chancellor, presidents, faculty, and staff.	22%	52%	26%	0%	23	2.04	15%
The board sustains a strong board/chancellor partnership and provides ongoing support for the chancellor to foster a strong partnership.	32%	68%	0%	0%	19	1.68	30%
The board completes the chancellor evaluation process and uses the results to strengthen the chancellor's performance and relationships.	46%	46%	8%	0%	13	1.62	52%
The board follows communication procedures with staff.	25%	50%	13%	13%	16	2.13	41%
Trustees work directly with community leaders and elected officials (local, state, national) to address issues/legislation that affect the college district.	38%	54%	4%	4%	24	1.75	11%
Community Relations – Advocacy							
Board members are knowledgeable about community college and state-related issues.	12%	77%	8%	4%	26	2.04	4%
The board acts as an advocate for community colleges.	28%	64%	4%	4%	25	1.84	7%
Board members participate actively in community activities.	35%	57%	4%	4%	23	1.78	15%
Board agendas include legislative and state policy issues that will impact the district.	27%	62%	8%	4%	26	1.88	4%
Board members act on behalf of the entire community.	17%	44%	22%	17%	23	2.39	15%
The board recognizes and celebrates positive accomplishments of the district and colleges.	35%	54%	4%	8%	26	1.85	4%
The board works to build a positive image of the district in the community.	35%	50%	4%	12%	26	1.92	4%
Board members adhere to policies for dealing with college, community citizens, and the media.	23%	55%	9%	14%	22	2.14	19%
The community and district employees are aware of who the elected trustees are and their role in district governance.	22%	70%	9%	0%	23	1.87	15%

**2013 Results of the Community, Student and Staff's Evaluation of
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	Distribution of Valid Responses				Total # Respondents	Average Rating (excluding n/a)	Not applicable or don't know
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
	1	2	3	4			
Board Leadership, Ethics, and Standards of Conduct							
The board understands collective bargaining and its role in the process.	32%	55%	14%	0%	22	1.82	19%
The board practices appropriate collegial consultation (participatory governance).	17%	70%	9%	4%	23	2.00	15%
The board maintains confidentiality of privileged information.	26%	65%	9%	0%	23	1.91	15%
The board makes decisions in the best interest of students, the colleges, and the entire district.	24%	48%	20%	8%	25	2.12	7%
The board operates ethically without conflict of interest following established board policies.	27%	50%	14%	9%	22	2.05	19%
Board members participate in trustee development activities.	39%	50%	11%	0%	18	1.72	33%

**Results of the Community, Student and Staff's Evaluation of
Board of Trustees' Operations and Performance, 2009-2013**

	% "strongly agree" or "agree"					% change from 2012
	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	
	n=27	n=52	n=32	n=46	n=14	
Board Organization and Operation						
Board meetings are conducted in a manner in which the purposes are achieved effectively and efficiently.	100%	80%	93%	89%	89%	20%
Board members respect each others' opinions.	92%	90%	96%	89%	78%	2%
The board conducts its meetings in compliance with state laws, including The Brown Act.	96%	88%	94%	81%	100%	8%
Board members understand that they have no legal authority beyond board meetings.	77%	86%	87%	79%	55%	-9%
Board members regularly seek the opinion of the student trustee.	84%	83%	82%	60%	57%	1%
Policy Role						
Board meetings focus on policy issues that relate to board responsibilities.	92%	94%	97%	92%	77%	-2%
The board focuses on policy in board discussion, not administrative matters.	78%	83%	80%	73%	55%	-5%
The board is knowledgeable about the mission and purpose of the institution.	88%	87%	94%	92%	100%	1%
The board clearly delegates the administration of the colleges to the chancellor.	88%	91%	97%	79%	80%	-3%
The board ensures compliance with federal and state laws and measures for emergency response.	100%	98%	100%	98%	89%	2%
Strategic Planning						
The board understands the budget process.	88%	76%	64%	87%	80%	12%
The board gives adequate attention to the mission, goals, and future planning of the district.	83%	78%	81%	87%	89%	5%
The board regularly develops and reviews goals for continuous improvement.	86%	80%	83%	75%	63%	6%
The board has adopted a planning and evaluation process which assures that the educational needs of students and the community are effectively and efficiently met.	81%	75%	70%	77%	60%	6%
The board understands the colleges' educational programs and services.	68%	72%	77%	74%	60%	-4%
The board is appropriately involved in defining the vision and goals of the district.	87%	82%	87%	86%	66%	5%
The board understands the financial audit and accepts responsibility for implementation of its recommendations.	96%	90%	93%	97%	89%	6%
The board understands the fiscal condition of the organization and provides fiscal oversight to assure the financial stability of the district.	85%	81%	78%	92%	89%	4%
The board understands the accreditation process and accepts responsibility for implementation of its recommendations.	88%	80%	83%	80%	70%	8%

**Results of the Community, Student and Staff's Evaluation of
Board of Trustees' Operations and Performance, 2009-2013**

	% "strongly agree" or "agree"					% change from 2012
	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	
	n=27	n=52	n=32	n=46	n=14	
Board Relations with the Chancellor, Presidents, Faculty, and Staff						
The board reaches decisions on the basis of the study of available background data and consideration of the recommendation of the chancellor.	81%	97%	96%	88%	70%	-16%
The board keeps the chancellor informed of community contacts.	100%	100%	100%	100%	88%	0%
The board follows a procedure for annual evaluations of the chancellor.	100%	100%	100%	88%	58%	0%
The board understands the difference between its policy and oversight roles and the roles of the chancellor and staff.	76%	86%	89%	76%	63%	-10%
The board and chancellor have a positive, cooperative relationship.	100%	98%	96%	100%	78%	2%
The board understands its role and that of the chancellor, presidents, faculty, and staff.	74%	79%	93%	78%	70%	-5%
The board sustains a strong board/chancellor partnership and provides ongoing support for the chancellor to foster a strong partnership.	100%	100%	100%	93%	78%	0%
The board completes the chancellor evaluation process and uses the results to strengthen the chancellor's performance and relationships.	92%	92%	90%	85%	72%	0%
The board follows communication procedures with staff.	75%	89%	83%	67%	66%	-14%
Trustees work directly with community leaders and elected officials (local, state, national) to address issues/legislation that affect the college district.	92%	92%	92%	88%	77%	0%
Community Relations – Advocacy						
Board members are knowledgeable about community college and state-related issues.	88%	89%	87%	91%	89%	-1%
The board acts as an advocate for community colleges.	92%	80%	97%	97%	87%	12%
Board members participate actively in community activities.	91%	94%	82%	79%	63%	-3%
Board agendas include legislative and state policy issues that will impact the district.	88%	88%	93%	84%	78%	0%
Board members act on behalf of the entire community.	62%	78%	76%	74%	67%	-16%
The board recognizes and celebrates positive accomplishments of the district and colleges.	88%	93%	96%	95%	88%	-5%
The board works to build a positive image of the district in the community.	85%	89%	90%	91%	88%	-4%
Board members adhere to policies for dealing with college, community citizens, and the media.	77%	89%	100%	86%	76%	-12%
The community and district employees are aware of who the elected trustees are and their role in district governance.	91%	77%	69%	58%	56%	14%
Board Leadership, Ethics, and Standards of Conduct						
The board understands collective bargaining and its role in the process.	86%	88%	100%	74%	100%	-2%
The board practices appropriate collegial consultation (participatory governance).	87%	81%	86%	82%	76%	6%
The board maintains confidentiality of privileged information.	92%	100%	97%	94%	67%	-8%
The board makes decisions in the best interest of students, the colleges, and the entire district.	72%	76%	79%	70%	88%	-4%
The board operates ethically without conflict of interest following established board policies.	77%	75%	91%	87%	67%	2%
Board members participate in trustee development activities.	90%	93%	96%	90%	84%	-3%

2013 Respondents' Comments

Board's greatest strengths:

- 1) The Board has a respectful relationship internally among its members. For this reason, meetings run smoothly. 2) The Board delegates responsibility to the Chancellor appropriately. In addition, experts within the district (e.g., related to accreditation, planning, budget, facilities, technology), and without (e.g., HMC Architectural Firm) are sought to inform the Board so decisions may be made with the best information possible.
- Board members demonstrate respect for each other. Board meetings are run with decorum. Differences of opinions are expressed appropriately and respectfully.
- It is clear that board members are invested in the success of students. Board meetings over the last year have had an enhanced positive tone. The recognition of faculty in addition to classified and administrative staff has been much appreciated. Furthermore, the relaxed yet professional environment of the meetings has made them more enjoyable. I commend current President Barrios for her leadership with this change in tone and appreciate the collegiality among board members during the meetings.
- The board appears to genuinely care about the needs of the students expressed by each of the ASG presidents.
- Very positive energy and attitudes in the meetings. They seem to get along well.
- Very professional and to the point
- Willingness
- Meetings are run professionally.
- Relationship with community and communication.
- Stability of the district during the recession
- That in every venue they remind the community that they speak as one. They may speak about our college's goals and issues based on their point of view, but when taking action- they speak as one. Only one time in recent history did one Board member forget this, when he sent a letter to the editor of the local newspaper "Orange County Register". I believe he signed it as a Trustee, disagreeing with a recent Board action. This was wrong.
- The board appears to have a more positive tone and is now engaging the college faculty & staff. It is hoped that their greatest strength is to represent and advocate on behalf of the district in the State and County.
- The board is well organized and understands the need for changes in the RSCCD.
- The quality of the people that serve on the board.
- The Board's commitment to affordable education
- They are now responsible for a particular electorate
- They do not seem to engage in pointless bickering.

Major accomplishments of the Board in the past year:

- 1) The Board has taken seriously the need to be in compliance with USDE Regulations as well as ACCJC standards and policies. To that end, the Board has developed this evaluation of itself and has developed a planning mechanism that is more profound than it was in the past, in answer to an accreditation recommendation of 2008. 2) The Board also delegates responsibility to the Chancellor, who has created a district governance structure which amplifies the planning-budget alignment issue. This structure has made possible the development of a Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategic Plan with clear direction for the district. This is a major accomplishment.
- Effective advocacy for positive legislation regarding community colleges. Maintained and facilitated good relationships with the community that our district serves. Effective oversight of facilities related items.
- Major gifts received.
- The Board has transitioned the new members well. The Board has participated in a number of training activities that have helped to inform the Board about their roles and expectations. The Board has embraced the training. This is helping the Board to be more cohesive.
- Forming trustee districts and adopting board goals that can be used in the colleges' accreditation efforts.
- Getting measures approved by the community to build new facilities and upgrade older facilities in the district.
- I am not sure because that information is not communicated to me.
- Managing the budget during the recent economic crisis.
- **Please Note:** There may be more than my fair share of N/A's on this survey because certain things have not "bubbled up" in terms of awareness of activities and accomplishments. I am aware that the trustees work hard to get out to various events at the colleges, and also read about their activities through an internal newsletter that comes to stakeholders from the college president.
- Recognition of accomplishments of funds attained and working with the students to reach their goals. Success of students is major.
- Setting up a system of self-evaluation. Reviewing their Board Policies for Governance and renumbering them to State Standards and rewriting out-of-date policies. Approving College mission statement.
- The board successfully reinstated winter intersession and accomplished significant strides towards the completion of Bond Measure E.

Areas in which the Board could improve:

- 1) The board needs to remember that each of the trustees is there to represent RSCCD not just their small part of the district. Board members have seemed more dedicated to the area they represent than maintaining a strong district. Board members' acting like this destroys morale at the college that isn't currently in favor. 2) It is always wonderful to recognize the accomplishments of faculty, staff, and students. Ideally, you want to recognize one member from each of the campuses but that isn't always possible. The board has recognized the FT Classified Staff Member of the Year from both colleges and the SAC Distinguished Faculty Member this year. The board did recognize the 2014 Orange County Teacher of the Year (Alex Taber, SCC) but not the SCC Faculty Excellence Award Winner. Dr. Taber deserves recognition for his external award but the way the board handled the situation was extremely disrespectful to SCC's Faculty Excellence Award winner. Just because Dr. Taber was recognized by Orange County does not mean the year's SCC winner should not be recognized just because you want to recognize one member from each campus. 3.) It is extremely inappropriate for board members to become involved in disputes between the academic senate and FARSCCD. It has the appearance of board members taking sides in a dispute that they shouldn't even know about. Internal disputes happen all of the time but the board should never get involved in them from their policy making role.
- Better participation from other Board Members.
- Rather than seeming to support a particular area in or college of the district, board members ought to advocate as representatives for the entire district rather than a portion of it. It seems that some board members do not follow RSCCD board policies regarding communication outside of board meetings, which could prove problematic with accreditation. It would prove beneficial if board members focused more on the work of the district and the workings of community colleges than on seemingly posturing for future political endeavors.
- The Board needs to continue to work on representing the interests of the District as a whole and not become overly focused on representing their area of election. The students that attend our colleges should be the focus and not the college that the Board perceives that it represents. This is critical to moving our students forward and to not creating unnecessary and divisive competition between the colleges. The issue of Board members inappropriately communicating with faculty continues to create problems. There is still a perception that some faculty have "special" relationships with board members and that board members have "pet" programs at the college and as such, violate and interfere with college processes.
- There is a learning curve for anyone in a new position. New Board members do have some training, but more is needed related to accreditation issues and perhaps other issues. Also, even though Board members are elected from an area of the district, once on the Board, it is one Board. Votes affect all the students of the district. It is not always clear that there isn't a bias to one area. (This is different from representing the community of an area, which is clearly needed. However, representing the community must be measured with the effect it will have district-wide.) In other words, one must keep in mind that SCC and SAC are part of one district: they are not two districts pasted together!
- Understand more about faculty roles in shared governance and how they relate to the "10+1."
- With the redistricting has come an attitude that particular board members are representing those slices of the district rather than the district as a whole.

- A good idea was raised at a conference about community college advancement. The President of a college in a two college district (in San Diego) said that the chancellor, trustees, college presidents, and foundation boards met regularly to share information and contacts and to build a case for advancement within the leadership of the district. Would that be a good idea to bring into play once or twice a year, so that everyone was more aware of the goals and activities of each entity - and how there might be ways to work together successfully to build awareness and advancement potential?
- Attend more of the functions that Santa Ana College has during the year. We see maybe 1 or 2 but not a majority. I think it's important that the volunteers, staff and students get to meet the entire trustee's. Also they need to support some of the fundraising efforts that go on during the as we the volunteer's do.
- Certain board member have violated ethical protocol in the decision-making process. These individuals do not act on behalf of the students or in the best interest of the RSCCD. Rather they maintain a position of outside influence for future and current political purposes. There should be an investigation into the fiscal policies of the district and their actions towards the misuse of funding. Also, I believe the board as a whole should increase focus and set forth specific guidelines regarding how to accomplish the promises set forth in Proposition 30 for fair and inexpensive participation in community colleges. Lastly I believe the board should be embarrassed at the number of students turned away from participating in community college this year. The board should set forth policy that allows every student the opportunity to participate in higher education.
- Better focus on student success.
- I wish they would change the format of Board Minutes. You learn very little from reading the minutes except what was approved or not approved. Although Budget reports presented by the District Fiscal Services can be found on the web-site, other documents cannot. When the two college President's speak the minutes only reflex that they provided a report - with no note as to the topic. In the distant past, I was able to ascertain the direction of the District from reading minutes that cannot be done now. Thus I try to attend the meetings. It is important to see with one's own eyes how the various members view the presentations that are provided, to hear how they question the Chancellor, Faculty Member, Staff Member, Student or Community Member.
- There are recognizable board members that actually do attend college events and activities and then there are those who are never seen. I think equal participation across both colleges is needed from all trustees. In addition, the expectations and knowledge of development and fundraising for trustees is non-existent. There is a huge disconnect in their role or possible role in “giving and or getting” resources for the colleges. At their level-connecting resources and relationships to the college presidents, etc. should not only be a part of their regular activities but should be expected.
- There is a feeling that board members are sometimes more attached to one college instead of equally working for both.
- They could be more visible to the colleges. They could better understand the programs we offer.
- They could visit the campuses more so faculty could get to know them better.