

## **Board – President Relations**

### **Resource Document for Discretionary Use**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Purpose .....	1
Responsibilities of College Boards and Presidents .....	1
Effective Board-President Relationship .....	4
Keys to a Successful Relationship .....	5
Resources for Presidential Recruitment, Employment Contract, Compensation and Performance Management .....	5

## Purpose

The intent of this document is to provide college board chairs, governors and presidents with background information on a successful Board-President relationship, recognizing that these relationships evolve and develop in very different environments. The document is provided as a resource, which hopefully college boards and presidents will find useful and applicable.

The relationship between a college board of governors and a college president is critical to a college's success. The board, accountable for the overall direction and operation of the college, hires a president as its chief executive officer and delegates to him or her the authority and responsibility for managing the ongoing affairs of the college, the implementation of board-approved policies, and the provision of the leadership required to achieve the college's strategic objectives. As the CEO, the president advises and is accountable to the board on board policies, strategic direction and general college operations.

## Responsibilities of College Boards and Presidents

In Ontario's colleges, board responsibilities are laid out in the [Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002](#). Under the Act, colleges are corporations without share capital and are subject to the provisions of the [Corporations Act](#), except where the Act, its regulations, the Minister's binding policy directives and associated ministry policies apply. The colleges' mandate is set out in the Act as follows:

“to offer a comprehensive program of career-oriented, post-secondary education and training to assist individuals in finding and keeping employment, to meet the needs of employers and the changing work environment and to support the economic and social needs of their local and diverse communities.”

“In carrying out its objectives a college may undertake a range of education and training-related activities including, but not limited to,

- entering into partnerships with business, industry and other educational institutions;
- offering its courses in the French language where the college is authorized to do so by regulation;
- adult vocational education and training;
- basic skills and literacy training;
- apprenticeship in-school training; and
- applied research.”

By regulation, each college's board of governors has an even number, between twelve and twenty, appointed external members and four internal elected members. External governors are selected for the diversity of their skills and experience as well as to represent the public served by the college. In addition to the president's role as the CEO reporting to the Board, she or he is also an ex-officio member of the board, with the same rights and responsibilities as any other board member.

Governors are accountable for establishing the college's strategic direction and ensuring that guiding policies, goals and objectives are in place; they do not administer, manage, or provide day-to-day guidance.

**Board responsibilities include the following:**

- Participate in setting and approving the college's strategic direction, policies and standards for college programs, services and operations including the college's business plan, budget and annual report
- Attract, hire, retain and, if appropriate, dismiss the college president
- Ensure that the college operates in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements
- Delegate to the president the responsibility for those activities required to achieve the board-approved strategic priorities and goals, implement board-approved policies and standards and manage the daily operations of the college
- Monitor and evaluate the college's and the president's performance annually against the attainment of stated college goals, objectives and board policies as outlined in the president's performance agreement
- Approve any changes to the president's contract of employment, changes in compensation levels including annual merit pay, and changes in perquisite amounts
- Take appropriate action when expected outcomes or performance are not achieved
- Manage its own internal affairs by determining board and committee structure, composition, mandate and membership; assessing the performance of the board as a whole and its committees; recruiting and recommending the selection of board members.

**Key Board Chair Responsibilities:**

- Preside over executive and board meetings
- Foster teamwork among board members, solve problems and resolve conflict
- Ensure that the Minister's Binding Policy Directive on Conflict of Interest is followed
- Represent and speak on behalf of the board when official representation is required
- Assist and support the president to secure strategic partnerships and college funding essential to the operation and advancement of the college
- Support and counsel the president as required

**President's Responsibilities:**

- Develop the college's strategic direction with board participation and approval
- Provide leadership to, and be accountable for the implementation of the college's strategic objectives as approved by the board
- Develop external relationships required to secure college funding, strategic partnerships, government approvals, and college recognition that are essential to the operation and advancement of the college
- Promote positive internal relationships throughout the college
- Be responsible for all phases of the operation and administration of the college including the appointment, promotion and termination of college staff
- Recommend the establishment of, changes to and/or elimination of programs to the board
- Act in the best interests of the college in securing and promoting its educational, community, administrative and financial objectives

## **Effective Board-President Relationship**

An effective board-president relationship greatly depends upon the effort that both parties invest in carrying out their individual responsibilities. Successful governance depends on a balanced relationship between the board and the president and operates best when it functions as a partnership. Even though the president reports to the board, the successful relationship tends to be more collegial than hierarchical. The board depends on the president's guidance, knowledge and experience when it formulates the college's strategic direction and determines key policies and goals. It also depends on the president to provide organizational leadership recognizing that the president is key to an outstanding educational institution.

The president relies on the board's representation of public input, influence and support so that he or she can successfully implement the college's strategic direction and policies. The president also requires the board's delegated authority and support to manage the daily operations of the college.

An effective Board-CEO relationship is built upon clear, mutually agreed upon roles and expectations, a common purpose, mutual respect and trust, and open and ongoing communication. Teamwork, commitment and nurturing are key.

The board and president share a commitment to the quality of the education and training the college provides and its impact on students, employers and the public. While the board's focus is on the public that the college serves, the president's is more on the well-being of the college and its ability to deliver high quality education and training in the public interest.

A successful board clearly defines its expectations of the president in an employment contract, college policies, and annual goals and objectives. Clear, public expectations provide presidents with a framework for action and assure them of board support. Presidents expect board members to provide support, guidance, information, feedback and community connections.

Boards are responsible for creating an environment in which the president is empowered to lead the college. Presidents create a positive environment for boards by facilitating processes, which allow them to successfully govern.

Open communication is one of the most important ways a board and president convey mutual support and respect. Meaningful debate about the direction of the college provides board members with the opportunity to make valuable contributions to setting policy and strategic objectives. It also enables the president to capitalize on the strength and skills of the board and its individual members in exploring ideas and

strategies. It is the president's responsibility to ensure that board members are provided with the relevant information that they need for productive discussions, sound decisions and advice to the president. It is the board's responsibility to carefully assess the information provided so they are prepared to participate fully in discussions and make appropriate decisions.

### **Keys to a Successful Relationship**

The level of success that a college board and president can achieve is greatly dependent upon the effort that both parties invest in the relationship. There is no simple or singular approach to an effective relationship. It requires trust, commitment, effort and open communication. For many boards and presidents, this guideline will confirm that theirs is an effective and productive working relationship. For others, it may help to start a discussion on how the relationship could be better.

For further information check the Association of Community College Trustees: Center for Effective Governance at: [www.acct.org/center/center.htm](http://www.acct.org/center/center.htm).

### **Resources for Presidential Recruitment, Employment Contract, Compensation and Performance Management**

These previously issued guidelines can assist a college board to recruit, negotiate a contract of employment, to establish a performance management and compensation program for a president. The guidelines can be accessed on the Council's website under "Governance" at [www.TheCouncil.on.ca](http://www.TheCouncil.on.ca).