



OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE®

Governance, Administration, & Communication Final Report

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Prepared by:



College Brain Trust

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Executive Summary

Oakland Community College (OCC) has a proud history of serving its communities, but it is in the midst of an evolution that will more clearly focus increasingly limited resources on the success of its students. Like many institutions that have several years of history, policies and structures that may have worked in an earlier time no longer make sense in an era of constrained resources and increased accountability for student success. Communication has become more difficult as the organization has grown and become more segmented.

An experienced team from the College Brain Trust (CBT) was asked to review how the College operated, how it was governed, and how administrators were held accountable at the campuses and College. The CBT team found that College reorganization was under way, and CBT is assisting College leaders to move to their new structure as successfully as possible.

The CBT team also found that several practices that were historically based and memorialized in union contracts that are hindrances to effective management of the College and its ability to serve students and its communities. While CBT understands that OCC operates in a union environment and that some changes will need to be negotiated, CBT nonetheless makes recommendations that are largely outside the scope of bargaining to improve OCC's governance, operations, and communications.

CBT heard many times during site visits that faculty, staff, and administrators were frustrated by how long it takes to make decisions at OCC, and people seemed to be uninformed about the disposition of recommendations that were forwarded to committees. There is confusion between administrative committees and participatory governance committees, and administrators did not seem to know the extent of their authority and how they would be held accountable for decisions.

The recommendations made in this section represent what CBT believes to be best practices in the areas of operations, governance, structure, decision-making, authority, accountability, and communication.

Task Overview

CBT was contracted to review campus and college operational, governance, communication, and decision-making policies and practices, including role clarification of campuses and district office and recommendations of "best practices"

associated with each. CBT was also asked to review the reorganization of the College that was underway and to identify issues that needed to be addressed to ensure the appropriate functionality of the new administrative structure. In completing this review, CBT was charged with reviewing and making recommendations to define and clarify lines of authority and accountability throughout the College and between campuses and the district office.

Methodology

In addressing these tasks, CBT consultants met with trustees, Chancellor Meyer, Cabinet administrators, deans and directors, Board members, faculty, leadership of all employee unions, classified staff leadership, campus exempt and management staff, district office exempt administrative and management staff, Senate leadership, College Academic Student Services Council (CASSC), College Administrative Services Council (CASC), and Human Resources leadership. CBT lead consultants have also conducted monthly calls with Chancellor Meyer.

Documents reviewed by CBT include ReDesign reports; Higher Learning Commission accreditation self study and reports; sample Board agendas and minutes; Board policies; Comprehensive Financial report dated November 16, 2011; organizational charts; committee descriptions; contract education budget documents; CREST activity report; Developmental Education Plan; Chancellor and Board Goals; listing and descriptions of professional development workshops; College Strategic Plan; staff survey reports; and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reports.

The CBT consultants assigned to these tasks have many years of experience in community college districts at different levels and in different states. They have an understanding of college culture and how different organizational structures work. They have all led complex organizations and appreciate the roles of faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees. They are committed to helping colleges improve and to the goal of increasing opportunities for student learning and success.

Findings and Observations

In meetings and interviews with trustees, administrators, and representatives of faculty and staff, CBT consultants heard a great deal of concern about trust, transparency, communication, and frustration with non-functional committees and slow decision-making processes. Lines of authority were not clear, and only recently has the Board given the Chancellor authority over his administrative staff. There remains a division on the Board as to its appropriate role in governance versus administration. The College is in the middle of an administrative restructuring, causing concern among some employees about the changes and how they will affect employees and students. Recommendations made through committees seem not to lead to decisions, and administrators are not held

accountable to make decisions after committees have addressed issues and forwarded recommendations. There does not seem to be a distinction between administrative committees and participatory governance committees.

One particular area that is in need of more involvement and transparency is the budget development process. After College staff members submit budget requests, the Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services and his staff work with budget managers at the campuses to develop the budget, but there is no mechanism for staff to provide input on where to make budget cuts and no opportunity for other College leaders to be involved in the development of the budget. The Vice Chancellor is in the position of having to make decisions without knowing the impact they will have at the campus or department level and without the guidance of any long-term fiscal plan. CBT consultants heard many times from administrators, faculty, and staff that they did not understand why some budget decisions were made or how they could accommodate unexpected budget cuts.

Administrators are constrained by provisions of union contracts so that they are not able to schedule classes when students need them or to be appropriately involved in the selection of full-time faculty. The current role of the academic deans in scheduling limits them to a little-used option of vetoing a department class schedule if they see a need for a change. Deans are constrained in that they cannot even be present during the first-level interview process for hiring full-time faculty. The lack of proper interviewing policies and procedures is creating a legal liability for OCC.

Classified employees told CBT representatives that their job descriptions are out-of-date because, as staff positions have been reduced, additional duties have been assigned to remaining staff. Maintaining up-to-date job descriptions is an important aspect of Human Resources Services, and the College should work to get job descriptions up-to-date before it becomes an even more labor-intensive task.

Administrators are not held accountable to make decisions, and action on recommendations is significantly delayed because of the mistaken assumption that committees, rather than administrators, should make decisions. Performance evaluations across all levels at the College are not consistently performed. Procedures to evaluate administrators on a regular basis have not yet been developed. CBT will be making recommendations in this area in year two of the project.

The Chancellor's Cabinet members are not equally informed about important issues. The Cabinet administrators who are members of other administrative committees or of a negotiating team do not report on a regular basis to the Cabinet. This may be due to the fact that the Cabinet has membership outside of direct reports to the Chancellor that inhibits the sharing of confidential information.

Based upon meetings with the Foundation Board and College trustees, CBT consultants believe that the Foundation has significant potential to increase its

effectiveness in raising funds for the college and for student scholarships. CBT was informed by OCC administration that the Foundation is currently not even self-supporting.

As noted in CBT's report on contract education, OCC does not have a fully staffed Grants and Contract Office. Such an office could provide a research and development function that is closely linked with the academic, student services, workforce, and college/work readiness functions of OCC. An effective Grants and Contracts Office could provide the financial support needed to address important College priorities.

At CBT's request, OCC staff prepared a complete listing of all College and campus committees and their functions. It appears that a significant amount of staff time is taken up by committee work.

Analysis

The Chancellor, through authority delegated by the Board of Trustees, is responsible for the effective and efficient administration of the College and is expected to recommend policies and policy changes to the Board and to develop and revise the administrative procedures to implement them. Likewise, the Chancellor must delegate certain administrative responsibilities to senior administrators at OCC. To carry out these responsibilities in a collegial setting, it is important that avenues are established to advise the Chancellor and senior administrators with regard to both operations and the development or revision of policies and procedures. College and campus committees are the most common avenues for the Chancellor and senior administrators to gather the advice from those who are expected to implement decisions and policies.

Administrative committees serve two purposes. They provide advice to a particular administrator in the area of operations. They also serve as a communication vehicle to ensure that procedures are interpreted and applied in a uniform manner. Generally, administrative committees are made up of those who report to the administrator who chairs the committee. Agendas can include confidential and sensitive items. The OCC Chancellor's Cabinet is an example of an administrative committee.

Participatory governance committees at both the campus and College levels bring together representatives of the College's constituent groups. They provide an avenue for an administrator to receive valuable advice from those who are most knowledgeable about specific aspects of the College or campus while also providing an opportunity for employees and students to have a say in recommendations that will affect them. Recommendations for new policies and procedures or for changes in policies and procedures are best brought before a governance committee before being forwarded to the Chancellor or the Board for action. Generally, governance committees are made up of a specific number of representatives either appointed or nominated by the constituent groups. Employee unions, as collective bargaining

groups with special legal status, are not usually considered constituent groups for the purpose of participatory governance.

Recommendations for Administration

1. Job descriptions for all administrators should be updated to show new responsibilities since the College reorganization. Job descriptions should clearly describe responsibilities, authority, and accountability in as much detail as possible.
2. Human Resources should develop a job description review schedule for all employees to ensure that the descriptions are up-to-date and accurate.
3. Administrators should be evaluated annually based upon their performance in meeting their responsibilities.
4. Supervisors should be held accountable for evaluating the performance of their employees in accordance with the provisions of union contracts.
5. Human Resources should monitor the performance appraisal process, reminding supervisors when performance appraisals are due and informing appropriate executive administrators when performance appraisals are not completed in a timely fashion.
6. Academic deans should be given the authority to schedule classes, in consultation with discipline faculty, to meet the needs of students.
7. The College Foundation should be given a specific time period, perhaps three years, to become self-supporting. During that period the College should invest funds to strengthen the Foundation and to provide Board training.
8. The College should consider the development of a fully staffed Grants and Contracts Office that could take advantage of opportunities to provide funding support for important College objectives.
9. Board changes to policies and administrative changes to procedures should be communicated to the College community on a regular basis and in an effective and timely fashion.
10. The Chancellor should conduct periodic meetings of Chancellor's Cabinet administrators and deans to discuss important College issues and how they are being addressed.
11. The Chancellor should consider the initiation of a Chancellor's Leadership Academy, which would have the potential to develop leadership skills and cross-College understanding of the important roles played by faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees. A leadership academy would also give participants an opportunity to understand how policy-makers at the federal, state, and local level impact the College.
12. The Chancellor should consider the implementation of an "innovation fund" to provide funding for the support of projects that could strengthen the College or improve student success.

Recommendations for Administrative Committees

1. College and campus committees should be clearly separated into administrative and governance committees.
2. An administrator should chair every administrative committee, and membership should be comprised of those who directly report to the administrator or those who are responsible for administering a function that is of concern to the committee.
3. Administrative committees should be advisory to specific administrators who are held accountable for decisions and for implementation in a timely manner.
4. Administrative committees should shape recommendations that are data-informed and in agreement with integrated College plans. Committee deliberations should consider how recommendations would affect student learning and success.
5. If a decision made by an administrator is different from a recommendation made by a committee, the administrator should inform the committee of the rationale for the decision.
6. Some standing administrative committees should be converted to task forces or to ad hoc committees with specific assignments and sunset dates.

Recommendations for Participatory Governance Committees

1. College and campus committees should be clearly separated into administrative and governance committees.
2. Governance committees should be reviewed to be sure they are still relevant and to determine if their missions and membership are in need of revision. The mission and current membership of all governance committees that are retained should be kept up-to-date and posted on the College Intranet, InfoMart,.
3. There should be a single primary governance committee or College Council, chaired by the Chancellor, with representatives from faculty, staff, administration, and perhaps students. Other College governance committees should be sub-committees or, if limited in duration, task forces, of the primary governance council and should report through it.
4. Standing College Council subcommittees, reporting through the College Council might include:
 - a. A Technology Committee, chaired by the Chief Information Officer.
 - b. A Facilities Committee, chaired by the Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services or the Director of Physical Facilities.
 - c. A Human Resources (HR) Committee, chaired by the Chief Human Resources Officer. An HR Committee could take the place of the Vacancy Committee and review the compatibility of staffing requests with the College Academic Master Plan.
 - d. A Budget Committee, chaired by the Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services, to serve as a clearing house for open

discussions on budget assumptions, trends, and development. Recommendations from such a committee would need to be discussed by the Chancellor's cabinet before the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor bring budget recommendations to the Board.

5. The campus presidents, who should be members of the primary College governance committee, should chair primary campus governance committees.
6. College constituent groups should make appointments or nominations for their representatives on governance committees.
7. Governance committee agendas and minutes should be posted in a timely manner on the College Intranet, InfoMart
8. Governance committees should be advisory to specific administrators who are held accountable for decisions and for implementation in a timely manner.
9. Governance committees should shape recommendations that are data-informed and in agreement with integrated College plans. Committee deliberations should consider how recommendations would affect student learning and success.
10. If a decision made by an administrator is different from a recommendation made by a governance committee, the administrator should inform the committee of the rationale for the decision.
11. Serving on governance committees should be seen as a professional obligation, and members should not receive extra pay or undue released time (which leads to a proliferation of committees and unproductive time).
12. Some standing governance committees should be converted to task forces or ad hoc committees with specific assignments and sunset dates.
13. Governance committee members should receive information on the advantages and limitations of participatory governance and training on how to be most effective as a committee member.
14. Governance committee chairs should receive training in how to be an effective chair.

Recommendations for Academic Senate

1. The primary focus of an academic senate should be academic and professional matters, including:
 - a. Student learning and success strategies
 - b. Curriculum development and program review
 - c. Degree and certificate requirements
 - d. Grading policies
 - e. Accreditation requirements and standards
 - f. Faculty qualifications, tenure requirements, and peer review
 - g. Professional development and training
2. The Chancellor should schedule regular (perhaps weekly) meetings with the Academic Senate president to discuss current College issues and challenges.

3. The Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs should be the primary administrative liaison to the Academic Senate and should forward recommendations from the Academic Senate to the College Council to ensure that recommendations are acted upon.

Recommendations for Search Committees

1. Search committees should receive training in Affirmative Action and the legalities of interviews.
2. An administrator and an Affirmative Action representative should be present during all interviews conducted by search committees.
3. Search committees should recommend an agreed-upon number of qualified finalists to the appropriate administrator.
4. If an administrator does not approve of any of the finalists forwarded by a search committee, the administrator should be able to ask the search committee to forward additional names or to restart the search.

Recommendations for Communication

1. Brief summaries of meetings of governance committees should be posted in a timely manner on InfoMart with links to the official agendas and minutes.
2. Dashboards or a Gantt chart model should be devised to show the progress of College projects toward measurable goals.
3. Members of governance committees should take responsibility to communicate with their constituencies.
4. The Chancellor and other executive administrators should schedule periodic meetings on campuses at convenient times to discuss important College issues and to provide employees an opportunity to ask questions.
5. College leaders should consider ways to bring employees together across campuses for more social interaction.
6. The Chancellor should designate an administrator, such as the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, to be responsible for oversight of communications throughout the College and community to be sure they are timely and effective.

Appendix

List of OCC committees