

EDITORS' NOTES

There has been a resurgence in interest—from both scholars and practitioners—in governance over the past decade owing to a number of forces, including changes in federal and state support for higher education funding, increased enrollments, growing competition for students, and massive retirements among community college leadership (Amey, 2004; Davis, 2000; Ehrenberg, 2004; Hines, 2000; Pusser, Slaughter, and Thomas, 2006; Tierney, 2004). Critics have noted that “current community college governance suffers from poor design and poor execution” (Davis, 2000, p. 1). We suggest that the massive turnover in leadership throughout community colleges creates new opportunities for understanding and perhaps altering governance structures within the community college—changes vital to achieving its evolving mission.

Most higher education governance structures evolved in an environment of rapid, sustained growth, when budgets grew as fast as enrollments. These governance systems were decentralized and siloed, with little communication between entities. In recent years changing environmental conditions—economic, political, demographic, and social—have increased challenges facing higher education while needed resources have declined (Alfred and Carter, 1999; Benjamin and Carroll, 1998). However, little has changed in governance structures. Thus, “higher education’s institutions and systems across the country are being forced to restructure themselves” in terms of decision making to address the problems currently facing higher education (Benjamin and Carroll, 1998, p. 93).

Governance is a complex topic, with horizontal and vertical layers, fluid processes influenced by “multiple claimants to authority” (Hines, 2000, p. 105). Although college governance is normally considered to be the purview of trustees, administrators, and faculty, new stakeholders are entering the governance arena as environmental conditions warrant—stakeholders ranging from students to part-time faculty, legislators, state accountability agencies, alumni, and local groups. External influences on community college governance have increased dramatically in recent years.

For this volume of *New Directions for Community Colleges* we have engaged authors with expertise in various aspects of governance to provide an overview of current issues and future directions related to the governance of community colleges. Best practices in governance are examined as they relate to finance, collective bargaining, economic development, and P–16 (or P–20) initiatives. Trends in governance are identified and analyzed.

In Chapter One, Marilyn J. Amey, Eric Jessup-Anger, and Jody Jessup-Anger set the stage for understanding governance in the community college—

which factors affect it and why it matters—along with a brief discussion of how community college governance differs from university governance. The authors review different governance models in community colleges as well as the role of academic senates, unions, and boards of trustees in community college governance, while placing these different models into political and economic contexts.

In Chapter Two, George E. Potter and Daniel J. Phelan examine institutional governance transformations over the past forty years (much of which George has witnessed over the forty-four years he served as an active trustee). Beyond the challenges of expanding mission, strategic planning, and policy governance are suggestions for significant modifications for boards and their presidents with regard to decision making, role clarity, and accountability.

Moving from the historical to the practical, the next three chapters look at organizational and operational aspects of governance. In Chapter Three, attorney Timothy K. Garfield discusses the challenges in managing a community college where the faculty are unionized. Unionization always results in some degree of power being shifted to the faculty, and governance becomes more legalistic as the provisions of collective bargaining contracts are added to the laws and policies of colleges. This chapter analyzes the major challenges of governing a community college with a unionized faculty and offers suggestions for dealing with these issues.

In Chapter Four, authors Michael T. Miller and Jennifer M. Miles describe the various approaches to internal shared governance utilized by community colleges, ranging from those that are intentional in their involvement of different constituent groups to those that evolve from habit, tradition, and precedence. Particular attention is given to how students, faculty (full- and part-time), and staff are involved and how external pressures affect these groups in efforts to influence decision making.

External influences on governance are discussed as part of the community colleges' workforce development imperative in Chapter Five. Here, Janice Nahra Friedel uses Kentucky and Iowa as case studies to explore the relationship between workforce development and community college governance. Kentucky's governor has called for higher education reform legislation through the creation of a new community college governance structure designed to create a responsive workforce development system. In Iowa, the legislature mandated a study of the locally governed system of community colleges, which reaffirmed a structure balancing local autonomy and state coordination to advance economic development and workforce development agendas.

In Chapter Six, Laurie Bricker, a member of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and former president of the Board of the Houston Independent School District, outlines the development of P-16 initiatives in Texas and the impact of these initiatives on community college governance. This chapter also discusses the tension between local and state governance structures that arises in P-16 and P-20 environments.

In Chapter Seven, John S. Levin discusses how community college governance varies not only regionally within the United States, but also across international borders. The chapter offers a three-nation perspective on college governance, emphasizing the condition of autonomy embedded in governance arrangements.

Chapter Eight looks to the future, as Richard L. Alfred notes the lag between rapidly changing forces in the external environment and static capabilities within community colleges mandating transformation in organizational structures, systems, and governance. A governance model that enables sustained growth and vitality is compared with more traditional models in place in many community colleges. The chapter also examines conditions inside colleges that fuel current models and identifies gaps between “what is” and “what needs to be” to succeed in tomorrow’s market. It closes with recommendations for change in governance that will facilitate colleges’ success in a volatile environment. Finally, Chapter Nine, written by Pam Schuetz, includes current resources that will be helpful to scholars and practitioners seeking new directions for community college governance.

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