

Sierra College

BOARD POLICY

BP 2715

Board of Trustees Code of Ethics

Date Adopted:	7/14/1992
Date Revised:	11/5/2024
Date Reviewed:	3/9/2021
References:	ACCJC Accreditation Standard 4.6

The Board maintains high standards of ethical conduct for its members. Members of the Board are responsible to:

- In all decisions, advance the mission of the College, and demonstrate our commitment to our students and the community at large.
- Ensure the District maintains equality of opportunity for all students without regard to national origin, immigration status, religion, age, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, or ethnicity, color, medical condition, genetic information, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, or military and veteran status, or because they are perceived to have one or more of the foregoing characteristics, or based on association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.
- As agents of the public who are entrusted with public funds, always protect, advance, and promote the interests of all citizens, and maintain independent judgment unbiased by any private, partisan or individual interests. Exercise authority only as a board.
- Through establishment of policies and appointment of administrative personnel, uphold, implement and enforce all laws and codes applying to the District.
- Recognize and actively communicate that authority rests only with the Board in a legally-constituted meeting, not with individual members.
- Attend and participate in all meetings insofar as possible, having prepared for discussion and decision by studying all agenda materials. Be informed about the District, educational issues, and responsibilities of trusteeship.
- Conduct all District business in open meetings, unless, in the judgment of the Board, and only for those purposes permitted by law, it is more appropriate to hold a closed session. Maintain confidentiality of all Board discussions held in closed session.

- Conduct effective meetings:
 - Give full attention to the meeting. Minimize the use of cell phones or communication devices by turning them off or putting them on vibrate; and minimize side conversations.
 - Speak after being recognized. Only one person speaks at a time.
 - Make sure every Board member has the opportunity to be heard, as well as staff and the public.
 - Be assertive in following the agenda, keep presentations precise, and limit meetings to a reasonable timeframe.
 - Identify routine items and put them on the consent agenda.
 - Take responsibility for seeking information sufficiently in advance necessary to deal with Board business.
 - Postpone issues when the Board feels it lacks sufficient information, unless an immediate decision is critical.
 - If a Board member votes against a decision, the member may state the basis for his or her vote, but should not undermine the Board decision.
- 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 Board. This policy shall not be construed as preventing an employee or official of the District from engaging in separate conversations or communications with members of the Board outside of a meeting in order to answer questions or provide information regarding a matter that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board, if that person does not communicate to members of the Board the comments or position of any other member or members of the Board. (Board Policy No. 2720)
- Avoid any situation that may constitute a conflict of interest. Inform the entire Board, or the Board President, when a matter under consideration might involve, or appear to involve, such a conflict. Abstain from the decision, and discussion, or any conflicting item.
- Enhance the ability to function effectively as a trustee through devotion of time to study contemporary educational issues, as well as attendance at professional workshops and conferences on the duties and responsibilities of trustees.
- Welcome and encourage the active involvement of students, employees, and citizens of the District with respect to establishing policy on current College operation and proposed future developments, and consider their views in the decision-making process. Ensure public input into Board deliberations in the spirit of the open meeting laws and regulations.
- Show support for the College, its students and staff by attending College functions, whenever possible.

- Be an advocate of the District in the community by encouraging support for and interest in Sierra College.
- Promote and maintain good relations with fellow Board members:
 - Recognize the importance of keeping an open mind and promoting the opportunity to think through other facts and points of view which may be presented at a legally constituted session of the Board.
 - Respect the opinions and differing view points of others and abiding by the principle of majority rule.
 - Respectfully work with other Board members in the spirit of harmony and cooperation. Give each member courteous consideration of their opinion.
 - Do not disparage other Board members. Do not say publicly what you would not say in a meeting.
 - Do not make disagreements on substantive issues personal.
 - Endeavor to have no surprises that put other members of the Board at a disadvantage.
- Promote healthy working relationships with the Superintendent/President and College staff:
 - The role of the Board of Trustees is to set policy. The President and staff are empowered to be decisive, innovative and creative.
 - Be transparent. Have no hidden agendas. Be candid about thinking and motives on issues.
 - Give clear parameters to staff when adopting policy or making requests of staff.
 - Support the chain of command and the shared governance structure.
 - Do not let staff use relationships with individual Board members to interfere with the chain of command.
 - Do not reference conversations with specific staff (other than executive staff) in public meetings.
 - Supporting District personnel in the appropriate performance of their duties and ensuring that they have the requisite responsibility and necessary authority to perform effectively.
 - Referring complaints and criticisms through the appropriate channels as previously agreed upon by the Superintendent/President and the Board.
 - Referring staff with complaints, or pending Board policy questions, or decisions to the Superintendent/President.
 - Expecting the Superintendent/President to keep the Board informed through both oral and written reports.

Violations

All Board members are expected to maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethical behavior and to adhere to the Board Code of Ethics. The Board will be prepared to investigate the factual basis behind any charge or complaint of trustee misconduct. A Board member may be subject to a resolution of censure by the governing Board should it be determined that trustee misconduct has occurred. Censure is an official expression of disapproval passed by the governing board, which requires a two-thirds vote of those voting. It is suggested that the Board member in question recuse themselves from the vote.

A complaint of trustee misconduct will be referred to an ad hoc committee composed of two trustees not subject to the complaint. In a manner deemed appropriate by the committee, a fact-finding process shall be initiated and completed within a reasonable period of time to determine the validity of the complaint. The committee shall be guided in its inquiry by the standards set forth in the Code of Ethics as defined in policy. The trustee subject to the charge of misconduct shall be provided an opportunity to present information to the committee. The committee shall, within a reasonable period of time, make a report of its findings to the governing board for action.