

## GOVERNING BOARD OVERSIGHT OF THE PERALTA COLLEGES

**BACKGROUND:** The Governing Board of The Peralta Colleges represents the interests of the residents of the six cities of northern Alameda County. The State of California has local control or governance of community colleges. Various facets of the law imposed by higher authority call for the governing boards to delegate the *authority* to operate the community colleges under their cognizance to the Chancellor or other appropriate senior executive. The boards are accountable to the public and other elements of society for institutional performance as spelled out in laws and regulations of higher authority. The boards are called upon to exercise *oversight authority*, a term used in the context of governing boards throughout the plethora of legal and guidance documentation.

**DISCUSSION:** The methodology for exercising oversight of institutional performance is noticeably limited in scope within the context of the applicable regulations. The board can hire a chancellor from a very limited pool of three to five candidates. The board is called upon to formally evaluate the chancellor and can terminate his/her contract for performance deficiencies. Virtually everyone agrees that a board cannot interfere with the conduct of institutional operations and then hold the senior executive accountable for the resulting performance.

So how does oversight work? What mechanisms are in place to provide the information flow, in a timely fashion, to the governing board so that an assessment of institutional performance can be made in carrying out the oversight role? The Board is charged with the development of a broad array of policies, most of which are required by various elements of society. We have some 250 policies. About ten percent apply strictly to the Board. The Chancellor is directed to develop and implement procedures for the remaining ninety percent. At The Peralta Colleges about eighty percent of the policies do not have procedures in place and the policies are presumably ignored throughout the

institution. There is no mechanism what-so-ever to evaluate compliance with Board policies. We are advised to keep the faith and maintain trust.

**EVALUATION:** I believe that everyone would agree that we have some very serious problems that prevail throughout The Peralta Colleges. The virtual collapse of the finance, information technology and human resources functions are very visible and new and significant deficiencies are discovered on a daily basis. However, the problems are not limited to 333 East 8<sup>th</sup> St. in Oakland. We have been trying to implement an Enterprise system for the better part of six years. It is well documented in business literature that this kind of a computerized, process control system demands standardization throughout the institution. This standardization has not occurred and there is little evidence of progress in that area. Then we wonder why the system does not work.

**RECOMMENDATION:** As a first step in the development of an oversight system, it is recommended that the Chancellor be called upon to formally certify in writing that the institution is in strict compliance with each of the Board policies. This certification is to be a repetitive process and should be completed no later than the first of May of each year. Any deviations in compliance should be noted, along with a timeline and action plan to bring operations into compliance. It is further recommended that the college presidents be required to certify to the Chancellor that their institutions are in full compliance with each of the implementing procedures.

It is further recommended that a task force be charged to develop an information flow covering key operating statistics so as to facilitate the exercise of the oversight role by the Governing Board, without interfering in the prosecution of day to day operations by the Chancellor.