

# ESTABLISHING POLICY

“Policy” has been defined as “a written statement of an organization’s intent and direction based on a philosophy or belief that guides the people in the organization.” If we accept this definition, it would appear that the job of a trustee, and collectively of a board of trustees, is to define the “intent” and direction” of the district and inscribe it so the managers of the institution have guidelines within which to act and a set of goals toward which to proceed. In addition, there is the responsibility to maintain an overview so as to assure the trustee, and through the trustee the community and the citizens of the state, that administrative action is indeed being taken within the context of the policies laid down.

Authority for board responsibility in policy-making resides in two acts: First, RCW 28B.10.528, the Higher Education Act, and second, in 28B.50.140, the Community and Technical College Act. In the latter act, the responsibility for the creation of “rules” and “regulation” is spelled out as a board of trustees’ obligation. After a listing of the many powers and duties of a board of trustees, there is the admonition that the board has the authority to “perform such other actions consistent with the law and not in conflict with the state college board” (SBCTC).

The Board of Trustees has responsibility for formulating policy for the operation of the college. Accordingly:

1. *Division of responsibility:*

The governance activities of the college shall maintain a clear distinction between:

- a. strategic, values-based policies, which are the responsibility of the board of trustees,
- b. administrative rules for employees to follow in implementing college policies, which are the responsibility of the president, and
- c. specific tactical decisions made in operating the various operating units, structures, or positions designated by the president.

2. *Policy development and review:*

In accordance with the policy-governance model of board operation, the board itself will set its agenda for policy development and review, based on its analysis of the strategic needs of the college after internal and external consultation, including consideration of any areas of policy development or revision suggested by the president, employee association, community, or students. This policy agenda shall be updated twice a year, and the board shall conduct a comprehensive review of its policies for relevance, clarity, and appropriateness each biennium.

The authority to “delegate” to the president, and through him to his or her designees, any of the powers and duties assigned to a board of trustees is contained in the Community and Technical College Act. It is this section of the act which largely provides the authority for administrative action. In essence, almost every action taken by the management team is taken in the name of the board of trustees. Implicit in the word “delegate” lays the responsibility of “review” for the delegating authority. Because there has been a delegation of authority in a given area, the board is not relieved of its responsibility to review actions taken in its name. This does not mean that the board must “second guess” those to whom authority is delegated. The board should, however, periodically review the performance of those to whom it entrusts management authority.

Finally, look at the close relationship indicated in the Community and Technical College Act between the “policy makers” and the “action takers.” There are in the act separate and distinct areas of responsibility for each with few “gray areas” of duplicated activity, and yet an interlocking and shared responsibility for the overall conduct of the business of the institution.