

Role of Board Chair

The board chair, as all board members, has no legal authority as an individual other than that specifically delegated by the board. Boards should adopt as policy the role and expectations of the board chair. He or she is a member of the board team, but has greater responsibility to create a positive climate, lead the board as a team, and work closely with the president.

Roles of a board chair include:

- Presiding officer of the board
- Board liaison with the president
- Spokesman for the board
- Representative of the board

Develop the board team: A good board chair will build a sense of team and help trustees work together. Board chairs help ensure there is respectful and ongoing communication among board members, and assist them in understanding their roles and responsibilities. Where there are significant disagreements or “split” boards, chairs need excellent conflict resolution skills to prevent discord from hurting the institution. It is the chair’s responsibility to work directly with individuals who are being disruptive or not contributing to the board as a unit. The board chair must occasionally remind board members of legal, ethical, and appropriate board behavior. This takes tact and courage, but is essential for an effective board.

Represent the board and district: The board chair often acts as the spokesperson for the board. Therefore he or she must be knowledgeable about the district, board policy, and external issues and trends. The chair must have the self-discipline to represent only the board’s actions, not personal views.

Work closely with the president: The board chair is a major source of support and counsel for the college president. The chair should communicate regularly with the president and clearly state board expectations on behalf of the board. The chair ensures the president is regularly evaluated.

Preside over board meetings: The chair presides over board meetings and ensures discussion and decision-making are orderly, deliberate, and appropriate. He or she works with the president to set the meeting agendas and is familiar with all items and pertinent issues. The chair ensures all trustees stay focused on policy-making, avoid administrative-type actions, support the mission and goals of the college, and are oriented toward the future.