

GRAYS HARBOR COLLEGE
Board Policy

Subject: CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Board Policy Number: 104

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POLICY STATEMENT

PREAMBLE

The trustees should set the ethical tone for their institutions through both their personal conduct and their institutional leadership.

Therefore, each trustee should adhere to the highest ethical standards and promote the moral development of the college community.

To achieve these goals, trustees should support active moral reflection, dialogue, and principled conduct among themselves, the president and administrators, faculty, staff, and students.

While no code of ethics alone can guarantee ethical behavior, the values and principles set forth in the code are intended to guide trustees in carrying out their duties. The trustees recognize their responsibilities (Attachment A) and pledge to work together according to the trustee tenets (Attachment B).

ETHICAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES IN PUBLIC SERVICE

To promote individual development and the common good, trustees should strive to promote basic values about how people should conduct themselves when dealing with others at Grays Harbor College. These values should represent a shared ideal which should permeate the institution and become for trustees a primary responsibility to uphold and honor.

Honesty. Honest persons are truthful, sincere, forthright, straightforward, frank, candid; they do not cheat, steal, lie, deceive, or act deviously.

Integrity. Persons with integrity are principled, honorable and upright; they are courageous and act on convictions; they will fight for their beliefs and will not adopt an ends justifies the means philosophy that ignores principles or be expedient at the expense of principle, be two-faced, or unscrupulous.

Promise-keeping. Persons worthy of trust keep promises, fulfill commitments, abide by the spirit as well as the letter of an agreement; they do not interpret agreements in an unreasonably technical or legalistic manner in order to rationalize noncompliance or create justifications for escaping their commitments.

Fidelity. Persons worthy of trust demonstrate fidelity and loyalty to persons and institutions by friendship in adversity and devotion to duty. They do not use or disclose information learned in confidence for personal or political advantage. They safeguard the ability to make independent professional judgments by scrupulously avoiding conflicts of interest.

Fairness. People who are fair are open minded, manifest a commitment to justice, treat all individuals equally, and have a tolerance for an acceptance of diversity. They are willing to adhere to and support the majority decision.

Caring. Concern for the well-being of others manifests itself in compassion, giving kindness to and serving others; it requires one to attempt to help those in need and to avoid harming others.

Respect. Ethical persons demonstrate respect for human dignity, privacy, and the right to self-determination of all people.

Citizenship. In a democracy, responsible citizenship is an ethical obligation; it involves lawfulness (abiding by laws and rules of society), participation (by voting and expressing informed views), social consciousness and the obligation of public service.

Excellence. Ethical persons are concerned with the quality of their work; they pursue excellence, they are diligent, reliable, industrious, and committed. A public servant must be well informed and well prepared to exercise public authority.

Accountability. Ethical persons accept responsibility for their decisions, and for the foreseeable consequences of their actions and inactions.

Protection or Public Trust. Persons in public service have a special obligation to protect the trust given to them by the public by using the Appearance of Fairness Doctrine. The Appearance of Fairness Doctrine says that you must not only act fairly and honorably, you must do it in such a way that any outsider will acknowledge your fairness. You must avoid even the appearance of impropriety or conflict of interest.

TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To devote time, thought, and study to the duties and responsibilities of a college board member so that I may render effective and creditable service.
2. To work with my fellow board members in a spirit of harmony and cooperation in spite of differences of opinion that arise during vigorous debates of points of issue.
3. To base my personal decision upon all available facts in each situation; to vote my honest conviction in every case, unswayed by partisan bias of any kind; therefore, to abide by and uphold the final majority decision of the board.
4. To remember at all times that as an individual I have no legal authority outside the meetings of the board, and to conduct my relationships with the community college staff, the local citizenry, and all media of community on the basis of this fact.
5. To resist every temptation and outside pressure to use my position as a community college board member to benefit either myself or any other individual or agency apart from the total interest of the community college district.
6. To recognize that it is as important for the board to understand and evaluate the educational program of the community college as it is to plan for the business of college operation.
7. To bear in mind under all circumstances that the primary function of the board is to establish the policies by which the community college is to be administered, but that the administration of the educational program and the conduct of college business shall be left to the president of the college and the professional and non-professional staff.
8. To welcome and encourage active cooperation by citizens, organizations, and the media of communication in the district with respect to establishing policy on current college operation and proposed future developments.
9. To support the state and national community college trustees association.

TRUSTEE TENETS

Acting as a whole. The board of trustees of a college can legally function only as a group. Individual acts of a trustee in relation to college matters are considered those of a private citizen. A board member should not misrepresent individual opinions as board opinions.

Managing conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest relate not only to the individual trustee, but also to his or her family and associates. Business relationship between the college and trustees, including hiring relatives, friends, and business associates as college employees should be avoided.

Handling special interest groups. Trustees, once appointed, are responsible for representing the general interests of the college district or service area, and should act only on the basis of what is in the best interests of the entire college and community.

Using appropriate channels. It's important for the board to establish appropriate relationships between and with the president, college employees, students, and citizens and the appropriate ways to request information to address concerns or complaints of others.

Maintaining appropriate conduct at board meetings. In order to facilitate good decision-making at board meetings, conduct at board meetings should model respect and consideration for other board members, citizens, students, and college staff.

Exercising authority as a trustee. When assuming the role as a board member, trustees assume the following responsibilities: to be knowledgeable of and support the mission and philosophy of community or technical colleges, to be knowledgeable of fiscal and legal responsibilities, to commit time and energy to discharging the duties of being a trustee, to participate as a leader in making policy, to support the college in the community, and to function as a team member.

Handling administrative matters. Board members should understand the distinction between policy making and the administration providing direction in policy development and implementation, as a resource to trustees to help them maintain their governing role.

Monitoring compensation and expense accounts. Trustees are responsible for ensuring that public funds are spent wisely and legally, including those that relate to their expenses. Questions board should ask include "Is it an authorized, legitimate, direct and reasonable expense?"