

CODE OF ETHICS - STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

The Board maintains high standards of ethical conduct for its members. Members of the Board are responsible to uphold, implement and enforce all laws and codes applying to the District. Given this basic charge, the activities and deliberations of the Board will be governed by the following Code of Ethics:

Each member of the Board will:

- A. Avoid any situation that may constitute a conflict of interest and disqualify them from participating in decisions in which they have a financial interest. Conflicts of interest may relate not only to the individual trustee but also to their family and business associates, or transactions between the District and trustees, including hiring relatives, friends, and business associates as college employees.
- B. Recognize that the Board acts as a whole and that the authority rests only with the Board in a legally constituted meeting, not with individual members. Once the Board reaches a decision, act in support of the decision.
- C. Maintain confidentiality of all Board discussions held in closed session in accordance with the Brown Act and recognize that deliberations of the Board in closed session are not to be released or discussed in public without the prior approval of the Board by majority vote, in compliance with Board Policy 2315 – *Closed Sessions*.
- D. Protect, advance, and promote the interest of all citizens maintaining independent judgment unbiased by private interests or special interest groups since they are an agent of the public, entrusted with public funds.
- E. Ensure that the District, in compliance with all applicable Federal and State laws, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, immigration status, ethnicity, marital status, age, religion, mental or physical disability, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity, medical condition, genetic information, pregnancy, sex, sexual orientation, or military or veteran status in any of its policies, regulations, or practices.
- F. Hold the educational welfare and equality of opportunity of the students of the District as their primary concern in all decisions.
- G. Demonstrate interest in the respect for student accomplishments by attending student ceremonies and events.
- H. Attend and participate in all meetings insofar as possible, having prepared for discussion and decision by studying all agenda materials.

- I. Conduct all District business in open public meetings unless in the judgment of the Board, and only for those purposes permitted by law, it is appropriate to hold a closed session.
- J. Enhance their 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.
- K. Promote and maintain good relations with fellow Board members by:
 - 1. Respectfully working with other Board members in a spirit of harmony and cooperation and affording each member courteous consideration of their opinion.
 - 2. Respecting the opinion of others and abiding by the principle of majority rule.
 - 3. Working with Board members in a spirit of respect and civility in spite of differences of opinion that may arise during vigorous debates of various points of view.
- L. Promote an effective working relationship with the Chancellor and District staff by:
 - 1. Providing the responsibility, necessary authority, and support to effectively perform their duties.
 - 2. Referring questions, complaints, and/or criticisms through the appropriate channels as previously agreed upon by the Chancellor and the Board.
 - 3. Advocating for the District in the community by encouraging support for and interest in the South Orange County Community College District.
 - 4. Remembering, at all times, that an individual trustee has no legal authority outside the meetings of the Board and should conduct their relationships with District staff, students, the local citizenry, and the media on that basis.
- M. Prohibiting personal use for themselves or others of public resources, supplies, and/or equipment, except that which is incidental and minimal, for personal purposes or any other purpose not authorized by law.

I. ENFORCEMENT

All Board members are expected to maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethical behavior and adhere to the Board’s Code of Ethics. The Board reserves the right to censure any Board member who does not adhere to this policy or engages in other unethical conduct.

- A. Censure is an official expression of disapproval passed by the Board. A Board member may be subject to a resolution of censure by the Board should it be determined that Board member misconduct has occurred.
- B. A complaint of Board member misconduct will be referred to the Board President and Chancellor.
 - 1. With the assistance of legal counsel, the Board President will appoint an ad hoc committee of three Board members not associated with the complaint to conduct an investigation and review of the matter. In the event the complaint involves the Board President, another officer of the Board shall form the ad hoc committee. A thorough

- fact-finding process, formulated in a manner deemed appropriate by the committee, shall be initiated. The committee shall be guided in its inquiry by the standards set forth in this policy and shall complete their inquiries within a reasonable period of time.
- C. The Board member subject to the charge of misconduct shall not be precluded from presenting information to the committee.
 - D. The committee shall, within a reasonable period of time, make a report of its findings to the Board for action.
 - E. Board members who are found by a majority of the Board to have acted unethically or to have violated this policy may be subject to reprimand, possible exclusion from closed sessions, removal from Board appointed committees, public censure, referral to the District Attorney for criminal prosecution, loss of the privilege of traveling to conferences and/or meetings at the expense of the District, or other action as determined by the Board.

References:

ACCJC Accreditation Standard 4.6
Government Code Section 8314
Penal Code Section 424