

ABSTRACT

TITLE: COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM INSTITUTE NETWORK COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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Public community colleges are experiencing unprecedented public scrutiny and expected to be more accountable for the decisions and policies of its leaders. To ensure public accountability of community colleges, the board of trustees has been given the responsibility of representing the community's interests and responding to the educational needs of the community. Serving as stewards of the public trust and a conduit for critical and meaningful connection to and with the college's community are a trustee's time-honored role. Trustees embody this connection when they first interact with the community and then act on behalf of the community they represent.

This case study examines and describes the public engagement practices of public community college trustees. There were two central research questions that guided this study:

1. What is the process by which community college trustees engage with the public?
2. What factors contribute to trustee public engagement practices?

Trustees' public engagement perceptions were pursued through inquiry within five categories: (a) role and responsibilities, (b) definition of public engagement, (c) public engagement practices, (d) barriers to public engagement, and (e) how to make public engagement more effective.

Five major themes emerged: (a) trustee role, (b) relationship with the public, (c) administrative and organizational structures, (d) leadership, and (e) policy from the findings, which have implications for theory and practice.

- Trustees identified serving and representing the community's interests as their role; this role has been performed with minimal meaningful contact with the community.
- Trustees had no common nomenclature for the public, constituents, stakeholders, community, public engagement or public participation.
- Trustee governance has not focused on public engagement in its relationship with the public.
- Trustees' engagement practices are influenced by a priori assumptions about the public and public participation.
- Trustees have no public engagement policy or framework linked to establishing policy or decision making.

A key finding of this study is that trustees do not identify deliberative public engagement as a role priority or a default priority. The role of trustees must be reframed and redefined to include democratic public engagement practices; and the public's role in democratic governance must be reclaimed.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: A CASE
STUDY OF NATIONAL ISSUES FORUMS INSTITUTE NETWORK
COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

Michelle T. Scott

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

May 20, 2007

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DEDICATION

The measure of a woman's character is what she gets from her ancestors and what she leaves her descendents. This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Frank and Maxine Scott and my sister Melanie, who have littered my life with unconditional love; and to my ancestors whose character, perseverance, and unrelenting faith live in me. And in loving memory of my grandmothers Cozette Byrd and Madeline Scott, who always intuitively knew what I needed and moved mountains to provide it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge the courage, vision, and leadership of Dr. Christine Johnson McPhail in establishing the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program, and for her many personal and professional sacrifices to prepare the next generation of community college leaders.

I sincerely acknowledge and appreciate the guidance from dissertation committee—Dr. Christine Johnson McPhail, Chair; Dr. Winona Taylor, Dissertation Advisor; and Dr. Robert A. Walker, Dissertation Advisor.

To Dr. McPhail: I thank you for serving as the chair of my dissertation committee and for your commitment, expertise, guidance, time, and being a standard bearer for excellence. You made me feel like I was the only student in your universe and that my research was relevant to the future of educational governance.

To Dr. Winona Taylor: I thank you for your commitment, critical insight, gentle and enduring patience, and spirit of excellence, for which I will be forever grateful. Your wit and wisdom always helped me to make sure that my research was crystal clear.

To Dr. Robert Walker: I thank you for agreeing to travel on this journey with me. Although we have been unwearied sojourners on a path to citizen liberation, democracy, and public engagement, this journey has been the most memorable. I thank you for extending a hand every time I stumbled, mumbled

and fumbled. I thank you for encouraging me to maintain integrity in the work of making a democracy work, as it should.

I especially acknowledge Dr. Charlene R. Nunley, the former President of Montgomery College, and Mr. Robert F. Cephas, the Chief of Staff at Montgomery College. Your dedicated leadership and investment in the next generation of community college leaders is one of your most important legacies. Your mantra for preparing new leadership has been, "If you can't find them, then develop and mentor them." You have more than walked your talk!

I especially acknowledge the Charles F. Kettering Foundation. Through continuing to encourage and support research that pursues the work of reclaiming a real American democracy through discourse, I have become a real believer that "the more we get together and talk, the more we discover that we have a shared future and destiny." What a profound truth.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The friends of our friends are our friends.
—African Proverb

I want to acknowledge the band of angels and sister friends who arrived early, often, and on time from villages near and far to drape me with their encouragement, love, and unwavering support.

Robert F. Cephas
William Blake
Jennifer Dobbins
Linda Fontaine
Carmen Posten-Farmer
David Gadson
Vivian Lawyer
Michael Matthews
Dr. Leslie Mitchell
Michael W. Monroe
Dilcia Morris
Miller Newman
Nathan Oliver
Dr. Maurice C. Taylor
Roylene Sims
Nathan Starr
Kriesta Watson
Brenda Williams
Janet Wormack
Jacki Zappala

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This chapter provides the contextual overview and fundamental problem that leads to the purpose for conducting this research. Several national perspectives about the disconnection between institutions of higher education and its public engagement praxis, and the significant role that higher education leadership must play to bridge this disconnection are discussed. The chapter begins with background on the research topic, followed by some national perspectives about the topic, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the conceptual framework, the central research questions, the significance of the study, limitations of the study, and definition of terms that were frequently used.

Background

Public community colleges are experiencing unprecedented public scrutiny and are expected to be more accountable for their decisions and policies. The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) warned that there is great risk for community college trustees in making policy decisions "in isolation" (Association of Community College Trustees, 2005a, p. 3). To ensure public accountability of community colleges, the board of trustees has been given the responsibility of responding to the educational needs and interests of the community and local citizens (Anson, 1982).

Trustees, however, face the awesome challenge of seeking out, considering and balancing many values and interests and integrating a wide

variety of stakeholder interests into policies that benefit the common good (Smith, 2000). To meet this challenge, the trustees' responsibility for representing the community's interests is most evident when trustees are knowledgeable, informed about, and understand the college's internal and external environments, community needs, and trends; and when trustees serve as a strategic link to the community by implementing practices that facilitate processes for engaging with the community to debate and discuss issues. Strategically linking to the community requires effective processes and practices for legitimately listening and talking to and appropriately responding to and with the community. This requirement notwithstanding, public institutions and their administrators, trusteeship and governance have focused primarily on administrative matters rather than issues and concerns arising from the public, which has consequently compromised their legitimacy with the public (Douglas, 2005; McKay, 2004; McPhail, 2005; PEW Foundation, 2004; Votruba et al., 2002). Based on these observations, it might be reasonably inferred that as a priority and practice, public community colleges, trusteeship and governance have not focused on public engagement or public deliberation in its relationship with the public.

National Perspectives

Public democracy, public policy, public administration, and public engagement theorists argued that restoring public legitimacy will require moving beyond the bureaucratic and technical expert dimensions of governance and cultivating institutional public engagement practices that include public

participation in decision making regarding education policy (Arnett, 1999; Furey, 2004; Grossi, 2001; Hawk, 2001; King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998; Mathews, 2005; PEW Foundation, 2004; Walters, Aydelotte, & Miller, 2000; Weeks, 2000). The act of moving beyond the bureaucratic and technical expert dimensions of governance also has specific implications for public community colleges trustee leadership.

The ACCT indicated that trustees have the collective role and responsibility to “represent the interests of the large group who own the institution—the community” (Association of Community College Trustees, 2005a, p. 3). Furthermore, the ACCT encouraged that the board of trustees ask themselves, “Are you effectively serving your community’s interest” (Association of Community College Trustees, 2005a, p. 6). The literature on trustees is ambiguous about whether the *community* is aware of its ownership of the institution and understands what its ownership actually means. Seminal research and popular literature on community college trustees reiterates that trustees have public trust responsibilities (Association of Community College Trustees, 2005a; Carver, 1994; Carver & Carver, 1997; Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004; Douglas, 2005; Kachiroubas, 2004; Kezar, Chambers, Burkhardt, & Associates, 2005; Mathews, 2005; Novak & Johnston, 2005; Sample, 2003; Smith, 2000; Vaughan & Weisman, 1997). Yet, this body of literature is vague on whether there is a common understanding between trustees and the public about what their public trust entails in practice. Furthermore, the literature is vague about what “public’s”

trust is being guarded (Association of Community College Trustees, 2005a; Douglas, 2005; Sample, 2003; Smith, 2000; Vaughan & Weisman, 1997), what “community’s” interests is being represented (Association of Community College Trustees, 2005a; Douglas, 2005; Sample, 2003; Smith, 2000; Vaughan & Weisman, 1997), and what “public good” trustees represent (Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004; Douglas, 2005; Kezar et al., 2005; Mathews, 2005; Novak & Johnston, 2005).

According to McPhail (2005), “the commonly accepted dichotomy in educational leadership—administration versus governance—takes governance for granted. As the result, the role of governance in leadership too often is overlooked” (p. 139). She also urged that the public trust responsibility must be understood as more than the “property or fiscal resources of the college. “[Trustees] are responsible for building an institution that can serve both today and tomorrow’s students with increasing accountability” (p. 139). As visible leaders, trustees are called upon to model for their respective institutions, students and the communities inclusive, broad-based and collaborative engagement or democratic participation practices for public deliberation and problem solving (Kellogg Commission, 1999; Kezar et al., 2005; London, 2003; Mathews, 2005; PEW Foundation, 2004; Votruba et al., 2002). In describing the purpose of the board of trustees, Smith (2000) states that trustees’ are primarily responsible for “representing the community’s interests” in their governance and policy-making processes. This responsibility requires that trustees are aware of

and consider community needs and values when setting policy. Community college trustees are in a visible public leadership roles and positions. As such, trustees are expected to engage in public discussion of issues and policies within the requirements of open meetings or “sunshine” laws. Open and public discussions of policy issues and institutional direction are also considered an important strategy to gain the public trust and confidence (Smith, 2000).

Eich (2006), adding to this discussion, remarked, “Leaders on well-regarded campuses know that good reputations are built on public trust, something neither a marketing committee nor an executive team can foster overnight” (p. 1). The reputation of an organization or institution is reflected in how it is viewed by others. “For colleges and universities, these include community leaders, current and future students, alumni, donors, faculty, legislators, the business community, competing colleges, the news media, and any other group with whom the institution may interact or wish to affect” (p. 13). An institution’s reputation includes what constituents think about its “academic merit, leadership team, position in the market, role as a corporate citizen, financial stewardship, athletic teams, physical campus, and sustainability over time” (p. 1).

Public trusteeship is conceptually a form of representative governance and “representative democracy” (Kelly, 1998; Pimbert & Wakeford, 2001, p. 1; Pitkin, 1967). Both representative governance and representative democracy philosophically presuppose, whether appointed or elected, that the role of

governance is to represent the broadest and most inclusive cross-sections of the population, which encompasses gender, race, age, disability, ethnicity, class, socio-economic status, education, and occupations (Kelly, 1998; Pimbert & Wakeford, 2001). Neither espouses serving as the public's proxy as the purpose of representative governance. In practice, representative governance requires public participation and entails engaging with the public to establish a legitimate public agenda that represents and ensures the public interests and common good. Pimbert and Wakeford warned, "democracy without citizen deliberation and participation is ultimately an empty and meaningless concept" (p. 1). However, a criticism of representative democracy is that it does not protect the interest of citizens (Pimbert & Wakeford, 2001).

In discussing representative governance, Pitkin (1967) identified four types of representation—"formal, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive. Formal representation occurs through the election process, whereby the voters give authority to an elected official to act on their behalf. Descriptive representation refers to the extent of homogeneity and comparability between the "populace and a political body or bureaucracy" (Kelly, 1998, p. 3). This form of representation espouses that policy making and implementation is more legitimate if the "decision makers are enough like those affected by the decisions to 'stand for' them (i.e., represent them)" (p. 3). Symbolic representation is the use of symbols such as the flag, the president, the king, and soldiers to express the ideal of shared values, and to stand for and represent people who are not present.

Substantive representation is acting for another and occurs when the substantive interests, issues, and wishes of those being represented are acted upon. In a case of representative governance, trustees are one example of the three common forms of substantive representation. According to Kelly, a trustee “uses his or her discretion to make decisions on behalf of and in the best interests of the represented” (p. 3). Kelly also noted that each type of representation, in its broadest context, is based on how the representatives interpret their role of standing for or acting for “those they are supposed to be representing” (p. 3).

National studies have been conducted that discuss the relationship between the academe and the public within the context of public engagement, and these studies have determined that public engagement is an important element of CEO and trustee leadership (Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Kezar et al., 2005; Votruba et al., 2002; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). A traditional role of higher education has been to join with the public and community partners to identify problems and solutions on a wide range of economic, social, education, and political issues (Boyte, 2000; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Mathews, 1999a; PEW Foundation, 2004; Votruba et al., 2002; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). In this traditional higher education role, the community college’s close ties to the community have positioned them to be civic engagement leaders in principle and practice (Zlotkowski et al., 2004).

During the past decade, however, there has been growing concern and criticism about the disconnection between the academe and the public (American

Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Boyte, 2000; Fonte, 1993; Friedman, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; London, 2002, 2003; Mathews, 1999a; PEW Foundation, 2004; Shaposka, 1997; Votruba et al., 2002). This criticism includes the perception that “the relationship between the academy and the public—is far down on the list of priorities, and only a partially identified one” (Mathews, 1999a, p. 78). This burgeoning criticism about the quality of the relationship between public institutions and the public can be characterized as discontent, disinterest, distrust, and finally disconnection. This continued and prolonged disconnection has created an estranged relationship between public institutions and the public that has not been easily reconciled.

The discourse on engagement has occurred within an ambiguous range of lexica. This ambiguity has resulted in criticism, confusion, and created a need for clarity of processes and practices that have been referred to as engagement. Among the criticism of the plethora of engagement processes and practices is that it has not gone beyond extension, conventional outreach, public service, service learning, and public relations (Kellogg Commission, 1999; McGovern, 2003; PEW Foundation, 2004; Woeste, 2002; Zlotkowski, et al., 2004). Consequently, without a clear and commonly agreed-upon definition of engagement, “some campuses and their leaders [have been left] with the impression that they are ‘doing engagement,’ when in fact they are not” (Votruba et al., 2002, p. 8). Currently, there is a more commonly accepted definition of engagement which makes clear that in practice, it is long-term, two-way

discourse interactions between an institution and the community that facilitates public participation processes for institutional collaboration with the public to identify, define, and solve public problems (Campus Compact, 2001b; Creighton, 2005; Friedman, 2004; Grossi, 2001; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; King et al., 1998; Mathews, 2006; Pew Foundation, 2004; Votruba et al., 2002).

A Kellogg Commission (1999) report indicated that a challenge that colleges and universities will face is the growing public frustration with higher education's unresponsiveness; and at the center of this challenge is the public's criticism and belief that higher education is out of touch and out of date with the problems of society. Although the Kellogg report focused on land grant colleges and universities, the Commission's contention has been reiterated by other studies conducted on higher education's relationship with the public. The demand for more accountability from the public and legislators for higher education to move toward a more public agenda is evident with the emergence of a national movement to create more publicly engaged institutions (PEW Foundation, 2004; Weerts, 2005, Votruba et al., 2002; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). This movement has been supported through scholarly research and initiatives on civic renewal and public engagement. The researchers and research organizations included Boyer, 1991; Boyte, 2002; Ehrlich, 2000; Friedman, Gutnick, & Danzberger, 1999; Harwood, 2005; Kellogg Commission, 1999, 2000; London, 2001; Peters, Jordan, Adamek, & Alter, 2005; Votruba et al., 2002;

Zlotkowski et al., 2004; the Association of State College and Universities; Campus Compact; and the Charles F. Kettering Foundation.

Ideally, democratic institutions should emulate democracy in practice and not pursue it as a destination. Creighton (2005) stated, "Democracy is a work in progress . . . [and] public participation in governmental decision making is considered part of the very definition of democracy" (p. 1). As a democratic institution, community colleges have been charged to be in relationship with the community (President Truman's Commission on Higher Education Report, 1947).

Several researchers emphasized, as corporate citizens of their communities and by the nature of their location within the communities, community colleges have a unique role and responsibility to establish and sustain relationships with the communities (Association of Community College Trustees, 2005a; Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004; Deegan & Tillery, 1991; Douglas, 2005; Gleazer, 1994; Smith, 2000; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). For example, Deegan and Tillery (1991) reiterated a perspective of Gleazer's that the community college is "ideally suited to serving as the 'nexus' among agencies dedicated to community improvement" (p. 244). Smith (2000) reiterated this perspective by indicating that because of their intimate community connections, community colleges are celebrated, and trustees embody their connections when they act on behalf of the communities they represent. Moreover, the research on public community college trustee leadership indicated that among the trustees' responsibilities is to engage the public in discussions on issues and policies

(MacTaggart & Mingle, 2002; Smith, 2000). But, in practice, how do trustees actually engage the public to discuss issues and policies?

Statement of the Problem

A pervasive problem is a lack of agreement in the literature regarding the definition of civic and public engagement. This problem has created concern, confusion, and criticism about the practices of public institutions and their administrations in engaging the public. Furthermore, there is ambiguity about the role of public engagement in representative governance (e.g., trusteeship), which exacerbates the problem. In light of these definitional and conceptual ambiguities and exclusions, there is a need for research that seeks a common meaning and critical pedagogy about representative trustee governance's public engagement practices. This kind of research could provide insight, on which community college trustees can rely, concerning how to operationalize public engagement practices that are viewed by the community as legitimate.

A traditional role of higher education has been to join with the public and community partners to identify problems and solutions on a wide range of economic, social, education, and political issues (Boyte, 2000; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Mathews, 1999a; PEW Foundation, 2004; Votruba et al., 2002; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). In this traditional higher education role, the community college's close ties to the community have positioned it to be a civic engagement leader in principle and practice (Zlotkowski et al., 2004). During the past decade, however, there has been growing concern and criticism about the

disconnection between the academe and the public. This criticism includes the concern that “the relationship between the academy and the public—is far down on the list of priorities, and only a partially identified one” (Mathews, 1999a, p. 78).

There is a growing civic movement in higher education that suggests the urgency for examining the role of public understanding, public support and public policy to mitigate the disconnection between higher education and society (London, 2003). A report on the national leadership dialogues on higher education for the public good indicated that there is a practical urgency for change in higher education. This urgency is defined by not only the potential to “revivify the public service mission of our colleges and universities but also begin to heal the separation between our nation’s academic and civic cultures, or perhaps help to restore the confidence and legitimacy to our institutions in the face of declining public trust and support” (p. 9). The report suggested several strategies to address this disconnection, which includes more closely aligning academic institutions and their culture with their public mission. Also among the suggested strategies was to establish occasions for public deliberation, dialogue, and collective action in order to cultivate a more authentic relationship between the academe and the public.

The research on public community college trustee leadership indicated that among the trustees’ responsibilities is to engage the public in discussions on issues and policies. The extant research does not discuss how trustees achieve

this responsibility in practice. A consistent theme in the literature is that community college trustees have been under-researched (Clark, 2005; Clos, 1997; Donahue, 2003; Douglas, 2005; Grabowski, 1994; Hendrix, 2004; McKay, 2004; Morgan, 2004; Peterson, 2002; Whitmore, 1987). Upon even closer examination, there is a paucity of research on community college trustees' behaviors within the context of their public engagement practices.

A plethora of engagement, public administration, public participation, and representation theorists have offered unrelated definitions of the meaning of engagement (Boyer, 1991; Boyte, 2000; Creighton, 2005; Ehrlich, 2000; Freidman, 2004; Friedman, Gutnick, & Danzberger, 1999; Gastil & Levine, 2005; Gottlieb & Robinson, 2002; Kelly, 1998; King et al., 1998; Mathews, 1999a, 2005; Pitkin, 1967; Putnam, 1993; Smith, 2000; Walters et al., 2000; Weeks, 2000; Yankelovich, 1998; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). Some engagement theorists have argued that the lack of a clear definition can leave some campuses and their leaders with the impression that they are “doing engagement,” when in fact they are not; that the breadth of civic engagement fosters great diversity of activity and as a result presents the risk that the term can say everything and nothing at the same time” (Votruba et al., 2002). Representation theorists argued that the meaning of representation is vague, not fixed, and ambiguous (Pitkin, 1967). Pitkin indicated that there is an endless controversy about the “proper relation” between representatives and constituents (p. 4). Pitkin (1967) and Kelly (1998) reiterated that public trusteeship is a form of representative governance. Both

Pitkin and Kelly also noted that in its broadest context, there is a practical difference in the behavior of representatives based upon whether they perceive their role as *standing for* or *acting for* those they represent.

The contemporary prevailing engagement theory indicated that authentic public engagement is long-term, two-way discourse interaction between an institution and the community that facilitates public participation processes for institutional collaboration with the public to identify, define, and solve public problems (Campus Compact, 2001b; Creighton, 2005; Friedman, 2004; Grossi, 2001; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; King et al., 1998; Mathews, 2006; PEW Foundation, 2004; Votruba et al., 2002; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). It also indicated that “engagement goes well beyond extension, conventional outreach, and even most conceptions of public service” (Kellogg Commission, 1999, p. 9). Reaffirming John Dewey’s theory on democracy and education, Gutman (1999) espoused,

If democracy includes the right of citizens to deliberate collectively about how to educate future citizens, then we might arrive at a very different conclusion: that the enforcement of any moral ideal of education, whether it be liberal or conservative, without the consent of citizens subverts democracy. (p. 13)

Grossi (2001) explained that the American democratic system of governance is designed around citizen participation. She also indicated, “In education, the public has demanded more accountability and has become critical of public education as a governmental institution. . . . There have been increased demands for public participation in the educational decision-making process”

(p. 103). There is a growing recognition on the part of public administrators that decision-making without [authentic] public participation is ineffective (King et al., 1998, p. 319). Both conceptually and practically, there are implications for trustees to play a decisive role in governance in the community's interest by establishing a mission of engagement that facilitates public deliberation and authentic public participation (King et al., 1998; Mathews, 2005; Weeks, 2000).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the public engagement practices of community college trustees. Recent research by Mathews (2005) raised the following question: Who is in a strategic position to forge ties between higher education and citizens trying to reengage their institutions as well as organizations who are attempting to reengage the public? He determined that the boards of trustees are in a strategic position to reengage their institutions with the public. According to Mathews, trustees are the people in an "ideal place to listen to the citizenry—their own representatives" (p. 82). As such, he went on to say, "Boards have a history of a democratic mission that is worth recalling. It is a history that sheds considerable light on how institutions came to have a civic mandate" (p. 81). Mathews reiterated, "In a democracy, colleges and universities were to serve the public interests, and the primary function of trustees was to see that they did" (p. 82). According to Sample (2003),

Although trustees legally own the university, they do not own it for their personal benefit; rather, they own it in trust for others, all of which begs the question: "For whom, specifically, do they own it in trust?" Certainly for

the current student body, for the current faculty and staff, and for the alumni. But the biggest constituency for whom trustees own a university [or community college] in trust comprises the hundreds of thousands of students, yet unborn, who will attend the university [or community college] in future centuries. Viewed in this light, trustees are stewards of a work in progress—an institution that is evolving over time. It is the trustees' privilege, and their sacred duty, to bequeath to future generations an institution that is even better than the one they own and govern today. (p. 4)

Community colleges can be exemplars of civic engagement within their communities, because they are uniquely positioned within and have close ties to their communities (Zlotkowski et al., 2004). By mediating between the internal institutional culture and the external environment of multiple constituencies, trustees relate their institution to the community and the community to the institution (Douglas, 2005).

Although there is research on the civic engagement practices of colleges and universities in general, there is limited research on community colleges and community college trustee engagement practices. Nationally, there are five community colleges that have established a center for public engagement initiatives and practices. It is important for trustees at these five community colleges to share their understanding about public engagement principles and practices and important lessons that they are learning. Collectively, these community colleges and their trustees have experiences that might be a cornerstone for understanding community college and trustee public engagement practices. Within these five community colleges, the purpose of this study was to examine the trustees' public engagement practices and the factors that

contribute to these practices. This examination was conducted within the context of public community college trustees' understanding of their responsibilities for engaging with the public in discussions on issues and policies. The researcher was seeking to discover whether trustees are facilitating traditional/conventional engagement practices or if they are facilitating occasions for public deliberation in their decision-making processes.

Conceptual Framework

To examine and describe the public engagement practices of community college trustees, this study used Creighton's (2005) four essential elements of public participation and Mathews' (2006) six democratic practices for public engagement as the conceptual framework. The researcher examined the literature on civic engagement, public engagement, public participation, democratic public participation, and public participation in public administration. The researcher argues that public engagement without the essential elements for public participation and concomitant democratic practices is antithetical to the fundamental notion and intent of public engagement. After analyzing this body of research, Creighton and Mathews were identified as creating the two major conceptual models suitable for this investigation.

Creighton's Essential Elements of Public Participation

A manifestation of democracy in action is public participation in governmental decision making (Creighton, 2005). Creighton's experience with

over 300 public participation cases has provided empirical research on the benefits of public participation. These benefits include consensus building, increasing ease of implementation, avoiding worst-case confrontations, maintaining credibility and legitimacy, anticipating public concerns and attitudes, and developing a civil society. Creighton described public engagement, as a democratic practice, entails public participation, which is defined by four essential elements—(a) issues that require administrative decision making; (b) interaction between an organization making the decision and the public; (c) organized processes for involving the public; and (d) participation that allows the public to have an opportunity to impact or influence the decision. Public participation occurs along a continuum, which has four major integrated categories—(a) informing the public; (b) listening to the public; (c) engaging in problem solving; and (d) developing agreements.

Although “procedural” public participation and “checklist participation” processes such as public hearings have an important function, this study is focused on a more democratic and collaborative model of public participation. This is public participation and public engagement model where there is power-sharing in decision making; consensus building is preferred over consensus seeking; and it moves beyond “tacit acceptance” and “informed consent” (Creighton (2005, p. 10). The sequential continuum of a public participation process begins with an organization informing the public about the issue. Because informing the public is nothing more than a “one-way communication to

the public,” informing the public does not facilitate public participation (p. 9). Critical next steps include establishing an occasion to listen to the public and engage in problem solving to reach common ground or agreement (Creighton, 2005). Public participation is characterized by a public mandate for decision makers to act; a process to integrate the public in decision making; representative stakeholders or public involvement in every step of the decision-making process, which includes defining the problem; and multiple techniques and activities to engage different audiences.

Creighton (2005) explained that public participation should be fully integrated in institutional decision making. He also recommended prior to going to the public for participation that an institution knows why it is interacting with the public at each stage of the process. This includes determining what issues need to be discussed with the public and what decisions the public’s involvement can impact. Assuring that the public is not engaged prematurely or too late is important. Since the public is not static and changes from issue to issue and it is a self-defined “subset of the total population,” Creighton maintained that anyone can decide to be a stakeholder (p. 23). As such, Creighton urged that there must be visible points of access into the public participation process so that citizens who want to participate can have a clear understanding of how and where to participate. Public participation processes should be inclusive and represent all points of view. There is no “one size fits all” public participation strategy.

However, there are critical elements of public participation that can impact its quality, legitimacy with the public and overall success (p. 2).

Through public engagement, public participation in decision making can ensure that policies are formulated in ways that “realistically” represent “citizen preferences,” limit criticisms of government administrators, and improve public support (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). Beierle and Cayford (2002) analyzed over 200 public participation cases within the past 30 years, using a rubric based upon the five social goals of public participation that are similar to Creighton’s— incorporating public values into decisions; improving the substantive quality of decisions; resolving conflict among competing interests; building trust in institutions; and educating and informing the public. “Involving the public not only frequently produces decisions that are responsive to public values and substantively robust, but it also helps to resolve conflict, build trust, educate and inform the public about the environment” was a finding of their analysis (p. 74).

Mathews’ Six Democratic Practices

Mathews’ (2006) six democratic practices of public engagement for facilitating citizen participation in decision making entails (a) naming problems in terms of what is most valuable to citizens; (b) framing issues to identify all of the options; (c) deliberating publicly to make sound decisions; (d) complementing institutional planning with civic commitment; (e) adding public acting to institutional action; and (f) turning evaluation into civic learning. This approach to public engagement empowers citizens by allowing everyone to become a

stakeholder; encouraging people to own their problems and identify options and solutions that are most valuable to the common good; limiting professionals and governmental officials from implementing an experts-only solution; including the public in implementation of the decision; and providing occasions for the public to be reflective about its civic engagement behavior and subsequent actions.

According to Mathews (2006), “As people give names to problems that reflect their experiences and deepest concerns, a routine activity is transformed into a democratic practice. Everyone becomes a stakeholder.” Failure to involve the public in naming problems can result in “professional descriptions [which] may give the impression that there is little that citizens can do” (p. 87). Mathews also stated, “Battles over the right name threaten to ignite conflicts that many people believe are counterproductive” (p. 87). Options for dealing with problems must be formulated (created), developed (cultivated), and implemented (carried out). “Public decision making is better served by a framework that includes all of the major options. These options grow out of various concerns, which are reflected in the names people use” (p. 88).

The framework is considered the sum of the options. Framing issues represent a democratic practice when two components unite—(a) the reflection of “the full range of experiences citizens have with an issue” and (b) “when the issue is based on the names citizens have selected” (Mathews, 2006, p. 89). Public forums are the places to lay out a problem, name it, and create a framework for decision making. Limiting the scope of problem solving to only two

options or approaches “pits two possible solutions against each other and encourages debate between advocates” (p. 88) When several options are explored simultaneously, it creates an environment of inclusion, thus, reinforcing a strong framework that is defined as “the sum of the options” (p. 89). Elected officials routinely and appropriately make some decisions, but other decisions need to include constituent participation. Deliberation is the process in which decision making becomes a public practice (p. 92, par. 4). Deliberation is “weighing the likely consequences of various approaches to a problem against all that we consider truly valuable” (p. 92).

In the institutional planning process, officials follow up on what people have decided in deliberations. However, “the democratic equivalent of planning is citizens making commitments to act and then reinforcing those commitments with covenants or mutual promises” (Mathews, 2006, p. 100). A reason offered for why people engage in civic responsibility is “because something valuable is at stake and because they see the possibility that they can act” (p. 100). Furthermore, when people have committed themselves in public they are “more likely to follow through” (p. 101). In the framework of civic commitment, an essential and effective component to political organizing is reciprocity,—which “builds connections between groups” (p. 101). The more inter-connectivity that occurs between groups and advocates, the more diverse the resources they can interject into public issues to bring about resolution. These connections create an environment of “social leverage” (p. 101).

Public decision making results in “public acting” (Mathews, 2006, p. 102). There are four unique qualities to public acting—lower transaction costs; increased productivity because the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts; not administratively regulated; and no administrative expenses. Public acting is multifaceted and involves citizens taking a variety of actions and working together over an extended period of time. It is mutually reinforcing, which occurs when deliberations result in a shared sense of direction; coherent without being bureaucratically coordinated; and “needed most when communities face ‘wicked problems’” (p. 101-102). A “wicked problem” is a problem whereby the “diagnosis or definition is unclear, the location or cause is uncertain, and any effective action to deal with it requires narrowing the gap between what is and what ought to be—in the face of disagreement about the latter” (p. 102). Coping with these problems requires sustained acting that does not begin at one point and end at another, but continues in a series of richly diverse initiatives” (p. 103).

Although there is a distinct difference in civic learning and organizational evaluations, they can be integrated into the regular routines of community assessment. An important distinction in civic learning is that the “community itself learns, and the learning is reflected in changed behavior. In other words, the unit of learning is the community itself, and the measure of learning is community change” (Mathews, 2006, p. 103). Civic learning can be undermined by conventional evaluations in that it fails to capture dynamics, essence and core of public building. Citizens generally want to know how well they are working

together and what they are achieving (Mathews, 2006). Another distinguishing impact of civic learning is that “both the objectives and the results are on the table for reconsideration when communities learn. That is different from measuring outcomes against fixed, predetermined goals” (p. 104). The six democratic practices are intended to ensure a continuous process whereby communities can learn, rename, reframe, and decide again. As a continuous process, “communities can make new commitments to act again and learn by acting” (p. 104, par. 4). “Communities that are in a learning mode have a better chance of staying the course. [And] For that reason, civic learning can’t wait until the end of a project; it has to go on continuously” (p. 105).

In summary, the researcher analyzed Creighton’s (2005) essential elements of public participation and Mathews’ (2006) democratic practices’ compatibility with the role of public community college trustees to engage with the public. In addition, the researcher determined that there are overlapping features in Creighton’s and Mathews’ models that create an ideal for a democratic public engagement practices. Creighton’s essential elements of public participation are embodied in Mathews’ democratic practices; and both represent the espoused philosophy, model, and practices of the National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) Network community college sites identified for this study. Therefore, to examine and describe the public engagement practices of trustees at the Network community colleges, a seven-step process was developed to examine and evaluate community trustee public engagement practices. A visual

model of the seven-step conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1. The model identifies the interplay between democratic engagement practices and public participation. It is a model that embellishes the democratic engagement practices by including public participation that is not limited to a single activity, but a succession of activities. Also the model espouses the notion that public engagement should be sustained along a continuum that begins with organized processes for involving the public to select the administrative structure, system, and process for public participation. For the purposes of this study, the researcher integrated the concepts of democratic public engagement and public participation to create an ideal model to examine and evaluate trustee public engagement practices.

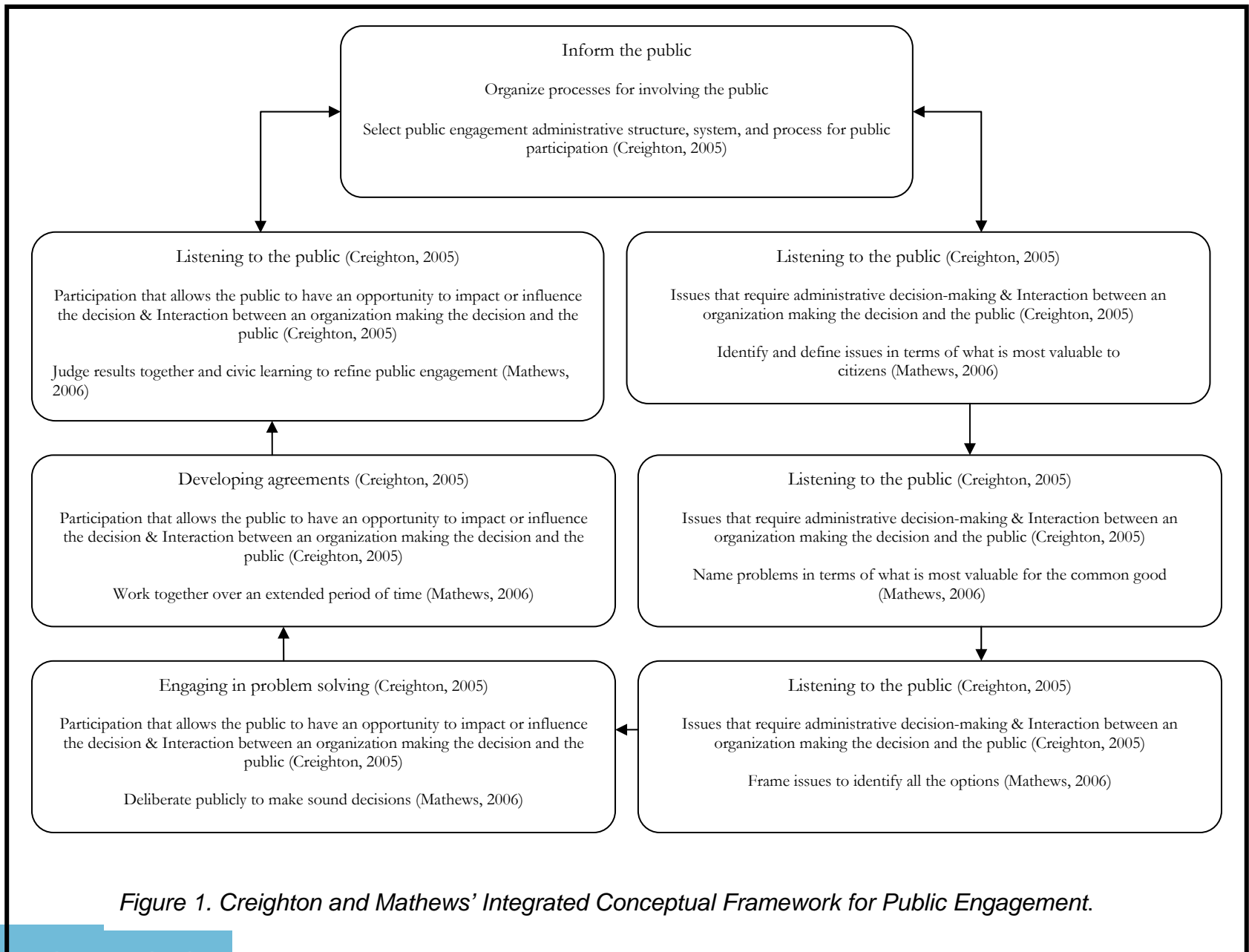


Figure 1. Creighton and Mathews' Integrated Conceptual Framework for Public Engagement.

Research Questions

There is a need for research that provides an understanding of how trustees practice their responsibilities to engage with the public to discuss issues and concerns (Smith, 2000). For the purpose of this study, the two central research questions were:

1. What is the process by which community college trustees engage with the public?
2. What factors contribute to trustee public engagement practices?

These general questions were guided by five subsidiary questions, which were based on this study's review of the literature characterization of the problem.

1. How do trustees describe their roles and responsibilities as a trustee?
2. How do trustees define public engagement?
3. How do trustees explain the role of public participation in their policy setting activities?
4. How do trustees describe the barriers to public engagement and public participation?
5. What suggestions do trustees have about making public engagement and public participation more effective?

Based on Mathews' (2006) six democratic practices of public engagement for facilitating citizen participation in decision making, these questions allowed trustees to self-report their public engagement practices and factors that contribute to their public engagement practices. These research questions also

enabled the researcher to examine how the trustees' practices aligned with Creighton's (2005) essential elements of public participation.

Significance of the Study

Community college trustees have among their responsibilities engaging the public in discussions on issues and policies, there is a need for research and theory that offers an explanation of the processes that trustees use to accomplish this responsibility. This study will contribute to an emerging body of research that explores the public engagement practices of public community colleges and its trustees. This research will provide a lens for understanding how community college trustees operationalize their responsibilities for engaging the public in discussions on issues and policies to ensure governance for the common good.

The findings from the study are significant to community college trustees and presidents; professional and development curricula, organizations, and programs; and internal and external communities of the community college, in that it will provide new information that can contribute to improving governance practices. Second, for researchers seeking data to develop community college trustee public engagement theories, this study will also be significant in providing information about current governance public engagement practices. Furthermore, a public engagement theory that illustrates the practices by which community college trustees engage with the public may fill gaps in the literature and encourage additional investigation of trustee practices and behaviors. Third, it will offer new and more effective public engagement strategies that community

college leaders can use to listen to, learn from, talk to, and share information with the public, as well as identify strategies to support and continue strong and more effective links between trustees and the communities they serve. Fourth, it will offer insight to trustees about enhancing their relationships with internal and external communities. Fifth, this kind of research might offer guidance on creating effective institutional structures, policies, processes, and practices to enable and sustain trustee engagement with the public.

Assumptions

The researcher made the following assumptions: (a) the board of trustee informants would candidly and honestly report personal perceptions, experiences, and observations about their public engagement practices and those of their respective community colleges; (b) the Public Policy Institute representative informants would candidly and honestly report personal perceptions, experiences and observations about their trustees' public engagement practices and those of their respective community colleges; and (c) both trustee and Public Policy Institute representative informants would be forthcoming about whether their institution's membership in the NIFI Network has influenced their public engagement mission, culture and practice.

Limitations of the Study

The participants in this study were limited to members of the board of trustees and the Public Policy Institute representatives from the five community

colleges in the NIFI Network. This Network includes an array of civic, educational and professional groups, organizations, and individuals that promote nonpartisan public deliberation in communities across the country. Although this national network consists of 38 organizations and many are associated with four-year universities and colleges, this study was limited to the five Public Policy Institute community colleges in the Network.

These community college sites are located in the southeastern, southwestern, mid northwestern, northern Pacific, and central Atlantic regions of the United States. Since the proposed research design explored only the public engagement practices of trustees from these five purposively selected community colleges within the Network, the findings may not be generalizable to trustee practices at other public community colleges in the state, region, or nation. This proposed research design did not claim that its findings applied to all public community college trustees.

Definitions of Terms

Before the research questions were investigated, the researcher defined several terms that would be frequently used in this study. It is intended that the reader use these definitions as a guide to understand their reference within the context of this study. For example, terms such as community and engagement were challenging to define, because their interpretations are ambiguous and nebulous. However, these terms had specific meaning to the study.

- *Authentic Engagement* refers to a discursive practice in which many stakeholders, prior to decision-making and not in every technical detail of College policy, are involved in helping to set the broad directions and values from which policy proceeds (Friedman, 2004).
- *Authentic Participation* refers to a public institution's ongoing, active involvement and engagement with the community through public deliberation (in its administrative processes) to provide opportunities for all involved to have an affect and impact on decision-making processes (King et al., 1998).
- *Community* refers to a group of individuals who share common relationships, interests, and concerns and for whom community college trustees are responsible for representing (Anderson & Jayakumar, 2002; Morse, 2004; Somé, 1993).
- *Conventional Participation* refers to public engagement practices where citizen participation occurs through public hearings, advisory boards, citizen commissions, and task forces (Weeks, 2000).
- *Public Engagement* refers to long-term, two-way interactions with the community and other external constituencies to solve public problems and is defined by sharing reciprocal and mutually beneficial expertise and respect among the participants (Kellogg Commission, 1999; PEW Foundation, 2004; Votruba et al., 2002).

- *Public Deliberation* refers to discursive decision-making, which involves citizens coming together in a non-coercive environment to solve public problems (Boyte, 2004; Lukensmeyer & Torres, 2003; Mathews & McAfee, 2001).
- *Trustee* refers to a member of the community college governance body, whether elected or appointed, responsible for ensuring the mission of the institution is accomplished, ensuring local interests are represented, and maintaining close connections with the community (Smith, 2000).

Summary

The higher education literature inferred that higher education administrators, faculty, students and a broader community of stakeholders are entering into a new genre of understanding the value of and implications for a more inclusive approach toward governance “in trust of others” to serve the “public’s interests” and decision-making for the “public good” (Grabowski, 1994; Grossi, 2001; Hatch, 2002; Hawk, 2001; Innes & Booher, 2004; King et al., 1998; London, 2003; Mathews, 2005). Sustaining the relationship between community college trustees and the public has several implications. These implications seem to suggest the need for identifying and implementing strategies to sustain connection, communication, and commitment that support and continue strong links between trustees and the communities they serve. Chapter II provides a

review of pertinent literature and studies on community college trustees and public engagement.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is a review of the critical literature and theories relevant to this study. The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the public engagement practices of community college trustees. The two central research questions that guided this study were:

1. What is the process by which community college trustees engage with the public?
2. What factors contribute to trustee public engagement practices?

This research was conducted within the context community college trustee perceptions about (a) role and responsibilities; (b) definition of public engagement; (c) public engagement practices; (d) barriers to public engagement; and (e) how to make public engagement more effective.

This literature review is organized into several major categories, beginning with a broad discussion about the characteristics of community colleges and then transitioning to a more concerted discussion about community college trustees and public engagement. The chapter categories are as follows:

- Characteristics of the American Community College
- Community College Trustees
- Community College Trustee Roles and Responsibilities
- Characteristics of Community College Trustees
- Governance at Community Colleges

- Public Engagement
- Characteristics of Public Engagement
- Public Engagement and Public Participation
- Public Engagement and Authentic Participation
- Public Engagement and Public Education
- Public Engagement and Higher Education
- Public Engagement and Community Colleges
- Public Engagement and Education Leadership
- Public Engagement and Community College Trustees

Characteristics of the American Community College

The metamorphosis of the junior college into America's community college has been a 105-year process to establish and legitimize its place in higher education. Community colleges have been on an arduous journey to step into the higher education landscape and distinguish their mission from other educational institutions (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Lorenzo & LeCroy, 1994). Since the opening of Joliet Junior College in 1901 (History of Joliet Junior College, 2005), the community college's mission has evolved through four distinct generations that span the period from 1900 to the mid 1980s. Deegan and Tillery (1991) characterized each generational mission as "high school extension, junior college, community college, and comprehensive community college" (p. 26). Cross (1991) offered that the purpose and mission of contemporary community colleges are not easy to define and "not nearly as easy as it was in the third

generation, when community colleges were in high agreement on a common purpose and a national mission to open doors of higher education to previously under-served segments of the population” (p. 34). The community college mission continues to be broad and far-reaching. As a result, a variety of students and community stakeholders benefit from its programs and services (McPhail, 2004). Today, however, the community college is in transition and entering the final gestation period of defining and delivering its “fifth generation” mission (Cross, 1991; Dougherty, 2001; Watson, 2005).

Community College Mission

The community college’s mission ostensibly is to meet the educational and workforce development needs of the local community (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Deegan & Tillery, 1991; Gleazer, 1994; Lee, 2004). As such, community colleges have been described as one of the most effective democratizing agents in higher education (Bowen & Muller, 1999; Conner & Griffith, 1994; Dougherty, 2001). Community colleges have opened the doors of opportunity to a generation of students who would not have been able to access higher education because of their socio-economic realities, poor performance in high school, or vocational interests. Based on its democratic origins, community colleges have an egalitarian impact (Dougherty, 2001). While the relevance and role of the community in the community college mission has an historical context, the contemporary discussions about the community college mission are more prescriptive. Cohen and Brawer (1996) made it clear that the community college

mission was primarily to prepare students for transfer to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, occupational or vocational training, and community education, with community education the “broadest” of its mission (Gleazer, 1994, p. 1). Critical components of community education include interaction between the college and community, use of the community as a resource for extending the broader context of learning, and an environment wherein the community can educate itself. A final component is institutional evaluation, which recognizes that the significance of citizen successes is a benchmark for institutional success (Wang, 2004).

In a 1936 article, Hollinshead, the president of a junior college in Pennsylvania, reportedly used the term "community college" (Gleazer, 1994, p. 18). The article articulated the that role of the junior college should be to meet community needs, serve and promote "a greater social and civic intelligence," provide education for adults learners, provide younger students educational, recreational, and vocational opportunities, and “the work of the community college should be closely integrated with the work of the high school and the work of other community institutions" (p. 18). An American Association of Community and Junior Colleges’ paper published in 1973 criticized that the emphasis is “too often on the word ‘college’” and proposed that as a community-based institution, the community college “organize itself around the customers’ needs” by “creating value satisfying goods and services” (Gleazer, 1994, p. 22). Gleazer observed that the maturing community colleges needed to develop and

build on appropriate structures for “a new era of education and community service and to be in the vanguard of change required in policies, institutional forms, and citizen attitudes,” which included a focus on “people—people in the community” (p. 22).

The Truman Commission

To embed the democratizing purpose of American higher education, President Truman established the Commission on Higher Education for Democracy. The Commission was charged “with the task of defining the responsibilities of colleges and universities in American democracy and international affairs—and, more specifically, with reexamining the objectives, methods, and facilities of higher education in the United States in light of the social role it has to play

(<http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/courses/eol474/sp98/truman.html>). In 1936, the Commission issued a report titled “Higher Education for American Democracy,” which established the purpose and role for the junior colleges within higher education. The report supported the view that education should benefit all segments of society—democratization—and advocated the expansion of educational opportunities for all the nation’s citizens. The findings of the Commission were instrumental in helping to set the direction for what is known today as the community college

(<http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/courses/eol474/sp98/truman.html>). The Commission recommended, “The community college must make frequent surveys of its

community so that it can adapt its program to the educational needs of its full-time students” (Gleazer, 1994, p. 19).

As contemporary higher education institutions, community colleges are viewed as dynamic, complex, and culturally iconic organizations. Often, community colleges are referred to as the gateway to higher education (Conner & Griffith, 1994; Shaw, Valadez, & Rhoads, 1999). Its mission has been instrumental in establishing its laudatory reputation as the higher education institution that provides unprecedented access to a broad range of students. This view is evidenced and reaffirmed by community college research, scholarship, and the earliest and newly established community college leadership preparation programs. Collectively, this evidence contributes to and fosters an understanding of the community college’s peculiarities through its mission (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Cross, 1991; Deegan & Tillery, 1991; Watson, 2005); leadership (Davis, 2005; McPhail, 2001, 2003; O’Banion & Kaplan, 2003); governance (Clark, 2005; Clos, 1997; Donahue, 2003; Douglas, 2005; Gayle, Bhoendradatt, & White, 2003; Hutchins, 2002; McKay, 2004; McPhail, 2000, 2005; Morgan, 2004; Smith, 2000); culture (Craig, 2004; Davis, 2005; Eagly & Johnson, 1994; Levin, 1997; McPhail, 2003; Smart, Kuh, & Tierney, 1997); teaching and learning paradigms (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Dolence, 1995; O’Banion, 1997; McPhail, 2005); policies and politics (Townsend & Twombly, 2001); students and student affairs (Blimling et al., 1999; Garrett, 2005; Komives, Woodward, & Associates, 2003; Phillippe, 2001); and relationship with and within the communities that it serves (Chambers

& Burkhardt, 2004; Douglas, 2005; Mathews, 2005; McKay, 2004; Smart, 2002; Smith 2000).

Brint and Karabel (1989) indicated that the “junior college moved rapidly from a position of marginality to one of prominence in the 20 years between 1919 and 1939” as the junior college’s enrollment “rose from 8,012 students to 149,854” (p. 23). With the growth of the community’s interests and needs for accessible post high school education, a niche was created for community colleges, which helped to establish the foundation of its mission, culture, institutional structures, and governance.

In responding to the community’s needs, community colleges have grown from one (i.e., Joliet Junior College) to 1,157 institutions, which include 979 public, 148 private, and 30 tribal colleges (American Association of Community Colleges Fast Facts, 2005c). This growth spurred changes in the community college’s mission, which have been accompanied by changing student demographics and student profiles (Blimling et al., 1999; Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Deegan & Tillery, 1991; Garrett, 2005; Komives et al., 2003).

Community College Students

With its open access policies, community colleges have rapidly become the destination of choice for a variety of students, including those who are multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, new immigrant, first generation college-bound, under-prepared and under-served, adult and high school age, as well as students with multiple visible and invisible disabilities. For example, 46% of all African-

American students, 55% of all Hispanic students, 46% of all Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 55% of all Native American students in higher education enroll in community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges Quick Facts, 2005). Enrollment data for community colleges by gender indicates that 58% of the students are female, 42% are male, and the average student age is 29 years (American Association of Community Colleges, 2005b).

Since 1901, at least 100 million people have attended community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2005a); currently, community colleges enroll approximately 10.4 million students, which includes “44% of all U.S. undergraduates, and 46% of all first-time freshmen” (Phillipe, 2001). As the niche, mission, and student demographics of community colleges changed, it became necessary to develop unique, specialized student support services. In addition, a cadre of highly skilled professionals who have experience in student support are needed to provide support services (Blimling et al., 1999; Boyd, 1996; Cross, 1991; Dougherty, 2001; Garrett, 2005; VanWagoner, Bowman, & Spraggs, 2005), and there are implications for reframing leadership and governance paradigms (Clark, 2005; Clos, 1997; Donahue, 2003; Douglas, 2005; Gayle et al., 2003; Hutchins, 2002; McPhail, 2000, 2005; McKay, 2004; Morgan, 2004; Smith, 2000).

Community College Trustees

Although national and regional studies, both qualitative and quantitative, have been conducted about appointed and elected community college trustees and board chairs, community college trustees are still under-researched. During the past 20 years, the research on community college trustees has included studies that advance an understanding of the

- awareness of presidents and trustees of selected legal and otherwise designated responsibilities of presidents (Jones, 1982);
- views of trustees on particular policy-making issues pertaining to educational programs, funding, and governance on the basis of demographic characteristics (Verner, 1984);
- profile of trustee characteristics, attitudes, and activities (Whitmore, 1987);
- trustees and policy involvement (Grabowski, 1994);
- extent to which board leadership is transformational (Clos, 1997);
- effectiveness of appointed and elected community college governing boards (Hernandez, 1998);
- perceptions of trustees regarding mission and governance (Hutchins, 2002);
- factors that affect the decision-making process, important issues, trustee effectiveness, and collective bargaining of trustees who are ACCT members (Peterson, 2002);

- reasons that governing boards tend to micromanage administrative affairs in their institutions (Lampton, 2002);
- trustees' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities within the context of the rural communities they serve, rural geographical district, and rural culture (Law-Broeren, 2003);
- relationship between personal characteristics of urban community college trustees and their viewpoints on the mission, mission function statements, and ranking of mission functions (Morgan, 2004);
- perceptions of appointed versus elected community college trustees' of mission and governance (Hendrix, 2004);
- perceptions and preferences of trustees' levels of involvement in institutional governance activities at Vanguard and non-Vanguard colleges (McKay, 2004);
- trustee knowledge of Learning College principles and perceptions of learning centered practices for creating and maintaining a Learning College (Clark, 2005); and
- processes trustees use for mediating the internal and external environments (Douglas, 2005).

Since there is a general gap in the higher education literature on community college trustees, this body of research provided critical philosophical and prescriptive perspectives and reiterated the roles and responsibilities of trustees. However, there continues to be a gap in the literature that provides a lens for viewing and understanding the practices of trustees relative to their roles

and responsibilities. For example, Hutchins (2002) implied that more studies are necessary to describe trustee perceptions and views about mission and governance. Within the context of trustees as guardians of the college's mission, Hutchins explained that there is a need to further research and carefully examine the perceptions of community college trustees regarding mission and governance (p. 2). Donahue (2003) argued that while leadership of the community college president has been studied extensively, the leadership of the board of trustees chair has been largely ignored. Furthermore, Donahue criticized that much of the literature on governing boards is focused on the "managerial and legal obligations of trustees" (p. 52). The studies on the role of the chair in board governance and leadership are a relatively new and emerging area of research, and Donahue stated that more study needs to be done in this area (p. 1). With the increasing number of first-time community college presidents, Donahue suggested that trustee research is especially necessary in order for these new presidents to better understand the critical relationship between the board chair and CEO. Understanding and perfecting this relationship is a prescription for CEO success. McKay (2004) suggested that "further research on trustee and CEO involvement in external affairs" was necessary (p. 102).

To provide an understanding of trustees as leaders, Douglas (2005) conducted a study that offered insight into the involvement of trustees within the context of external affairs. That study is significant and particularly relevant to this study in that it is not prescriptive, but descriptive, and provides "an understanding of the actions and behaviors of community college trustees" (p. 10). More

specifically, the Douglas study investigated the process community college trustees use to mediate between internal and external environments and provided a theoretical model for understanding how community college trustees relate their institutions to their communities and their communities to their institutions. Douglas reiterated that trustees have the tasks of meeting the expectations and needs of multiple stakeholders among their responsibilities (p. 6) and described mediating” as a behavior that places the trustees between or “in the middle” of its internal and external environments (p. 6). Douglas stated that trustees are “situated in the middle of their institution’s internal and external environments and select how the two environments relate to each other” (p. 6). Conceptually, these behaviors included “conveying, communicating, managing, navigating or negotiating ideas, needs or expectations between different groups” (p. 6). Douglas’ practical examples of mediating behaviors included “formal or informal conversations with constituents, studying issues in order to understand multiple and conflicting stances about those issues, meeting with public and state officials, engaging in institutional strategic planning, and providing input on board agendas” (p. 6).

The theory that emerged in the Douglas (2005) study proposed that trustees serve as “conduits or two-way channels between their colleges and stakeholders.” This trustee conduit role can create expectations for ensuring that the needs of students and the community are met, which also magnifies the trustees’ feelings of accountability to the public. That the strategies trustees selected to manage their conduit roles were influenced by several contexts and

conditions, which included informing, promoting, advocating, connecting, explaining, and alleviating conflict, were among the findings of the study. The choice and implementation of a strategy can result in six potential outcomes: (a) a positive image of the community college, (b) validation, (c) personal rewards, (d) diminished personal or political agendas, (e) agendas for further action, and (f) partnership building.

Another finding of the study was that community college trustees make significant contributions to the institutions they serve when they mediate between the internal and external environments of their communities. When trustees mediate, they not only respond and react to trends and expectations; but, by listening and conveying information, they enable their colleges to better meet the needs of their constituents, help their communities prepare for the future, and gain support for their community colleges. A final significant finding of the study was that presidents are in a key position for cultivating a board culture that promotes positive mediating behaviors; that trustees can take a strong role in building a board culture that reinforces positive mediating behaviors; and that organizations that provide services to trustees should consider broadening the traditional roles and responsibilities of trustees.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Task Force on Public Engagement (2002) conducted a study that produced a final report titled *Stepping Forward as Stewards of Place*. This study, spanning a

period of two years, involved its membership institutions. By disseminating a national survey, case studies and interviews, the Association developed a framework that is useful to presidents and chancellors for determining how higher education leaders think about and promote public engagement on their campuses. The study described the challenges of public engagement for higher education institutions and identified definitive ways in which institutions needed to respond. There were two primary research questions that guided the study—How do campuses and their leaders translate the rhetoric of engagement into reality, and how do presidents and chancellors “walk the walk” as well as “talk the talk” in leading engaged institutions? An assessment for higher education engagement was developed for the study that was constructed around a model for institutional engagement to compare what was considered an “ideal” with the “real” (p. 10). As a result of the study, “a strategic toolkit” was developed that “state college and university CEOs who want to breathe more life into the concept of public engagement at the campus, college, and departmental levels” can rely on (p. 10). The guide provides presidents, chancellors, and other campus leaders with a working definition of public engagement as well as identifies exemplary initiatives on campuses committed to engagement. It also proposes specific actions that institutions, public policy-makers, and the Association can implement to demonstrate their commitment to public engagement. The AASCU’s research is among the seminal studies establishing the role of higher education leadership in determining and sustaining public engagement as an institutional mission and

priority. As the Association considers its study and guide an important resource for

. . . CEOs who have determined that public engagement is an important element of their overall institutional mission and who now must think and act strategically in order to get all elements of the campus aligned and working together in support of public engagement efforts, . . . it can also serve as a resource for local leaders and policymakers looking for ways to better link with nearby colleges and universities. (p. 10)

The AASCU study (2002) provided a conceptual framework from which Weerts (2005) conducted a study on *how campus executives, faculty, and staff at large research universities articulate and demonstrate their commitment to outreach and engagement and how community partners validate and make sense of this commitment*. Weerts also determined that several factors explain an institution's commitment to service, outreach and engagement: (a) institutional history and culture, (b) leadership, (c) organizational structures and policies, (d) faculty and staff involvement, and (e) campus communications. However, a unique aspect of the study was the perspective of community partners, wherein the findings indicated that the community perceptions about institutional commitment to outreach and engagement are informed by the rhetoric and behaviors of top executives. There were two primary research questions that guided the study—What are the factors that shape or characterize a land grant institution's commitment to outreach and engagement, and what ways and to what extent do these institutional factors inform community partners' perceptions about institutional commitment to outreach and engagement? Both the AASCU and Weerts studies are among the critical higher education public engagement

research, which identified leadership as a key factor for predicting an institution's commitment to engagement (Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004; Douglas, 2005; Grossi, 2001; Maurrasse, 2001; Smith, 2000; Votruba, et al., 2002; Walshok, 1999; Ward, 1996; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). However, there is a need to understand how trustees, as visible leaders charged with the responsibilities for engaging the public in discussions on issues and policies, think about and promote public engagement on their campuses and practice public deliberation in their relationship with the public.

The AASCU (Votruba et al., 2002), Weerts (2005), and Douglas (2005) studies reiterated the essential role of leadership in influencing and shaping an institution's mission, agenda, and processes for public engagement with its stakeholders and communities. Douglas' research offered a theory for understanding how community college trustees relate their institutions to their communities and their communities to their institutions. Collectively, these studies provide a context for exploring and understanding how higher education leadership thinks about and promotes public engagement on their campuses. Furthermore, the AASCU study provided a model for comparing the "ideal" with the "real" public engagement practices of trustees, which can be, therefore, analyzed using deliberation as a model for public engagement (p. 10).

Community College Trustee Roles and Responsibilities

According to Vaughan and Weisman (1997), "approximately 46,000 men and women serve on the governing boards of higher education institutions" (p. 6).

Serving as a college trustee is seen as a civic calling (Smith, 2000; McPhail, 2005; Mathews, 2005; Nason, 1982; Polonio, 2006; Vaughan & Weisman, 1997). Trustee service is considered important in American democracy, and it is believed that lay boards are an important ingredient that enables higher education institutions to effectively function in a society committed to democratic ideals (Vaughan & Weisman, 1997).

The literature on the roles and responsibilities of community college trustees has been more prescriptive than descriptive. Ingram (1997) enumerated the trustee responsibilities as—setting and clarifying the mission and purpose; appointing and supporting the CEO and monitoring the CEO's performance; ensuring good management; ensuring adequate resources; relating the campus to the community and the community to the campus; reviewing educational and public service programs; preserving institutional independence; and serving as a court of appeals. Fisher (1991) expanded these trustee responsibilities to include representing the institution and the public, evaluating the institution, and assessing board policies.

Smith (2000), in her study on community college trustees, provided a context in which trustees should perform their responsibilities that included acting as a unit to represent a common good; setting policy; employing, supporting, and evaluating the chief executive officer; defining policy standards for college operations; monitoring institutional performance; creating a positive climate; supporting and advocating the interests of the institution; and leading as a thoughtful, educated team. Smith determined that trustees are leaders at there

respective institutions and stated, “Boards are more than another layer of administration” (p. 17).

Trustee literature reiterates that the board of trustees has a decision-making and policy-setting role and responsibility. The sunshine laws have been the government’s response to the public’s concern about the ways public officials make decisions and set policy, and every state has sunshine laws (Hearn, McLenson, & Gilchrist, 2004). Within public institutions, the sunshine laws are intended to ensure that the public good is the primary purpose for decision making and setting policy. The sunshine laws have been viewed as a democratic tool for holding government decision makers accountable to the public and ensuring “both procedural and outcome equity in decision making” (p. 1). In a multi-state survey, Hearn et al. reported that open-meeting and open-records laws showcased the “difficulties in balancing compliance with the need for candid board deliberation” (p. 1).

Robert and Carey (2006) advised,

American education has never been more in need of good governance than it is right now. Yet, much of the structure many boards have inherited or created tends to stall or impede timely, well-informed, and broadly supported decision making. (p. 19)

Chait, Holland and Taylor (1993) observed that the organizational and operational focus of boards is less focused on long-term strategies. During a discussion of restructuring Brown University’s governance body, “the lack of strategic direction, inadequacy of time allotted for discussion (as opposed to passive presentations), and insufficient use of members’ experience and

knowledge” was noted (Robert & Carey, 2006, p. 21). Burke (2004) explained, “Trustees are best positioned to balance the civic, academic, and commercial forces pressuring higher education—each of which presents a different vision of accountability” (p. 1). He discussed six primary accountability obligations of trustees and higher education officials. Burke indicated that trustees must— demonstrate the proper and legal use of their powers; demonstrate that they are working to achieve their “designated mission”; “report how well they are performing to stakeholders and the public”; pursue effectiveness and efficiency with resources received; ensure program quality; and guarantee the institution is responsive to the public’s needs (p. 3). Some of these accountability obligations represent a new and expanded role for trustees. Trustees must ensure and insist that their institution is responding to the public’s needs, and reporting institutional results to the public has become recognized as essential in a democratic society (Burke, 2004).

As a corporate body, trustees acquire and maintain their authority, which is relegated to them through their responsibility of acting as a unit (Association of Community College Trustees, 2005a; Smith, 2000). This requires that trustees speak with one voice and work toward common goals (Smith, 2000). In order to speak with one voice, trustees must be able to gather relevant and representative information based upon broad-based community needs in order to identify common goals (Douglas, 2005).

Trustees have a critical responsibility, which is sometimes misinterpreted, to govern their institutions. This governance responsibility is regarded as

distinctly different from that of administration and management, which is the role of the CEO. Although state law establishes the authority of trustees, there is a commonly held belief that the trustees “strength comes from its connections to the communities” (Smith, 2000, p. 69). In answering the question—What is the role of trustees—Sample (2003) posited, “There may be as many answers as there are campuses in the United States” (p. 1). MacTaggart and Mingle (2002) explained, “Many trustees are uncertain of both their authority over their institutions and their responsibility to society” (p. 2). However, as trustees reconcile their uncertainty, among their important responsibilities is to nurture, preserve, and protect their institutions and fulfill their policy development role. In fulfilling this role, trustees pursue “three agendas simultaneously”—an institution-first agenda, which includes gathering new resources and enhancing academic prestige; an administrative agenda, which is established by the state statutes and includes planning and accountability; and a public agenda (p. 3). The public agenda, according to MacTaggart and Mingle, tends “to be less defined but no less important”; focuses on the “broader social benefits of higher education and less on the individual ones”; and it puts the “consumers—students, employers, citizens, and taxpayers—first and institutional interests second. In other words: A ‘university exists to serve the people’” (p. 3). In pursuing their agenda, these authors warned that it is important for trustees to understand the academic, economic, and social purposes of higher education and be mindful of the need for strong executive leadership and the need to be both accountable to, but separate from, state government.

While discussing the board leadership and CEO relationship, Pocock (1988) indicated, “There is a clear and abiding recognition of this common responsibility to provide leadership, a responsibility that must be at the heart of the relationship between the board chair and the president” (p.15). Pocock further explained that the nature of that relationship is “highly specific to the nature of the institution, its ordained and accrued governance practices, the structure of the board and its method of appointment, the pressures peculiar to the institution and, above all, the personal chemistries and drives of the two parties” (p. 15).

McKay (2004) said,

Trustees and CEOs must be educated in and agree upon those principles that drive the purpose, culture, direction, governance and overall effectiveness of the community college. Each of these areas significantly impacts the vision and mission of the institution, which ultimately impacts student learning at community colleges. (p. 101)

In order to be educated about and consider the strategic directions for the college, trustees are expected to optimize their role as the linkage between their respective institutions and the communities. There are 20 essential questions that every board member must answer, according to the ACCT (2005). Among those questions is, “Are you effectively serving your community’s interest” (ACCT, 2005b, p. 6).

There is consistency within the literature on several trustee responsibilities that are similar for nonprofit boards and public boards—acting as a unit; assuring legal and fiduciary accountability; employing, evaluating and supporting the CEO; exercising oversight in defining policy standards for operations; and representing

constituencies and viewpoints for the common good (Carver & Carver, 1997; Smith, 2000, ACCT, 2005a; Board Source, 2005).

Characteristics of Community College Trustees

The demographics of community college students have changed significantly over its 100-year evolution. The Vaughan and Weisman (1997) national survey identified a trustee demographic profile of the ACCT trustee members, which is noticeably different from community college student enrollment data. The ACCT published the survey findings in the book *Community College Trustees: Leading on Behalf of Their Communities*. Table 1 contains data on the demographic profile of the participants in the 1997 Vaughan and Weisman study (Smith, 2000). Polonio (2006), however, indicated that the current trustee profiles are similar to the data from the Vaughan and Weisman study. Demographic diversity among trustees and their associated viewpoints provide “the most direct means to inject community needs and values in institutional policy-making” (Morgan, 2004, p. 3). Although there have been changes in the community college’s student diversity demographics, there are relatively unnoticeable changes in trustee demographics and diversity profiles. There is also limited research on the how trustees assure that they are listening to, hearing from, talking to and connecting with broader and diverse communities in order to represent their interests (Morgan, 2004). With the changing demographics of the community college’s students and its surrounding community, research that explores and explains trustees’ behaviors is more pertinent than it has ever been before.

Table 1

Vaughan and Weisman's Profile of Public Community College Trustees

Gender		Education	
Male	67%	Bachelor's degree or higher	85%
Female	33%	Degree beyond the bachelor's	51%
		Have attended a community college	51%
Ethnicity			
Caucasian	86.6%	Employment Status	
African American	7.9%	Employed outside the home	68%
Hispanics	2.3%	(63% fulltime)	
Asian American	1.1%	Retired	28%
Native American	0.8%	Homemakers	3%
Other	1.2%		
		Occupation	
Age		Professions other than education	43%
Range	22 — 84	Education	24%
Average	57.5 years old	Business Owner or Manager	17%
		Sales, Service, or Office Work	4%
Political Party Affiliation		Farmer, Rancher, Forester	4%
Republican	43%	Others	8%
Democrat	42%		
Independent	14%	Annual Family Income	
		Less than \$55,000	23%
Political Stance		55,000 — 100,000	41%
Moderate	52%	Over 100,000	36%
Conservative	35%		
Liberal	12%	Method of Trustee Selection	
		Appointed by governor	35%
		Appointed by local officials	28%
		Elected	30%

Governance at Community Colleges

Community college governance is occurring in a political, economic, social and cultural environment, wherein the CEO and the board of trustees share a common role and responsibility—to *together* create an environment to successfully achieve the mission of the institution (Chait et al., 1993; Fisher, 1991; Sherman, 1999, Smith, 2000). The trustee literature provides a lens for understanding the delicate and deliberative nature of the CEO and board relationship. While this relationship has been viewed as sometimes complex and

“hierarchical,” the literature consistently intimates that the board is responsible for creating an environment in which the CEO has the power to lead the college (Fisher, 1991; Smith, 2000; Vaughan & Weisman, 1997). Smith (2000) offered that the role of the board is significantly different from that of the CEO, in that trustees “do not do the work of their institution—they establish standards that work through policies they set” (p. 16). In essence, the “board works for the public, and the CEO works for the board” (p. 67). As “stewards of the public interests and college mission,” boards have a fiduciary responsibility, which is often best implemented in supporting the CEO (p. 17). Stewardship of the public interests is to assure, within the trustees’ role, the institution’s financial solvency by their active involvement in the financial affairs of the institution, not just fund raising (Fisher, 1991); prudent fiscal and asset management; and ethical and legal use of funds (ACCT, 2005, Smith, 2000). Fisher indicated, “Money is the board’s responsibility” (p. 100). Fisher also implied that the board should delegate responsibility and authority to the president to run the institution; as such, “the president would be perceived as an agent of the board with its complete mandate” (p. 96).

However, this mandate has new meaning in the aftermath of corporate financial scandals, such as Enron, Tyco International and WorldCom. The financial scandals of these corporations have created new levels of government scrutiny and accountability for public companies and corporate boards. Corporate financial scandals are the parents of legislation such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. This Act was established to assure accountability in public financial

matters, including corporate responsibility, financial fraud, financial disclosure, auditing, and auditor independence. The Act is profoundly relevant to the community college board of trustees, in the trustees' responsibilities as a corporate body and fiduciary agents. In fact, Basinger (2004) advised that community college trustees, as a nonprofit board and stewards of public funds, must be prepared to respond to increased external scrutiny. Trustees have been admonished to preserve "both the principles and practice of good governance while expanding the oversight responsibilities of the Board as addressed by Sarbanes-Oxley" (Basinger, 2004).

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act was identified in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2004) among the top ten legal issues for higher education. Christine Helwick offered that "it will take several years before colleges can effectively respond to Sarbanes-Oxley issues—the role of trustees in institutional governance, the institutionalization of new ethical standards, the granting of greater independence to auditors, the establishment of new procedures for whistle-blowers, and so on" (p. B4). Dreier (2005) stated,

The splash the law has made has left the boards of some colleges, universities, and other nonprofit organizations bobbing on a sea of uncertainty. As the Act's requirements have taken hold, trustees and lawmakers have been grappling with whether to apply Sarbanes-Oxley to higher-education institutions and, if so, how its requirements, which Congress crafted for public companies, should affect nonprofit colleges and universities. (p. B10)

Although, to some, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act might seem to blur the role of governance and management, Dreier (2005) advised, "The question of whether Sarbanes-Oxley benefits a college or university has been left to each board to

answer” (p. B10). Dreier’s perspective notwithstanding, there are some immediate implications of the Act for CEO and board relations, including the need to work collaboratively to maintain sound financial controls; adopt new governance measures and financial-reporting policies; and establish, monitor, and enforce policy for institution operations and compliance. By implication, this will require the CEO and board to commit to maintaining a solid partnership, with open and honest communication about all financial matters, including, if applicable, the institution’s Foundation Board, daily updates on institutional legislative compliance, contracted services, financial ethics, financial disclosure, and the requirement to conduct annual audits through an independent auditing firm. Finally, financial compliance is a two-way street, in that individual trustees, the CEO, and senior management have a duty of open and honest disclosure, to appropriately act to assure fair dealing, and to excuse themselves from financial decisions that represent or might represent a conflict of interest or self-interest.

Another impact on trusteeship and governance regarding the political and social climate is where state and local support for higher education are rapidly dwindling. Contemporary higher education leaders have expressed concern about issues of access, affordability, and the ability of higher education to meet enrollment demands. These issues are impacted by federal and state public policy and magnified by the demands of national and local legislators for more accountability in such areas as—resource utilization, institutional efficiency and effectiveness, student learning outcomes, public and private partnerships, and relationships with the public (ACCT, 2005a; Barr, 2002; Goldstein, 2005; Nunley,

2004; VanWagoner et al., 2005). Furthermore, these issues are exacerbated, as higher education competes for fiscal resources, in an austere budget environment where politicians struggle to prioritize resources for supporting wars to achieve peace, assure the future economic well-being of Americans through Social Security, and deliver universal health care through health care reform, all of which also have public policy implications. The competition for state funding of higher education has resulted in some higher education officials concluding, “Colleges and universities have gone from being state sponsored to state assisted and state located” (Public Policy Paper Series, 2005, p. 1).

The Association of Governing Boards (AGB) (2005) suggested that it is not convinced that higher education has successfully made its case to be considered as a potential budget priority. This observation by the AGB was addressed in more detail in its 2005-2006 biennial report, which summarized the top ten public policy issues that affect higher education—homeland security, scientific research, affordable tuition, participation of low-income students, diminishing state capacity for higher education policy, culture wars, economic and workforce development, accountability to the public, ownership of intellectual property, and Sarbanes-Oxley (Association of Governing Boards, 2005, p. 1). The AGB also issued a 2003-2004 report that identified the top ten higher education public policy issues, of which only four of the same issues were identified in its 2005-2006 report. The AGB reports, by implication, suggested that trusteeship and governance require decision making about public policy

issues and that the public's interests must be considered in trustee decision making about public policy.

The AACT commissioned an environmental scan that identified 20 trends that might affect community colleges and the future of the communities. These trends, based upon the social, political, technological, global and other environments, ranged from the struggle of local and federal governments to respond to increasing demands for limited fiscal resources to changing student demographics to issues of safety and security. Although the ACCT scan does not specifically address such issues as the culture war, Sarbanes-Oxley, and ownership of intellectual property as identified in the AGB report, both reports suggested implications for the community college board of trustees in every area of their roles and responsibilities, especially, in their policy-setting role.

Although the AGB (2005) and ACCT (2004) reports framed the public policy issues differently and perhaps more specifically for four-year colleges and universities, both reports pose an obligation for the CEO and board of trustees to be introspective and reflective about the strategic directions and public policy priorities for their respective institutions. These reports reemphasized the critical responsibility of leadership and trustee governance to make informed decisions, such as fiscal management based on current and accurate internal and external data, to engage in strategic planning about the future direction of the institution based on internal and external environmental data, and to annually conduct institutional and self-assessments to assure organizational efficiency and effectiveness based on these and other data.

The ACCT's *Guide to the Practice of Exemplary Governance Series* (2005) articulated that its goal is to help develop the competencies of high-performing boards through identifying state-of-the-art governance practices at community colleges. The Association identified processes and practices of exemplary governance that can help move boards beyond theory. These processes and practices fall within five critical areas of board competency—the community, advocacy, policy development, affirmation and review, and regulatory compliance. As a unit, trustees should demonstrate these competencies in order for the board to move beyond governance, as a theory, to practices that model exemplary vision and leadership. In identifying the significance of the relationship between the community and the board, the guide is reiterative that every board action is taken on behalf of the community. Within the context of advocacy, trustees have the role of determining the needs and wants of the community and translating those needs into actions that benefit the community. In the area of policy development, the guide suggested that trustees must assure that the community's needs and wants are affirmed and confirmed in the trustees' decision-making processes. For trustees, in particular, the AGB (2005) and ACCT (2004) reports, as well as the ACCT's *Guide to the Practice of Exemplary Governance Series* (2005) make a compelling case for reassuring that boards of trustees are connecting with the community in its decision-making and that it is an essential component of assessing institutional and board effectiveness.

Public Engagement

In order to do the public's will, public institutions, including the community college, are viewed as democratic institutions that have a civic duty to engage the communities that they serve. Pimbert and Wakeford (2001) argued, "Democracy without citizen deliberation and participation is ultimately an empty and meaningless concept" (p. 23). Citizen deliberation through public engagement is multidimensional. The effectiveness of citizen deliberation and participation can be examined within the dimension of a public engagement practice, process, purpose, place and participants. There is increasing evidence that these dimensions of engagement are essential for public institutions to most effectively do the public's will and facilitate the authentic participation of the public in decision making (Creighton, 2005; Furey, 2004; Grossi, 2001; Hawk, 2001; King et al., 1998; Mathews, 2002, 2006; Morse, 2004; Reich, 1988; Walters et al., 2000; Weeks, 2000). Emerging research on engagement suggested it has been subject to a variety interpretations. In order to gain some perspective on the nature and characteristics of engagement, this section provides a review of literature on engagement in higher education, public deliberation, public participation theory, authentic engagement, and authentic participation of the community.

Characteristics of Public Engagement

The Kellogg Commission, Kettering Foundation, PEW Foundation, and the Center for Democracy and Citizenship have been national leaders in advancing

research that defines and theorizes engagement. Public engagement has been considered a strategy for renewing civic spirit and reconnecting and restoring the relationship between the academe and the public (Boyte, 2000; London, 2002; Kellogg Commission, 1999; PEW Foundation, 2004). The processes and practices for engagement have occurred within several contexts, and the discourse on engagement has occurred within a range of lexica. This lexica includes public engagement, civic engagement, public deliberation, authentic engagement, authentic participation, strong democracy, unitary democracy, discursive democracy, deliberative dialogue, deliberative democracy, outreach, community outreach, community service, public service, community relations, and service learning (Friedman, 2004; Gottlieb & Robinson, 2002; Grossi, 2001; Hawk, 2001; King et al., 1998; Mathews, 1999b, 2005; Mathews & McAfee, 2001; McGovern, 2003; PEW Foundation, 2004; Roberts, 1997, 2003, 2004; Walters et al., 2000; Weeks, 2000; Woeste, 2002).

Often, discussions about engagement within higher education have been relegated to and focused on socializing students to undertake their civic role in society. This civic socialization process has been primarily pursued through service learning activities and programs. Newman (2000) offered that it is important to prepare students for civic engagement or democratic participation. However, a study on engagement reported, "For colleges and universities, too often 'engagement' is synonymous only with service and volunteerism on the part of undergraduates" (PEW Foundation, 2004, p. 106). The report also indicated that while service learning and outreach efforts are valuable, . . . true

engagement encompasses an institution-wide commitment to civic education and community problem-solving efforts that are much broader in scope” (p. 106).

Boyte (2000) argued that civic engagement is too narrowly defined and suggested that civic engagement is more than community outreach or public service. He criticized that engagement has been considered as something carried out “on behalf of the community instead of in partnership with the community” (p. 4). Boyte maintained that engagement needed a more “‘public epistemology,’ one that emphasizes the art of public discourse, the cultivation of civic imagination and capacity, the importance of engaging alternative points of view, and the value of engaging in ‘public work’” (p. 4).

There are many public engagement and discursive processes, including debate, discussion, deliberation, and dialogue, all of which have particular uses and values. While “dialogue and deliberation share some [similar] characteristics, the main differences are that dialogue seeks to educate, and deliberation seeks both to educate and to decide” (Mathews & McAfee, 2001, p. 10). Although debate, a conventional public discourse process, also seeks to decide, it has discursive characteristics that are uniquely different from a deliberation and dialogue. Debates have been characterized as competitive, seeking to persuade, seeking majority, and promoting opinion. Deliberation has been frequently characterized as a democratic practice (Barge, 2002; Boyte, 2000; Burkhalter, Gastil, & Kelshaw, 2000; Button & Mattson, 1999; Gastil, 2000; Mathews, 1994; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). While deliberation has democratic attributions, Burkhalter et al. (2000) challenged that it is only one of many kinds of political

talk that help maintain a healthy polity. . . . Each is necessary in its own way”
(p. 419).

Public Engagement, Public Deliberation, and Authentic Participation

Public engagement within the framework of deliberation and authentic participation are inextricably linked. Public engagement that is deliberative facilitates opportunities for a broad range of relevant stakeholders to participate in decision making. It moves beyond concerns with legitimacy and public relations to shared control; it embraces the tenants of democracy, including equal representation and participation; for public institutions, public administrators and public officials, these practices are ethical imperatives (Anderson, 1998; Arnett, 1999; Friedman, 2004; Furey, 2004; Grossi, 2001; Hawk, 2001; King et al., 1998; Mathews, 1999b; Mathews & McAfee, 2001). As an engagement practice, public deliberation occurs when public institutions, public administrators and public officials cultivate the habit of implementing strategic approaches and processes for the authentic participation of the public in discussions on issues and policies. By its nature, public engagement through deliberation can be essential for public institutions to demonstrate their intention to move beyond mere public relations to shared control with a broader community of stakeholders in planning, decision making, and outcomes (Boyte, 2004; Friedman, 2004; King et al., 1998). In conventional participation practices (i.e., advisory boards, public hearings, town hall meetings, citizen commissions), “the administrators or the institution control the ability of citizens to influence the situation or process” (King et al., 1998,

p. 319). An important aspect of authentic participation is that it “places the citizen next to the issue, and administrative structures and processes furthest away” (p. 319). Weeks (2000) indicated that “conventional avenues of citizen involvement, such as public hearings, advisory boards, citizen commissions and task forces, engage only a small number of citizens and typically involve only those with a particular interest in the specific policy area” (p. 3). Walters et al. (2000) stated: “The public exists in informal associations and not just in formal organizations . . . [and] that successful citizen participation depends on the appropriate crafting of citizen participation strategies” (p. 350).

Public deliberation that assures authentic public participation can ensure “ongoing, active involvement, not [just] a one-shot deal, [and]... outreach to every part of the community, however defined” (Walters et al., 2000, p. 319). Authentic public engagement

. . . assumes that many stakeholders can and should be involved, not in every technical detail of College policy, but in helping to set the broad directions and values from which policy proceeds. . . . Engaging these groups early on makes it more likely that important actors will view your plan as legitimate and be willing to actively support it later, when you are putting it into effect. (Friedman, 2004, p. 7)

Public deliberation, as form of public engagement, does not have as its intent to facilitate competition, persuade, promote opinion, or seek majority. Its fundamental purpose is to “seek private understanding and to create public knowledge” about a situation or issue (Mathews & McAfee, 2001, p. 10). Some key characteristics of debate, dialogue, and deliberation are identified in Table 2.

Table 2

Key Characteristics of Debate, Dialogue and Deliberation

DEBATE	DIALOGUE	DELIBERATE
CONTEST	EXPLORE	CHOOSE
COMPETE	EXCHANGE	WEIGH
ARGUE	DISCUSS	DECIDE
PROMOTE OPINION	BUILD RELATIONSHIPS	MAKE DECISIONS
PERSUADE	UNDERSTAND	UNDERSTAND
SEEK MAJORITY	SEEK UNDERSTANDING	SEEK INTEGRATIVE DECISIONS
DIG-IN	REACH ACROSS	FIND COMMON GROUND
TIGHTLY STRUCTURED	LOOSELY STRUCTURED	FRAMED TO MAKE CHOICES
EXPRESS	LISTEN	LISTEN
CHOOSE SOLUTION	DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING	DECIDE COMMON PATH
USUALLY FAST	USUALLY SLOW	USUALLY SLOW
CLARIFIES	CLARIFIES	CLARIFIES
MAJORITARIAN	NON-DECISIVE	COMPLEMENTARY
PARTISAN VICTORY	PRIVATE UNDERSTANDING	PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE

Source: Data is from Charles F. Kettering Foundation Public Policy Workshop (2003), Dayton, Ohio.

The philosophical foundation of public engagement that facilitates deliberation is that an engaged public talks together, learns together, and acts together; “the more we get together and talk, the more we discover that we have a shared future and a shared destiny” (Mathews & McAfee, 2001, p. 8). Deliberative public engagement is characterized as essential for exploring, building relationships to make decisions, seeking understanding, and seeking private understanding to create public knowledge. Prior to deliberative public engagement, an issue is identified (named) and defined and synthesized (framed) in a context with language where even non-expert publics and communities can understand its scope and impact. Deliberative dialogue, as a public engagement practice, is based on the premise that to improve the nature of public discourse, the participants must have the opportunity to:

- share their personal stakes (i.e., self-interest and what is of value to them) about an issue and their preferences for a specific policy direction;
- weigh the benefits, consequences and costs of various public policy approaches with other community members, and
- identify the common interests or common directions of their self-interests among the self-interests of other dialogue participants (Mathews & McAfee, 2001).

It is an inclusive practice that recognizes that no one individual, institution or organization has all the information or facts about an issue or concern. It is also a practice that recognizes that there is no prevailing self-interest that determines the best public policy strategy. Institutions that are implementing effective and successful public engagement practices also recognize that “the public exists in informal associations and not just in formal organizations” (Walters et al., p. 350). Authentic public participation practices might dispel *a priori* notions and conjecture among public administrators and public institutions, including public governance boards, that its most commonly used and conventional practices of relating to the public (i.e., study circles, debates and town hall meetings) are preferred by the public.

Public Engagement and Public Participation

Public participation theorists have concluded that public administrators and the public have been on an unrelenting journey to establish a mutually agreed-upon and common understanding of the public’s role in decision-making processes. The criticism about and rationale for and against public participation and public engagement in public administration and representative governance

decision making is extensive. There is increased interest in public participation in administrative decision making (Creighton, 2005; King et al., 1998; Morse, 2004; Pimbert & Wakeford, 2001; Reich, 1988). This interest is particularly evident as citizens are demanding more accountability of public officials and citizen trust of government and public officials is diminishing. While there is no public participation approach that fits every situation, there is “a growing recognition on the part of public administrators that decision making without public participation is ineffective” (King et al., 1998, p. 319).

Public participation is defined by four essential elements: (a) issues that require administrative decision making; (b) interaction between an organization making the decision and the public; (c) organized processes for involving the public; and (d) participation that allows the public to have an opportunity to impact or influence the decision (Creighton, 2005). The sequential continuum of a public participation process begins with an organization informing the public about the issue. Traditionally, this process of informing has included determining the public participation process, defining the issue for the public, and proposing a solution to address the issue. It is important to mention that informing the public is nothing more than a “one-way communication to the public;” therefore, informing the public does not constitute or facilitate public participation (p. 9). In order to reach common ground or agreement about how to address an issue, it is critical for an organization to establish occasions for listening to the public and engaging in collaborative problem solving (Creighton, 2005). Creighton indicated that public participation is generally characterized by a public mandate for

decision makers to act; a process to integrate the public in decision making; representative stakeholders or public involvement in every step of the decision-making process, which includes defining the problem; and multiple techniques and activities to engage different audiences.

During the past decade, however, there has been increased criticism of and cynicism toward the government and its public participation and public engagement practices (Evans, 1997; Habermas, 1984; Irvin & Stansbury 2004; King et al., 1998; Walters et al., 2000; Weeks, 2000; Yankelovich, 1991). A constant focus of this criticism has been on the government's failure to facilitate authentic public participation processes for public decision making and, as such, the government's lack of authentic engagement with the public (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; King et al., 1998; Walters et al., 2000; Weeks, 2000). An observation about the importance of public participation is reiterated in the statement, "Despite the good that policy-makers and shapers can affect, real social change *does not happen without the active involvement of the public*" (Voices, 2000, p. 6). The importance of public participation in public engagement is that it "involves getting real people to do real things to affect change in our society. Public engagement harnesses voices of the public to demand that their rights, needs and desires are met" (Voices, 2000, p. 6).

A practical observation by Ebdon and Franklin (2004) was that structured opportunities for public participation in decision making are not prevalent. In their research, they found that where public input has the most impact, it is especially not prevalent—in budget decisions. The occasions for which the government

generally facilitated input from citizens have been considered a strategy for reducing citizen distrust of the government and educating citizens about government and its activities (Ebdon & Franklin, 2004). For example, citizens have been found to be less cynical about local government in cities where citizens have more participation (Berman, 1997).

The contemporary literature on public participation suggested that public institutions have far too long instigated an estranged relationship with the publics that they have been established to serve. This estrangement can be further exacerbated when public institutions fail to authentically engage the public's participation in its decision-making processes. There is substantial literature that advocates a critical role for the public with public institutions within the governance process as well as advocating for a shift in the governance process and the need to create a new public participation paradigm (Adams, 2004; Arvai, 2003; Austin, 2004; Campbell, 2005; Cortes, 1996; Creighton, 2005; Dimock, 1990; Ebdon & Franklin, 2004; Farmer, 2002; Harwood, 2005; Heifetz & Sinder, 1988; Innes & Booher, 2004; King et al., 1998; Marshall & Anderson, 1994; Mathews, 1999b, 2002, 2005; Mathews & McAfee, 2001; McSwite, 2005; Morse, 2004; Petts & Leach, 2000; Putman, 2000; Roberts, 1997, 2003, 2004; Walters et al., 2000; Webler & Tuler, 2000; Vigoda, 2002; Weeks, 2000; Weerts, 2005; Yanklelovich, 1991). However, not all public administrators have reached consensus with the public on the value of and process for effective public participation in decision making. There is embedded and pervasive resistance to the notion of a new public participation paradigm.

The notion of public participation and the role of citizens in governance were among Aristotle's earliest philosophical discussions about government. Aristotle viewed citizens as political beings, and he defined the citizen "as a person who has the right to participate in deliberative or judicial office, . . . [and the Aristotelian] "citizens were more directly involved in governing" (Cortes, 1996; Aristotle's Political Theory, 2006, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics/>). In general, however, the role of citizen governance and public participation in governmental decision making has emerged, as a contemporary issue, which has not been reconciled.

Public Engagement and Social Capital Theory

Cortes (1996) is among several researchers who have discussed the views of citizens, government officials, and policy analysts regarding the opportunities and challenges of public participation in public policy and decision-making processes. Cortes expressed concern about the "disintegration of the civic culture" and criticized that "our political identity as citizens who can shape our destiny is eroding" (p. 2). Cortes' even greater concern was the lack of organizations that connect people to political power and facilitate participation in public life—essentially the lack of collaboration, lack of reciprocity, lack of trust, and, in essence, the lack of social capital. Within the context of public conversations, Cortes discussed the significance of social capital, which he defined as "public relationships of trust and collaboration among adults" (p. 2). Humans are social beings who are defined by their relationships with others and

their engagement with others in the daily business of life, he noted. The social nature of humans is relevant, he offered; because, in a democracy, the best judgments are those made in conversations and debate with others. Cortes also indicated that public conversations create occasions for face-to-face dialogue and provide citizens an opportunity to actively participate rather than function as passive spectators. “Democracy, at its heart, is distinguished by public conversations about the interests of citizens. And politics is how we translate those conversations into action” (p. 1). This might suggest that public conversations are political activities.

The hope of Cortes (1996) was to revitalize democracy by creating institutions (e.g., schools, religious institutions, community organizations) with an infrastructure for mediating and facilitating relationships that connect to the public and connect the public to one another. Mediating institutions were referred to as those in which “relationships were developed among neighbors and families that cut across lines of race and economics. . . . Social capital and civic culture were created, and real politics was practiced” (p. 3). Cortes espoused that as a function of ensuring self-governance and democratic institutions, an important role of mediation institutions is training community leaders as to how to participate in public life. He criticized that for universities, action is rarely an outcome, even with deliberation, discussion, judgment, and wisdom. He challenged that there must be a willingness to have the conversations to develop leadership and practice real politics that assures social capital.

Public Participation

According to King et al. (1998), “Although the political system in the United States is designed to reflect and engender an active citizenry, it is also designed to protect political and administrative processes from a too-active citizenry” (p. 318). This protective intent is reinforced when institutions resist public participation and view it as a liability, ineffective, time-consuming and costly (Walters et al., 2000; Weeks, 2000). Walters et al. stated, “One of the persistent criticisms of policy analysis is that it [public participation] undermines basic democratic institutions and processes by replacing public participation and debate with esoteric expert analysis” (p. 349). These researchers further indicated that commonly held perspectives about and resistance to public participation in policy discussions are attributed to the following beliefs:

- Today’s problems are too complex for the public to understand.
- The incremental decision-making characteristic of democracy is irrational.
- The public is either uninterested or pursuing their self interest rather than the public interests.
- Rational decision-making and democratic decision-making have different goals.
- Greater citizen involvement means redefining public officials’ roles in decision-making, an uncomfortable process rejected by many officials.
- It is more time-consuming, expensive, complicated and emotionally draining. (p. 349-350)

In considering the value of citizen participation, many administrators are, “at best, ambivalent about *public* involvement; or, at worst, they find it

problematic” and “any participation seen as challenging the administrative status quo is blocked by the very administrators who desire more participatory processes” (King et al., 1998, p. 319).

Roberts (1997) explored the generative approach, one of four basic approaches to general management, in public education administration that seemed to be most compatible for public deliberation. The four basic approaches are “directive, reactive, adaptive, and generative” (p. 124). In two case studies, Roberts concluded that “public deliberation, as the cornerstone of the generative approach to general management in the public sectors, is an emerging form of social interaction used to set direction for government agencies” (p. 130). While each approach is considered an “ideal type that emerges from an interaction among an organization’s major elements—its political, technical, social and economic environments, as well as internal leadership, membership, and design factors,” Roberts examined the generative approach as being most useful in public deliberation because of its implications for public participation in decision making. The goal of the generative approach is “to help people find some underlying framework or solution that would enable them to resolve the paradoxes inherent in modern organizations” and to promote organizational learning “that develops people’s capacity to create new solutions to old problems...” (p. 125). Roberts observed, however, that it is challenging for public executives to craft policy and set direction through public deliberation. In order to enhance the public deliberation capacities of public executives, she suggested that these executives would need to see themselves in a new role and re-

envision themselves as stewards of democracy who function as conveners and facilitators of learning and engagers of a collective and mutual process for gathering and assessing information.

In a national survey of public officials, Berman (1997) examined the extent of cynicism and the extent to which “public officials can reduce the level of cynicism by adapting better communication strategies, improving public participation in decision making and enhancing government’s reputation for efficiency and effectiveness” (p. 105). Berman indicated that the public’s disillusionment with government has caused alienation, disenfranchisement, distrust, and disengagement. He noted, however, “While public officials are concerned about its relationships with the public, little has been written about the role of the public administrators’ role in shaping the attitudes of the public about that relationship” (p.107).

The theory of cynicism was developed, as a result of the Berman (1997) study, and it suggested three goals for public administration strategies to reduce public cynicism. The first strategy was to “show that the government uses its power to help citizens, rather than to harm them or be indifferent” (p. 107). The lack of citizen awareness about local government activities produced the lack of trust between citizens and government. The second strategy was to “incorporate citizen input into public decision-making” (p. 107). Berman indicated that venues such as public hearings did not often attract citizen participation; he suggested citizen surveys, panels, and focus groups as alternative strategies. The third strategy was to “enhance the reputation of local government for competency and

efficiency,” which had two components, “good performance and effective communication of that performance” (p. 107).

Weeks (2000) described the strategic alternatives recommended by Berman (1997) as “conventional avenues of citizen involvement” (p. 3). He also criticized “public hearings, advisory boards, citizen commissions and task forces” because they “engage only a small number of citizens and typically involve only those with a particular interest in the specific policy area” (p. 3). As some institutions have been perplexed about identifying their public and pardoned themselves from implementing public participation strategies, Walters et al. (2000) said, “The public exists in informal associations and not just in formal organizations . . . [and] that successful citizen participation depends on the appropriate crafting of citizen participation strategies” (p. 350). Weeks explained,

Citizens are angry with their political leaders, estranged from civic institutions, distrustful of the news media, and pessimistic about the prospect for collective action to solve community problems. At the core of our dysfunctional political culture is the degraded quality of civic discourse—how we talk about public problems. (p. 360)

Weeks argued that a critical problem is that the public has been viewed as a customer and the government as a market. He stated, “These views demean the nature of citizenship and the responsibilities of government . . . [and that] . . . it is time to enlarge the sphere of public discourse and restore the voice of ordinary citizens” (p. 371). “Despite the good that policy makers and shapers can affect, real social change does not happen without the active involvement of the public” (Voices, 2000, p. 6). Authentic public engagement has been recommended as a critical strategy because it “involves getting real people to do

real things to affect change in our society. Public engagement harnesses voices of the *public* to demand that their rights, needs and desires are met” (p. 6).

Upon reflecting and critiquing Habermas’ discourse theory of democracy, O’Neill (2000) applied the theory to lawmaking. O’Neill posited, “No citizen, or group of citizens, should be excluded from a democratic process of legitimation. Relevant interests and needs, values and aspirations, convictions and conceptions of identity must somehow all be factored into our lawmaking procedure” (p. 503). He argued, however, that within a pluralistic democracy, the theories of democratic legitimacy needed to reconcile the possibilities of “tension between the demands of inclusion and the need for reasoned agreements among citizens” (p. 503). As such, he particularly considered this to be a challenge in a pluralistic democracy. He challenged that to adequately “address the problems and prospects of discursive democracy,” there is a need to “broaden the scope of philosophical reflection so as to investigate the material and cultural bases of such a form of political engagement” and to “investigate the conditions favourable [sic] to the emergence of such a society” (p. 519).

Ebdon and Franklin (2004) noted that structured opportunities for public participation in decision making is not prevalent; however, where public input has the most impact, it is especially not prevalent—in budget decisions. In their study of public participation in budget decisions, these researchers observed, “Citizen input is generally viewed as a way to reduce the level of citizen distrust in government and to educate people about government activities” (p. 33).

With regard to the notion of public participation in education, Shaposka (1997) offered, “In recent decades community involvement has not been a salient component of public education. Schools seemed content to function without engaging the public and became isolated from their communities” (p. 4).

Adams (2004) indicated that public meetings have been criticized as “useless democratic rituals that lack deliberative qualities and fail to give citizens a voice in the policy process” (p. 43). He argued, however, that public meetings have a role to play in fostering citizen participation in policy-making (p. 43). Frequently, public institution processes and practices for involving the public in decision making have been accused of falling short of the mark. According to Hawk (2001),

Often, what appears to be participatory practice is really just smoke and mirrors as participation is used as a tool of collusion, diversion, or purely to promote good public relations. Participants often become disheartened as they realize that their voices count little or may not be heard at all. (p. 3)

Irvin and Stansbury (2004) discussed the conditions for effective citizen governance and the conditions where community participation is ineffective and costly. They indicated that much of the debate and discussion on citizen participation has focused less on the process and more on the benefits. In evaluating the effectiveness of citizen participation processes, Irvin and Stansbury explained that there are two tiers that should be considered—“process and outcomes,” and two beneficiaries—the “government and citizens” (p. 2). Irvin and Stansbury identified some mutual advantages and disadvantages to citizens

and government for citizen participation in the decision-making process and outcomes.

Irvin and Stansbury (2004) identified three specific advantages to citizens and the government in a decision-making process. The first advantage is that it provides occasions for “education,” which is essentially opportunities for the citizens to “learn from and inform the government” and the “government to learn from and inform the citizens” (p. 2). Among the education advantages is that “the administrators, through regular contact with citizens who might otherwise not be engaged in the policy process, learn which policies are likely to be explosively unpopular and how to avoid such policy failures” (p. 3). Persuasion is the second advantage, which is essentially the opportunity for citizens to “persuade and enlighten government” and government to “persuade citizens, build trust and allay anxiety or hostility” (p. 2). According to Irvin and Stansbury, “Whether the government truly collaborates with citizens, or whether it merely works to win over citizen sentiment, a key assumption of successful political suasion is the social influence of citizen participants” (p. 3). The third advantage is twofold: (a) citizens to “gain skills for activist citizenship” and (b) the government to “build strategic alliances, [and] gain legitimacy of decisions” (p. 2).

There are specific outcomes that can be anticipated in concert with the decision-making process advantages. The first two are advantageous to both citizens and government by creating a “break in gridlock” and “better policy and implementation of decisions” (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, p. 2). They also stated, “In some communities, traditional political discourse can disintegrate into

obstructionist maneuvers, bringing decision-making to a halt” (p. 3). The third outcome has a citizen advantage, which is to “gain some control of the policy process” and a government advantage, which is to “avoid litigation costs” (p. 2).

Citizens and the government have different outcome concerns about citizen participation processes, which have created some problems, criticisms and some decided disadvantages. Concurring with Walters et al. (2000), Irvin and Stansbury (2004) reiterated that the government commonly complained that citizen participation was a disadvantage because it is time-consuming and too costly. Government is focused on “loss of decision-making control,” the “possibility of bad decisions that are politically impossible to ignore,” and “less budget for implementation of the actual priorities” (p. 4). The government has also been concerned about citizen “backfire” and “creating more [citizen] hostility toward government” (p. 4).

On the other hand, citizens are concerned that their decisions will be ignored in the decision-making process (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). As such, citizens viewed their participation as problematic and pointless. Citizens are focused on the possibility of “worst-policy decisions,” especially if the decisions were “influenced by opposing interest groups,” a disadvantage. It was further noted that with effective structuring and adequate resources, “certain problems” of the citizen-participation processes could be resolved. Irvin and Stansbury indicated that other problems with citizen participation were contextual and suggested that “some communities are poor candidates for citizen-participation

initiatives, and measurable outcomes may be better achieved with other decision-making methods” (p. 4).

There is, however, a growing recognition on the part of public administrators that decision making without [authentic] public participation is ineffective (King et al., 1998, p. 319). The citizen participants in the King et al. study agreed that the “main problem with participation as it is currently practiced and framed is that it doesn't work. They believe that finding better ways to engender participation will make it more meaningful for all involved” (p. 319).

Public Engagement and Authentic Participation

The literature contains a variety of perspectives and propositions about the best practices that institutions can employ to engage with its stakeholders. However, the integrity of an institution's public relationships and the legitimacy of its engagement practices might be viewed with skepticism and subject to criticism if it does facilitate authentic participation. Hawk (2001) provided a source of relevant research on engagement and authentic participation. Hawk's contribution to the literature established an understanding of the nature of authentic participatory practices in the public schools. Her research examined the factors that shape participatory practices in a school and why some individuals and groups are empowered while others are disenfranchised. The study affirmed that authentic participation preserves and embraces the tenants of democracy by ensuring “equal representation and participation, the development of the individual, shared control, a more active and informed citizenry,” and requiring

institutions to act with “greater moral authority” (p. 55). Anderson (1998) and Hawk provided a more complete description of authentic participation, and Anderson explained,

Authentic participation moves beyond concerns with legitimacy and public relations to shared control. It conceives of participation as important for the development of the individual, important for the creation of democratic institutions, and important as a means to increase learning outcomes. Finally, it defines democracy as participatory rather than merely representative and results in more active and informed citizens and institutions with greater authority. (p. 2)

King et al. (1998) determined, “Public participation processes have four major components: (1) the issue or situation; (2) the administrative structures, systems, and processes within which participation takes place; (3) the administrators; and (4) the citizens” (p. 319). Authentic participation adds another level of understanding to the engagement discussion about the involvement of stakeholder voices. King et al. defined authentic participation as a “deep and continuous involvement in administrative processes with the potential for all involved to have an affect on the situation” (p. 320). Authentic participation provides citizens with the “ability and opportunity” to impact the decision-making process; it is “ongoing” and characterized by the “active involvement” of citizens (p. 320). It is not a “one-shot deal” where citizens only participate by “just pulling the lever” when voting; it should “reach out to every part of your community, however defined” (p. 320). There is a growing recognition on the part of administrators that “decision making without [authentic] public participation is ineffective” (p. 319). King et al. developed “Table 3,” which summarizes the key differences between unauthentic and authentic participation (p. 321). To assist

with identifying authentic discursive involvement, the Grossi (2001) study also assessed how superintendents engaged public participation in educational administration decision making, using the King et al. table.

Table 3

Comparison of Authentic and Unauthentic Participation

	Unauthentic Participation	Authentic Participation
Interaction style Participation is sought	Conflictual After the agenda is set and decisions are made	Collaborative Early; before anything is set
Role of administrator Administrative skills needed	Expert technician/manager Technical; managerial	Collaborative technician/governor Technical, interpersonal skills, discourse skills, facilitation skills
Role of citizen Citizenship skills needed	Unequal participation None	Equal partner Civics, participation skills, discourse skills
Approach toward "other" Administrative process Citizen options Citizen output Administrator output Time to decision	Mistrust Static, invisible, closed Reactive Buy-in Decision Appears shorter and easier but often involves going back and "redoing" based upon citizen reaction	Trust Dynamic, visible, open Proactive or reactive Design Process Appears longer and more onerous but usually doesn't require redoing because citizens have been involved throughout; may take less time to reach decisions than through traditional processes
Decision is made	By administrator/political and/or administrative processes perhaps in consultation with citizens	Emerges as a result of discourse; equal opportunity for all to enter the discourse and to influence the outcomes

Source: King, C. S., Feltey, K. M., & Susel, B. O. (1998, July/August). The question of participation: Toward authentic public participation in public administration. *Public Administration Review*, 58(4), 319.

Hawk (2001) argued,

The current focus in public education is on things borrowed from a rational, positivist view of the world. Standards, accountability, benchmarks, and scores hold hostage the thinking and practice of many educators. Influenced heavily by a market economy mentality, educators scramble to establish bottom lines, display data-driven goals, and convey their successes toward the attainment of externally driven standards.

Concerns about competing in the global marketplace and losing face with the business community cause school leaders to examine existing practices, usually in terms of what's most productive, not what's most just. The values of efficiency and effectiveness often outweigh those of equity and community in administrative thinking and practice. (p. 1)

Hawk repeated a perspective of Sirotnik and Oakes (1986).

In the midst of this market-driven milieu is another world. It is marked by an increasingly diverse public and growing cynicism toward public schools. The disjuncture between the way schools are, the way the public would like them to be, and the way the students need them to be is becoming more polarized. (p. 1)

However, Hawk also argued,

On the other side of the spectrum, educators are becoming frustrated by frenzied attempts to serve an increasingly diverse and difficult population of students with decreasing resources. The other perspective includes parents who demand more from educators in terms of time and expertise. Politicians, who blame schools for most of society's problems, ranging from a prepared workforce to an overpopulated prison system, join those losing confidence in public schools. (p. 1)

Hawk assessed, "At the center of this polarized perspective of public education is the question of democratic participation in schools" (p. 1). She posed the question: "How do we bring these varied interests, needs, and perspectives together to work toward common concerns?" (p. 1). In response to this question, Sirotnik and Oakes (1986) stated that currently there is no process to facilitate legitimate discourse for public decision-making about the future of schools and that school officials need to develop and implement such a process. As it related to the democratic process, Gutman (1999) also offered a response to Hawks' question and described democratic processes as

. . . those in which we can publicly debate educational problems in a way much more likely to increase our understanding of education and each other than if we were to leave the management of schools to depend

entirely upon the judgment of the most enlightened educational experts.
(p. 2)

Public Engagement and Public Education

In a study conducted by Furey (2004), it was found, “Citizens have concerns and ideas to share about education, but are not afforded the proper amount of time and space to essentially discuss. . . . There is not enough emphasis on soliciting the public’s opinion through a deliberative and purposeful process of civic engagement” (p. 6). While reminding us that “public education is an important part of the public sector,” Grossi (2001) cautioned that it is necessary to begin looking “beyond the political framework and the bureaucratic structure to insure that all voices are heard, rather than just those of controlling interests groups” (p. 8). Grossi also urged that governmental institutions assure that goals of public education and schooling are defined in the public interests.

The research of King et al. (1998), Ward (1996), and Grossi (2001) concluded that it is necessary for public administrators to be accountable to the citizens, which has implications for establishing a framework in which everyone shares in determining the priorities and participation in decision making. More specifically, Ward (1996) and Grossi (2001) concurred that it is necessary for public education administrators to be accountable to the citizens by requiring a framework in which everyone shares in determining the priorities of schools and who should be served. This approach to public education leadership and administration is required to regain legitimacy with the public.

In his discussion on higher education engagement practices, Woeste (2002) used the lexicon of civic engagement to explain that “civic engagement should be more than a symbolic gesture to a community and constitute more than a public relations campaign and a photo-op” (p. 78). Woeste further indicated that institutional and leadership engagement commitment, culture, and practices must be intentional, deliberately crafted, and nurtured. He indicated it is imperative that “the practice of thoughtful compassion and civic action must be modeled and lived-out by those in leadership positions if the students are to embrace this lifestyle as well (p. 85).

During past decades, Shaposka (1997) observed, “Community involvement has not been a salient component of public education. Schools seemed content to function without engaging the public and became isolated from their communities” (p. 4). As public education professionals continue to make and implement public education policy without creating opportunities for public engagement, citizens have continued to lose confidence in public education (Shaposka, 1997). A consequence is that “policy makers are completely out of touch with the grassroots public” (p. 4). Shaposka reiterated a criticism that education policy makers are not “community-minded, disproportionately representative of the ethnic composition of the community and insensitive to socioeconomic trends that affect not only pupils’ education but also community attitudes” (p. 4).

The need to design and implement effective public engagement activities is evident. Indicators in the prevailing literature of a correlation between engaging

the public through citizen participation and quality schools has led educators to surmise that the presently perceived gloomy state of public education may be a partial outcome of the lack of community involvement. Sexton (1992) proposed that it is vital for public education policy makers to improve democratic processes and sharpen civic skills to build community consensus and support for the broader needs of students.

Public Engagement and Higher Education

Because no established body of research could be tapped to explore questions about public engagement at colleges and universities, the Kellogg Commission (1999) encouraged its member institutions to develop exploratory portraits of their engagement activities (p. 11). The W. K. Kellogg Foundation convened the Kellogg Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good National Leadership Dialogues series. The focus of these dialogues was to explore a stronger role for higher education in advancing civic engagement and social responsibility. During the spring of 2002 dialogue, Elizabeth Hollander, Executive Director of Campus Compact, offered,

Higher education must make a greater effort to engage the public. Too often, academics define and interpret the public good without any input from people in the community. If colleges and universities are serious about advancing the common good, they have to find ways to partner with their surrounding communities and provide public spaces where the public can come together to find common ground and define its own agenda. (London, 2002, p. 18)

Grossi (2001) indicated,

The American democratic system of government is designed around active citizen participation. The role of the public participation has

diminished because of an increased lack of trust in governmental institutions. In education, goals are not clearly defined and the public is demanding accountability. The public is more knowledgeable and confident in questioning educators and pushing for input. Leadership in today's educational systems requires the ability to influence others to achieve mutually agreed upon purposes, or educational goals.

In characterizing public engagement in higher education, Votruba et al. (2002) suggested, "The publicly engaged institution is fully committed to direct, two-way interaction with communities and other external constituencies through the development, exchange, and application of knowledge, information, and expertise for mutual benefit" (p. 9). Although a focus of their research is examining engagement practices at the AASCU institutions, they provided a perspective about how engagement is viewed and practiced in higher education.

Much has been written in recent years concerning the need for America's colleges and universities to more aggressively and creatively engage society's most pressing challenges. . . . The term "public engagement" has become shorthand for describing a new era of two-way [sic] partnerships between America's colleges and universities and the publics they serve. What is now needed is a practical and strategic guide for state college and university leaders who want to more deeply embed public engagement in the fabric of their institution at the campus, college, and departmental levels. (p. 7)

The research of Votruba et al. (2002) investigated the authenticity of engagement in higher education by examining how presidents and chancellors "walk the walk and talk the talk in leading engaged institutions" (p. 5). Arguing, "Many universities espouse the importance of public engagement but do little internally to align the institution to support its achievement," Votruba et al. (2002) maintained that public engagement as result "remains on many campuses very fragile and person-dependent." Moreover, the study found that neither

institutional culture nor leadership had significantly impacted how public engagement was viewed, valued and practiced. A specific observation was that “At most institutions, the idea of public engagement is not so deeply rooted in its culture that its emphasis would continue unabated after the departure of a committed CEO or other academic leader” (p. 7). The study recommended that public engagement “become as deeply embedded in the institution as other mission dimensions” (p. 7); “public policy must be developed that actively promotes the engagement of colleges and universities in their regions, rather than passively permitting or implicitly discouraging engagement” (p. 7); and “AASCU institutions should embrace public engagement as a core value and defining characteristic, and encourage activities that authentically promote these ends.” (p. 11). The study also recommended,

If public engagement is to be such a significant part of the daily lives of colleges and universities, it is extremely important to be clear on just what that entails. Such clarity is made even more essential by the fact that public engagement is a very broad term. While that breadth fosters great diversity of activity, it also presents the risk that the term can say everything and nothing at the same time.

Finally, Votruba et al. (2002) provided illustrations of the ideal or prototypical publicly engaged institution, which included ensuring “community involvement in the development of institutional priorities,” which “does not mean an abdication of internal responsibility or control”; “sharing planning information—particularly the environmental scan components—with community representatives”; “seeking interpretation of trends and unmet needs”; and “discussing institutional choices suggested by the realities revealed” (p. 20). In

affect, this will “build relationships with individuals who understand not only what you intend to pursue, but why you have made these choices” and could result in “these individuals” becoming “important institutional advocates to state government” (p. 20).

Gottlieb and Robinson (2002) explained that the definitions of engagement, including civic engagement, are broad and ambiguous and that “some authors, researchers, and institutions do not differentiate among them” (p. 8). Emerging research on civic engagement often defines it within the lexicon of public engagement, civic responsibility, deliberation, outreach, community outreach, community service, service learning, and engagement. The Pew Partnership, broadly defined civic engagement as “the will and capacity to solve public problems” (PEW Foundation, 2004, p. 3). Accordingly, PEW suggested that higher education’s demonstration of a “genuine commitment to civic engagement” required entering into “long-term, democratic, reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships” with the surrounding community” (p. 4) and that engagement implied a “greater role for colleges and universities in framing society’s critical questions, in creating space for public deliberation that offers exposure to different points of view and enables people to form, express, and discuss their own opinions” (p. 4). Adding her voice to the conversation on public engagement, Holland (2001a) contended,

The term “engagement” has been gradually defined and applies to a variety of institutional/community relationships and a range of institutional strategies meant to link the work of the academy with public action and societal priorities. Today, public scholarship, engagement, the concept of the campus as a citizen and the status and the value of linking community

contributions to the curriculum and educational goals of an institution (e.g., service-learning; problem-based learning using community concerns and topics) are topics of growing interest to institutions of all types. (p. 1)

Mathews and McAfee' (2001) discussion of deliberation, as a specific kind of engagement, maintained, "Public deliberation is a means by which citizens make tough choices about basic purposes and directions for their communities and their country." Deliberation was described as a way of "reasoning and talking together" and deciding how to "act in a way that achieves what is most valuable to us" (p. 10). Therefore, deliberation must involve framing issues and everyday concerns in a way that calls attention to what is valuable to all stakeholders—"in public terms" (p. 10).

Ehrlich (2000) advised,

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference." He espoused that civic engagement meant "promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes" and "having knowledge and a commitment to act. (p. vi)

He also implied that civic engagement should be more than a philosophical perspective within academia; it should be a practice that can be appropriately assessed. As such, Ehrlich stated, "To assess civic engagement sometimes focuses on what most would describe as overt political acts: voting, joining political campaigns, and making campaign contributions." While several other researchers, however, look beyond the explicit political acts to a category of activities that might be described as persuading others, some researchers think about civic engagement in the broadest way as "promoting the quality of life

in a community” and find volunteering to be an accurate indicator for civic engagement (Individual and Campus Assessment Tools, p. 2, http://www.aascu.org/programs/adp/toolkit0104/Assessment/Campus_Assessment_Tools.pdf).

In recounting a conversation with Barbara Taylor, Holland (2001a) recalled Taylor saying, “The stakes are so high and the tasks of management and oversight so difficult, chief executives and trustees should be discussing what the institution is trying to do, how to measure and monitor progress, and what kind of information—in what form and how often—the board should receive in order to exercise its oversight function” (p. 20). A proponent of public engagement measures and evaluation, Holland stated, “We want evaluative data,” and “we want to use the findings to shape the design and selection of elements to be measured and the methods for collecting and analyzing data” (p. 20). She also warned that engagement measures are especially vulnerable to misinterpretation, since a deep understanding of the local context is essential for creating a suitable panel of measures or indicators as well as for interpreting the results (p. 20).

Holland (2001a) advised that there are many different uses of performance indicators and assessment strategies, and the data collected for one of these purposes may not serve well to address others: (a) as an accompaniment to self-study and institutional development; (b) as a means to assess institutional performance; (c) as a component of accountability to the public; (d) as a component of quality assurance during institutional accreditation;

(e) as a research tool either for institutional research conducted by an institution or for scholarly purposes; and (f) as a component of institutional comparisons and ranking schemes. She said that any system of measures must:

- focus attention of users/readers on core issues;
- reinforce common terms and definitions;
- be clear, thoughtfully constructed and well-presented;
- be grounded in data about results from the perspectives of all users;
- be designed to provoke a serious and sustained conversation about improving higher education systems and policies or individual institutional performance. (p. 21)

Finally, Holland argued,

At this time, there are strong advocates for the role of engagement in academia who hold different views of its potential. . . . Currently, engagement is perceived by many as an exploratory or transformational endeavor, and the diverse views of engagement's potential seem to be extremely helpful and even essential tools of flexibility that facilitate campus attempts to explore the meaning of engagement in their own internal and community contexts.”(p. 25)

Public Engagement and Community Colleges

American community colleges are involved in a range of activities that they regard as engagement. In 2001, the AACC conducted a national survey of community colleges to identify their community programs and services. The survey findings included:

- More than 82 percent of community colleges reported that offering community programs and services is part of their mission statement.
- To encourage student involvement in the community, 66 percent of responding colleges held special community service events, and 45 percent provided service-learning opportunities.

- More than half of college respondents (51 percent) provided diversity awareness training; 81 percent sponsored events highlighting other cultures.
- Twenty-nine percent of respondents provided leadership training for youth and others.
- Sixty-eight percent of responding colleges facilitated community summits on local issues.
- Almost 62 percent of colleges held health screenings and health fairs for the community.
- Seventy-six percent of respondents provided access to arts and cultural events, and a little more than 50 percent sponsored a museum. (Phinney, Schoen, & Hause, 2002, p. 1)

The Campus Compact (CC), a coalition of college and university presidents committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education, has been “dedicated to promoting community service, civic engagement, and service-learning in higher education” (Campus Compact Web site, www.compact.org). The CC noted that higher education leaders have become increasingly interested in “reasserting the civic-purpose of their institution,” which included 535 college and university presidents signing the President’s Declaration of Civic Responsibility of Higher Education (Zlotkowski et al., 2004, p. 6). The CC has contributed to the research on civic engagement and the ways to measure, assess, expand, and enhance engagement efforts. The engaged campus was defined as

. . . one that is consciously committed to reinvigorating the democratic spirit and community engagement in all aspects of its campus life: students, faculty, staff and the institution itself. . . . The engaged campus is not just located within a community; it is intimately connected to the public purposes and aspirations of community life itself. The engaged campus is

unable to separate its unique responsibility for the development of knowledge from the role of knowledge in a democratic society to form the basis for social progress and human equality. (CC, 2001b)

A specific role for the president, faculty, campus, and community at engaged institutions was also identified. Presidents need to be committed to and articulate the importance of community engagement. Faculty must demonstrate a “scholarship of engagement and share their knowledge with and help their students learn from the community” (CC, 2001b). The campus must have staff with the responsibility to “build collaborative community relationships based on mutual respect” and share its physical and economic resources with the community, such as physical and economic resources (CC, 2001b).

In 2002, Campus Compact initiated the Indicators of Engagement Project (IOEP). The purpose of the Project was to document and disseminate best practices of civic engagement at different types of higher education institutions and help colleges and universities with more broadly institutionalizing civic engagement. The Project established community colleges as its first-year priority for a variety of reasons, which included its natural connection to the community, exemplary practices, and because it has been under-researched in the civic engagement literature. Thirteen community colleges have exemplary approaches to one or more of the indicators. An additional seven institutions were profiled for their innovative approaches to specific civic engagement strategies.

In order to assess its definition of the engaged campus, the CC developed a list of 13 indicators with three levels for characterizing engagement at community colleges. Accordingly, these indicators are considered useful to

campuses for assessing their current level of engagement and creating new strategies to enhance their engagement efforts (Zlotkowski et al., 2004). The three levels for characterizing engagement are: “(a) Level One: Introductory Practice; (b) Level Two: Intermediate Practice; and (c) Level Three: Advanced Practice” (p. 5). At “Level One,” campuses are beginning to recognize the value of community engagement; building a campus-wide constituency effort through awareness among the faculty, students and community partners; and with the context of the mission “debating, discussing, and clarifying the meaning of service learning and civic engagement” (p. 5). “Level Two” is characterized by the campus focusing on ensuring quality activities; establishing a “critical mass of faculty involvement”; service learning and civic engagement opportunities for students; “sound community partnerships, and a funded infrastructure” (p. 5). “Level Three” is the stage at which the campus has “fully integrated service learning and civic engagement” in its institutional mission, activities, policies, processes, and structures (p. 5). In advocating the importance of an engaged campus, the CC also offered that academe can gain from its community engagement activities and by applying scholarship to addressing social, political, economic issues. The 13 indicators of engagement and the indicator definitions are identified in Table 4.

Table 4

Campus Compact's 13 Indicators of Engagement

Indicators of Engagement	Indicator Definitions
Mission and Purpose	Explicitly articulates its commitment to the public purposes of higher education
Administrative and Academic Leadership (president, trustees, provost)	Is in the forefront of institutional transformation that supports engagement, in both their words and their actions
Disciplines, Departments, and Interdisciplinary Work	Have incorporated community-based education, allowing it to penetrate across disciplines and reach the institution's academic core
Pedagogy and Epistemology	Incorporate a community-based, public problem-solving approach to teaching and learning
Faculty Development	Opportunities are available for faculty to retool their teaching and redesign their curricula to incorporate community-based activities and reflection on those activities within the context of the course
Faculty Roles and Rewards, including promotion and tenure guidelines and review	Reflect a reconsideration of scholarship that embraces a scholarship of engagement
Enabling Mechanisms	Are present in the form of visible and easily accessible structures (e.g., centers, offices) on campus to assist faculty with community-based teaching and to broker community partnerships
Internal Resource Allocation	Is adequate for establishing, enhancing, and deepening community-based work on campus—for faculty, students, and programs that involve community partners
Community Voices	Deepens the role of community partners in contributing to community-based education and shaping outcomes that benefit the community
External Resource Allocation	Is made available for community partners to create richer learning environments for students and for community-building efforts in local neighborhoods
Integrated and complementary community service activities	Weave together student service, service learning, and other community engagement activities on campus
Forums for fostering public dialogue	Are created that include multiple stakeholders in public problem-solving
Student voice	Is cultivated in a way that recognizes students as key partners in their own education and civic development and supports their efforts to act on issues important to themselves and their peers

Source: Zlotkowski, E. et al. (2004). *The community's college indicators of engagement at two-year institutions* (p. 5). Providence, RI: Campus Compact.

Public Engagement and Education Leadership

Leadership plays a key role in establishing an organization's engagement culture, commitment, and practices (Gottlieb & Robinson, 2002; Boyte 2000; Mathews, 1999b; Votruba et al., 2002; Weerts, 2005; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). The literature has also been clear about the role of presidential leadership in the civic engagement practices of their institutions. Through the lens of college presidents, the Hoyle (2001) study focused on presidential attitudes and opinions regarding various aspects of civic engagement. Hoyle (2002) echoed a perspective of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges and Gaudiani (1999) that a problem with college presidents' leadership is that "College presidents for the most part, and in departure from earlier practice, are not actively engaged in public discourse over social issues nor actively involved in community affairs" (p. 7). "Today, college presidents do not appear as sources of public policy pronouncements nor fearless critics of the status quo" (p. 8).

There is agreement in the literature about the role of the college president and the importance of their relationship with the community (Crosson, 1983; Fisher & Koch, 1996; Hoyle, 2001, 2002; Millet, 1980; Vaughan, 1998; Votruba et al., 2002; Weerts, 2005; Zlotkowski et al., 2004;). For example, the earlier writings of Crosson suggested that importance of the president's relationship with the community is not a new phenomenon. Crosson stated that the president's external relationships have a significant impact on the president's success and the institution's mission. Millet shared that college presidents are involved in a broad range of relationships with members of the community, which includes—

individuals, alumni, civic leaders and organizations, religious leaders, businesses and business leaders, elected officials and legislatures (e.g., governor, senator, mayor), local and state boards of higher education, federal government, and community foundations. Millet also discussed the complexity of the president's relationship with the community and the impact these relationships can have on achieving the institution's mission.

Campus Compact (2001a) identified presidential and trustee leadership as one of its 13 indicators for assessing engagement at two-year institutions. Leadership has a significant impact in shaping campus attitudes, activities and practices on civic engagement. A benchmark for assessing leadership engagement practices is visibility and being at the "forefront of institutional transformation that supports engagement in both their words and their actions" (p. 5).

Hoyle (2001) conducted a survey of higher education chief executive officers on the civic engagement activities. The survey findings provided a lens for viewing how higher education executives define civic engagement. Presidential civic engagement activities were examined in a variety of contexts—shaping public policy; external group influence by serving on the board of directors of an organization; written influence through writing opinion pieces for newspapers; writing articles for journals, writing books, book reviews, and chapters for books; and political action through running for elected office and supporting a political candidate. A majority of the presidents indicated that they considered running for public elective office, endorsing a political candidate, and

hosting a political fund-raiser to be inappropriate in their leadership role. A “slight majority,” however, believed it acceptable to endorse “non-education-related [sic] legislation before a state legislature” (Hoyle, 2002, p. 1). Hoyle (2001) concluded that even though some college presidents “believe civic engagement is vital to the country’s health; many say they are in a quandary over how to become involved while keeping within the spirit and the mission of their institution” (p. 144).

Creating, fostering, and supporting community/campus partnerships have been cited as the way executive leadership translates its commitment to institutional engagement. The literature on community/campus partnerships in higher education places emphasis on community building. Stanton, Giles and Cruz (1999) urged that more research be conducted that emphasizes the communities’ voices and perspectives on the costs and benefits of participating in community/campus partnerships. In his study of land-grant institutions, Weerts (2005) indicated that community partner perceptions of institutional engagement are informed by the rhetoric and behavior of top university leaders. He stated that leadership at the top levels of the institution is critical to demonstrating commitment to outreach and engagement—both in the institutional and the community partner contexts (p. 99). Weerts reiterated the important role of executive-level leadership in assuring community partners that an initiative is sustainable, important, and valued within the institution. Leadership commitment is most evident in their rhetoric and is demonstrated through being visible and providing a high public profile to these activities (Weerts, 2005). An implication of

Weerts' study was for "institutions to increase the visibility of campus leaders in communities where engagement is a high priority" (p. 99).

Leiderman, Furco, Zapf and Goss (2003) indicated,

Several factors contribute to current growing interest in community and campus collaboration and partnership. As public resources dwindle and social needs proliferate, community-based organizations are increasingly looking for institutional partners with which to collaborate to address complex social issues. At the same time, many institutions of higher education are renewing their emphases on the civic purposes of higher education and, consequently, have been expanding their connections to the local community of which they are a part. (p. 3)

The emerging research of Harkavy, Zlotkowski, Holland and Gelmon, and Walskok (cited in Leiderman et al., 2004) suggests, "Communities that want to improve the quality of life of their residents potentially have much to gain from partnerships with institutions of higher education" (p. 3).

Woeste (2002) proposed, "Civic engagement should be more than a symbolic gesture to a community and constitute more than a public relations campaign and a photo-op" (p. 78). Higher education presidents must be in a relationship with the community through connections with a variety of organizations and individuals. This includes relationships with federal, state and local organizations, legislatures, and higher education boards; the Governor; civic organizations; community foundations, businesses and churches; and alumni and friends of the institution (Hoyle, 2001). This relationship complexity is exacerbated by what McGovern (2003) diagnosed as a significant problem—no theory that explains institutional commitment to civic engagement (p. 7).

McGovern (2003) conducted a study to determine how commitment to civic engagement on a college and university campus that has a presidential pledge of support manifests itself from the perspective of the chief academic officer. The chief academic officer perspective provides an important leadership lens for examining the significance and practices of civic engagement.

McGovern's study found,

- There is ambiguity in civic engagement.
- Civic engagement is not clearly defined on many college campuses.
- Civic engagement is not defined by any of the campus documents, publications, or public literature.
- Civic engagement is not clearly defined by faculty or academic units.
- Civic engagement is not defined by the institutional mission.
- The Chief Academic Officers "must struggle to uphold the public purposes of civic engagement of their institutions without clear guidance." (p. 52)

In addition, among his findings was that *community* was defined differently and took on several meanings, depending on the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and the institution at which the CAO resided (McGovern, 2003, p. 48). The study emphatically identified several and broader categories of community, some of which are referred to as "public groups, those outside of the academy or even off campus" (p. 49). According to McGovern, the research depicts categories of community attributed to organizations, which include nonprofits, businesses, and government (p. 49). He inferred that community has been too narrowly defined. As such, McGovern pointed out that community is comprised of institutional or

campus community; the professional or disciplinary community; the academic community; and societal subcultures or people with identifiable common needs, such as the homeless, victims of domestic violence, farmers, at-risk youth, people living in poverty, the incarcerated community, and people living with mental illness. Each has its own needs and purpose.

Public Engagement and Community College Trustees

In 1995, Vaughan and Weisman (1997) surveyed and conducted in-depth interviews with presidents, board chairs, and trustees of community colleges who are members of the Association of Community College Trustees. The survey was organized to collect data about trustees' perceptions in seven areas—trustee activities, the board, board members, board and president relations, board assessments, presidential selection, and demographic characteristics. The area of trustee activities included relationship of trustees to their communities. In this area, the survey asked trustees how they would rate their responsiveness to certain segments of the community, which included state and local political leaders, business and industry, and social agencies. Trustees' responses indicated that nearly 70% believed their board to be very responsive to political leaders, 76% very responsive to the business community, and 46 % very responsive to social agencies. By comparison, the presidents rated their boards as—66% very responsive to political leaders, 72% very responsive to business leaders, and 38% very responsive to social agencies. Through interviews, trustees were for whom they worked and represented, and consistently the

responses indicated that trustees believe they hold the college in trust for the public. Trustees believed that they work for and have the responsibility to ensure that “all actions” taken by the college are on behalf of its constituents. Yet, when trustees were specifically queried about responsiveness in the community, political leaders, business leaders, and social agencies were identified as the community; and the public was identified as constituents. It is not clear if Vaughan and Weisman or trustees make the distinction between the community and constituents. It is important to note that the reference regarding responsiveness to community and representing the people identified two different external communities.

Community colleges are often called the people’s college, democracy’s college or, as their name makes clear, the community’s college. The meaning attached to these phrases depends upon one’s perspective and is, therefore, subject to many interpretations” (Vaughan & Weisman, 1997, p. 99). Vaughan and Weisman reiterated that trustees are responsible for ensuring that their institutions are responsive to their communities’ educational needs and indicated that trustees have a “legal and moral responsibility to represent the owners of the college, the people” (p. 99). They concurred with Carver and Mayhew (1994) that boards are the “only legitimate bridge between those [i.e., the community] who morally own the college” (p. 25).

The trustees of America’s contemporary colleges are governing and establishing policy within a political environment that is significantly different from the past. Cross (1991), Boyd (1996), and VanWagoner et al. (2005) warned that

American community colleges face a future marked by contrasts. Boyd provided a sobering reality about community colleges by indicating that while early American community colleges experienced stable environments, an environment of increasing chaos challenges today's community colleges. Issues of growth, access, affordability, and capacity to meet enrollment growth characterized this chaos (Barr, 2002; Goldstein, 2005; Nunley, 2004). In addition, issues inherent in the growth of higher education are exacerbated by:

- decreases in external, state and federal funding (Barr, 2002; Goldstein, 2005; Johnstone, 1999; Townsend & Twombly, 2001);
- changes in the curriculum (Blimling et al., 1999);
- new expectations of accountability to state and federal legislators for student learning and outcomes (Albach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 1999; Lovell, 2001)
- increases in focus on the civic capacities of students through service learning (Blimling et al., 1999; Gillett-Karam, 1996);
- the balancing of the impact of technology that provides support and services to students who are demanding flexible classes and online services (Milliron, 2004; Milliron & Miles, 2000; Santovec, 2004); and
- increases in student and employee diversity (Bensimon, 2005; Garrett, 2005; Kezar & Eckel, 1999).

VanWagoner et al. (2005) advised that the level of success that has sustained community colleges in the past would not suffice for the future. In fact, Cross (1991) and VanWagoner et al. predicted that the future and success of community colleges would be impacted by shifting environments, resources, competitors, accountability, and technology, which will necessitate a change in the measures of organizational performance. These researchers further noted,

To respond institutions must make accountability an inherent and important component of the internal organizational culture. Moving from success (as defined in the "old" way) to significance (as defined by student achievement) will require community colleges to reinvent their organizations, their measures, and their indicators. (VanWagoner et al., 2005, p. 4)

The perspectives of Boyd (1996), Cross, and VanWagoner et al. are representative of many researchers and practitioners during the past decade who have sounded the alarm that the architecture of the community college's mission, vision, leadership, governance, and funding paradigms will need to be reframed. The Association of Community College Trustees (2005a) predicted that the board of trustees' ability to navigate this uncertainty would be tested, as demands on community colleges become more complex. Furthermore, the Association indicated, "Strong leadership and effective governance in these dynamic times are crucial ingredients for success" (p. 2). As such, the Association claimed, "Maximizing local influence for the college should be a key professional objective of Trustees" (p. 6). In order to maximize their local influence for the college and represent the community's interests, trustees must implement strategies to discover, weigh and balance many values and interests (p. 25). Maximizing local

influence could have even greater implications for trustees, as an AGB article claimed that trustees function as the “referee” for connecting their institution with the community and determining the process and importance of engagement at their institution (Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004, p. 3). Trustees are expected to perform this function by working with the president to determine whether engagement is within the framework of the institution’s mission, determining that engagement is an institution priority, allocating resources for engagement, and determining ways to promote and sustain engagement on and off campus (Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004).

Smith (2000) offered that trustees are most effective when they “focus on their relationship with their communities, their policy-making role, and their responsibility to monitor institutional performance” (p. 25). Furthermore, Smith said that the trustees’ are primarily responsible for “representing the community’s interests” in their governance and policy-making processes, which can best be achieved if trustees are knowledgeable about the college’s internal and external environments (p. 53). To accomplish this responsibility, she indicated that trustees are expected to seek out, balance and integrate a wide variety of stakeholder interests into policies that benefit the common good. This responsibility is perhaps most evident in the trustees’ role of knowing the community’s needs and serving as a link with the community. Trustees are also expected to engage in public discussions of issues and policies within the requirements of open meetings or “sunshine” laws (p. 56). Open and public discussion of policy issues and institutional direction is also considered an

important strategy to gain the public trust and confidence (Smith, 2000). Smith offered that trustees debate publicly to provide “an opportunity for citizens to learn about issues and contribute to the decision-making process,” which can result in policy that might “more likely enjoy public support” (p. 56). This approach to engaging the public seems to suggest that the public’s role is viewed more as passive spectators rather than active participants in the debates and discussions about policy. Therefore, the researcher argues that in order to know the community’s needs, trustees must have effective processes and practices for listening, talking, and appropriately responding to and with the community.

Higher education CEOs and trustees have significant roles in influencing the organizational culture and “determining the style and importance of civic engagement and social engagement” (Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004). These roles include establishing engagement practices to convene the public for deliberation as an organizational priority, developing organizational capacities for public engagement, identifying the most effective practical approaches for public engagement, and committing the staff, resources, and time to achieve their public engagement agenda (Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004). Pursuing this kind of public engagement practice as a strategic direction can provide a culture of evidence that suggests the CEO and board “recognize that successful citizen participation depends on the appropriate crafting of citizen participation strategies” (Walters et al., 2000). There is concurrence within the civic and public engagement literature that the quality and process for citizen participation is the litmus test for determining the merits of a public engagement process and

practice (Creighton, 2005; Friedman, 2004; Grossi, 2001; Hawk, 2001; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; King et al., 1998; Mathews, 2006; Shaposka, 1997; Walters et al., 2000).

MacRae and Wilde (1986) provided a perspective about policy analysis for public decisions. This perspective is relevant to public community college trustees, in that trustees function as public officials who are either elected or appointed. Trustees are responsible for overseeing the effective and efficient public administration of their respective institutions. In their decision-making role, trustees are charged with setting and establishing policy that represents the greater good, common good, and community's interests. This trustee decision-making role fits within the framework of the McCrae and Wilde's profile of political communities. Trustees are citizens of a state, county, or town who influence choices by voting; they work as an organized group that talks and writes to people, and publicize their position on issues. Trustee decision-making is considered "policy" in that it significantly affects "large numbers of people" (p. 3). Ideally, their decision-making behaviors should follow a course of action, which results in public policy and administrative decisions that facilitate a "policy choice" strategy, whereby the benefits, consequences, and tradeoffs are considered and weighed among possible policy options. This approach to decision making requires allocating sufficient time, resources, and systemic policy analysis.

However, there is a pervasive criticism about public administrators' decision-making processes and citizen participation in these decision-making processes. This criticism provided a foundation for investigating the problem

being analyzed in this study. For example, Downs (1994) discussed the public interests in a democracy and argued that most officials are “significantly motivated by self-interest when their social function is to serve the public interests (or some organizational purpose of their bureau)” (p. 87). Downs stated, “Although many officials serve the public interests as they perceive it, it does not necessarily follow that they are privately motivated solely or even mainly by a desire to serve the public interests per se” (p. 87). He argued that society has failed to hold public officials accountable for “proper institutional arrangements” that would cause public officials to stop exercising their private motives and self interest—and, therefore, represent the public’s interest. “Whether or not the public interests will in fact be served depends upon how efficiently social institutions are designed to achieve that purpose. Society cannot insure that it will be served merely by assigning someone to serve it” (p. 87).

Gayle, Hakim, Agarwal, and Alfonso (1999) surveyed chief academic officers and faculty senate leaders at more than 1,000 universities and colleges to examine the “attitudes and assumptions of faculty and administrative leaders on various issues related to governance” (p. 1). The survey queried the respondents about “the scope of decentralization, the match between authority and accountability, the effects of the campus governance structure on teaching and learning, and the effects of organizational culture on decision making” (p. 2). Gayle et al. indicated that the respondents suggested that trustees consider several strategies, which include building upon the considerable overlap in attitudes about governance; fostering dialogue among board, faculty, and

administrative leaders about teaching, research, and governance; promoting more effective use of technology to enhance communication; paying careful attention to attitudes regarding budgetary decentralization; and considering and valuing key elements of organizational culture, such as missions, traditions, implicit values, and distinctive characteristics (p. 2-3). Among the survey findings was that “trustees will need to listen actively to academic, administrative, and student leaders and encourage collaborative leadership. Trustees also should patiently involve these groups in their decision-making” (p. 4).

With the community college’s unique positioning within the community, its board of trustees and CEO can create virtually endless possibilities to develop approaches to serve community needs and engage with its community in ways that go beyond the conventional and business-as-usual strategies. Such strategies will require expanding beyond the most commonly used and conventional practices of relating *to* the public and establishing public participation practices for engaging and relating *with* the public (Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004; Creighton, 2005; Friedman, 2004; Mathews, 2006). Weeks (2000) indicated that “conventional avenues of citizen involvement, such as public hearings, advisory boards, citizen commissions and task forces, engage only a small number of citizens and typically involve only those with a particular interest in the specific policy area” (p. 3). Walters et al. (2000) stated that “the public exists in informal associations and not just in formal organizations . . . [and] that successful citizen participation depends on the appropriate crafting of citizen participation strategies” (p. 350).

The CEO and trustees have significant roles in influencing the organizational culture and “determining the style and importance of civic engagement and social engagement” (Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004). This includes supporting and implementing practices for convening the public for deliberation as an organizational priority; developing organizational capacities for public deliberation; identifying the most effective practical approaches; and committing the staff, resources, and time to achieve its engagement and public deliberation agenda. Pursuing this kind of public engagement practice, as a strategic direction, would suggest that the CEO and board “recognize that successful citizen participation depends on the appropriate crafting of citizen participation strategies” (Walters et al., 2000). Engagement strategies that trustees could consider are grounded in the practices of public engagement for deliberation in decision making and setting policy. However, the literature and research is sparse in its discussion about how trustees actually relate and implement their public engagement role and purpose with the public.

Summary

This chapter provided a review of relevant literature regarding the characteristics of the community college’s mission, governance, and characteristics and responsibilities of community college trustees. It also presented a variety of studies and literature, which discussed the broad lexicon of public engagement and the range of activities and practices that higher education leadership and institutions consider public engagement. Chapter III will

discuss the research methodology used to conduct the study and collect and analyze the pertinent data.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology used to conduct this multi-case, multi-site qualitative study. The first section of the chapter provides an overview of qualitative research design and includes with a description of the study's unit of analysis and site selection. The second section provides an overview of this study's data collection procedures, which includes a discussion of case study design, structured open-ended interviews and document review, and the approach for integrating the data collection procedures. Finally, the data coding process and data analysis method are discussed.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine and describe the public engagement practices of community college trustees. The focus of study was trustees' perceptions, which was guided by two central research questions:

1. What is the process by which community college trustees engage with the public?
2. What factors contribute to trustee public engagement practices?

As context for ascertaining and investigating trustee perceptions, the researcher established five categories of inquiry: (a) role and responsibilities, (b) definition of public engagement, (c) public engagement practices, (d) barriers to public engagement, and (e) how to make public engagement more effective.

The decision to investigate trustee perceptions was based on the scarcity of previous research regarding their perceptions about and practices of public engagement. In addition, numerous studies focused on the important role trustees play in representing the interests of the community in their decision making and setting policy (Douglas, 2005; Grabowski, 1994; Hernandez, 1998; Peterson, 2002; Smith, 2000). The rationale also considered that trustees' public engagement practices might best be understood in a global context by the behaviors of its leadership. Creighton's (2005) essential elements of public participation and Mathews' (2006) democratic practices for public engagement provided a relevant conceptual framework for examining trustees' perceptions and practices.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was undertaken for this study, which is often a preferred design when "there is lack of theory or an existing theory fails to adequately explain a phenomenon" (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 5). Case study is the recommended research method for examining "contemporary events" when the "relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated" and the evidence can be gathered through interviews, documents, artifacts and observation (p. 7). Merriam & Associates emphasized that qualitative research is "inductive," and the role of the researcher is to "gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories, rather than deductively deriving postulates or hypotheses to be tested" (p. 5) The practicality, usefulness, and convenience of the qualitative research

methodology made it an appropriate choice for this study (Creswell, 1998; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Nachmias & Nachmias, 1999; Patton, 1980; Stake, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Case Study Methodology

Case study methodology allowed the researcher an opportunity to “investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, [especially when] the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident,” and “use multiple sources of evidence” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Furthermore, a case study was an appropriate methodology for this study because it examined two types of community colleges (i.e., urban and rural) and two types of trustees (i.e., appointed and elected). In case study, the researcher records the realities, meanings, and interpretations of different individuals about contemporary events (Yin, 2003). This can be done through two sources of evidence—“direct observation of the event being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events” (p. 8). A multi-case design was employed, which is considered to be more compelling and robust (p. 46). Multi-case design also allowed the researcher to collect rich and contextual data of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2003). The researcher’s intent was to uncover meaning, while at the same time gain rich descriptive information regarding the public engagement perceptions and practices of community college trustees. In doing so, standardized individual interviews and archival institutional document reviews and analyses were selected as useful

and appropriate choices for collecting data. A short survey was also used to expediently collect trustee demographic data, such as age, race, appointment type (i.e., appointed or elected), education, and length of service on the board.

Unit of Analysis: Trustees at Community Colleges in the National Issues Forum Institute Network

The unit of analysis for this study was the five community colleges in the National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) Network. Accordingly, a total of 10 community college trustees and five Public Policy Institute representatives from these community colleges were selected as participants. The community colleges are located in five states— Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Oregon, and Maryland. There are 38 institutions within the Network, which includes an array of civic, educational and professional groups, organizations, and individuals that promote nonpartisan public deliberation in communities across the country. Although the Network consists of 38 organizations, many are associated with four-year universities and colleges. Within the Network, there are only five community colleges; they have been members of the Network for at least four years and have established a unit or center to facilitate and sustain engagement practices that convene the public for deliberation.

For the purposes of this study, the community college sites were classified as urban and suburban. As illustrated in Table 5, collectively, these community colleges have governance bodies that is either elected or appointed, which ranges in size from five to 11 members, and the term of appointment ranges from four to six years.

Table 5

National Issues Forums Institute Network Community College Trustee Profile

Community College Location	Institutional Type	Size of Board	Type of Appointment	Term of Appointment
Arizona	Urban	5 Members	Elected	6-year term
Florida	Urban	10 Members	Appointed	4-year term
Illinois	Suburban	8 Members	Elected	6-year term
Maryland	Suburban	10 Members	Appointed	6-year term
Oregon	Urban	7 Members	Elected	4-year term

Site Selection

The NIFI network community colleges were particularly well suited for this study, and the participants were selected from these community colleges.

Holland (1997) proposed that institutional commitment to engagement could be understood by investigating campuses that model these activities. This study's investigation of trustees' perceptions of public engagement practices, at community colleges within the NIFI Network, builds upon Holland's notion of investigating campuses that model these activities. The researcher's selection of nationally recognized NIFI sites, which model engagement practices to convene the public for deliberation, was considered a critical factor for ensuring the credibility of the study's participant perceptions and practices.

These sites are a part of a national network consisting of organizations that have established a unit or center to facilitate and sustain engagement practices, which convene the public for deliberation. Second, while many of the NIFI Network organizations are associated with four-year universities and

colleges, there are only five community college participants in the Network. These community colleges have been participants in the Network for at least four years and have established a unit or center on their campuses that models public engagement that facilitates and sustains engagement practices to convene the public for deliberation. Third, these five community colleges have as their public engagement genesis and foundation research support from the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, which served as a resource for establishing and conducting research to understand what it takes to sustain a public engagement practice. The Foundation's initial research contract to these community colleges was approximately \$15,000, which was to assist with developing a deliberative public engagement practice, modeling deliberative public engagement as an institutional practice, and conducting research on what the institution understands about its public engagement practice and civic learning. Fourth, the community colleges are, rather than localized, located across the United States—in the southeastern, southwestern, mid northwestern, northern Pacific, and central Atlantic regions,—which could provide a national perspective about trustee perceptions. Fifth, collectively these community colleges and their trustees might have engagement practices that could provide insight on the role that institutional trustee leadership plays in supporting, facilitating, and sustaining a community college's public engagement practices for public deliberation with its community.

Furthermore, the selection of the NIFI community college campuses as the sites for this study was informed by reviewing primary and secondary data on

the Network, reviewing primary and secondary data on the five community colleges in the Network, the researcher's previous work in assisting institutions to establish an NIFI Public Policy Institute, and a plethora of concerns expressed about the role of institutional leadership (especially trustee leadership) in supporting, facilitating, and sustaining public engagement practices for public deliberation with their communities. The site selection was also informed by obtaining the counsel of:

- David Mathews, CEO, Charles F. Kettering Foundation;
- Carolyn Farrow-Garland, Program Officer, Charles F. Kettering Foundation;
- Christine Johnson-McPhail, Ed.D, Professor and Director, Morgan State University, Community Leadership Doctoral Program; and
- Robert Walker, Ph.D., Public Engagement Consultant and Senior Public Policy Institute Faculty, Center for Community Leadership Development and Public Policy at Montgomery College.

The NIFI Network, sometimes referred to as the NIFI Public Policy Institute sites, was established in 1981. Originally, the Network was known as the Domestic Policy Association. The National Issues Forums Institute is an outgrowth of the Wingspread Conference series. David Mathews, president of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, was the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, a professional educator, and former president of the University of Alabama when he initiated this call for national, nonpartisan public dialogues and deliberation to engage citizens in the formation of public policy. The Wingspread

Conference was one of several think tanks organized by Mathews to strategize about how to create opportunities to more fully engage citizens in public policy decision making. “Fourteen civic and educational leaders” who to met to discuss “how to fashion a better system for learning and communicating about public policy” joined Mathews at the Wingspread Conference (Mathews, 1985, p. 1). These leaders were concerned about the “fragmentation of the country into special interest groups, with the estrangement citizens felt from their own government and with the lack of cohesiveness at all levels in America” (p. 1). Most of these leaders and their respective institutions had been involved in “educating citizens in their own communities on policy issues; they felt a broader effort was needed to develop a new model for public policy education” (p. 1). This leadership body agreed to collaborate and create a “national network of like-minded organizations and to devote at least three of their forums to common topics,” which they called the Domestic Policy Association (p. 2). The Domestic Policy Association was

. . . dedicated to community building but not to parochialism . . . [with the purpose of addressing] very fundamental problems, ones that would endure for some time and embrace moral as well as technical considerations . . . particularly attracted to topics where the experts and the public were almost at opposite poles in the way the problems were defined and debated. . . .It was in such situations that they could best test their new kinds of community discussions, which they called National Issues Forums. (p. 3)

In 1982, the National Issues Forums held its first forum. The forums “involved 313 meetings in 17 states, and they brought together nearly 10,000 people” (Mathews, 1985, p. 3). The participants represented a range of the

American public, including students, school teachers, parents, retirees, farmers and business executives who had come together to engage “in thoughtful discussions of the issues that went beyond narrow self-interest” (p. 4).

“An ongoing concern of the NIFI” has been how to “increase the role of citizens in formulating public policy” (Hagood, 1990, p. 2). Mathews has argued that although there are organizations involved in assisting the nation in “making rational public policy decisions, there are only a few general forums for the informed framing of issues” (p. 3). He has continued to espouse that “universities and colleges are in the position to frame and discuss public issues” and should bring the public and government together in conversation through academia’s conference activities” (p. 3).

For more that 25 years, the National Issues Forums Institutes have worked to accomplish its mission to establish, promote, and sustain public engagement across the United States. This includes establishing (a) processes for facilitating national nonpartisan dialogues to deliberate about domestic policy issues, (b) processes to increase citizen “understanding of domestic policy issues and provide citizens with opportunities to express and convey informed opinions on the issues to the nation's decision makers,” and (c) processes for citizens to understand and deliberate about local public policy issues (Kingseed, 2006, p. 1). Currently, thousands of these forums are held throughout the United States annually, and several hundred are held internationally.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher conducted standardized individual interviews and conducted reviews and analyses of archival institutional documents to collect data. While there are variations in qualitative interviewing, standardized open-ended, face-to-face interviews were used to examine the perceptions and practices of board of trustees' members and Public Policy Institute directors about public engagement. Typical of qualitative case study research methodology, the interviews were conducted on-site within the community college setting, face-to-face, and via telephone (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 1980). To accommodate convenience, ease, and efficiency for the informants, the interviews were conducted in a place selected by the informants. Prior to each informant interview, the researcher requested permission to record the interview and addressed confidentiality concerns and issues. The key informant interviews were recorded, and the researcher also took notes to increase the accuracy of data collection and analysis. The community colleges and informants were each given a pseudonym identifier to protect their anonymity and maintain confidentiality. The trustee informants were referred to as "T" and assigned a subscript number as an identifier such as, T₅₀; the PPI representatives were referred to as "R" and assigned a subscript number as an identifier such as R₅₀.

The interview questions were developed to better understand the process by which the trustees engage with the public and how these practices align with the six democratic practices for public engagement and the essential elements of public participation (Creighton, 2005; Mathews, 2006). The interviews allowed

the researcher to hear and understand (Creswell, 2003; Miles & Humberman, 1994; Patton, 1980) trustee perceptions about public engagement (i.e., what it is, what it is not, and what it should be). Furthermore, the interviews allowed the researcher to gain trustees' and the Public Policy Institute representative's perceptions of the history, mission, and culture that guide trustee public engagement practices at their respective institutions.

The researcher determined that homogenous and convenience sampling would strengthen the study. Homogenous sampling allowed the researcher to select participants that "possess similar traits or characteristics" and "individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics" (Creswell, 2005, p. 206). Therefore, a convenience homogenous sample totaling 15 key informants was interviewed, which included the board chair (n=5) and a board member (n=5) at each of the five community colleges within the NIFI Network. Interviews were also conducted with the Public Policy Institute representatives (n=5), who are public engagement subject-matter experts. These subject-matter experts were invited to participate in an interview to obtain their insight about their institutions' and trustees' public engagement practices. Using snowball sampling (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1992), these informants were asked to provide the names of other key informants and identify documents that could be helpful to the researcher. The researcher considered the others as potential sources to gain more insight into trustee and institutional commitment and efforts to implement, support and/or promote public engagement practices. The

researcher determined that the role of the key informants was to provide evidence that is corroboratory or contradictory (Yin, 2003).

Initial Contact with NIFI Network Community Colleges

In September 2005, the researcher made initial contact with the Public Policy Institute representatives by conference call to discuss the research study's potential and possibilities. As a follow-up to the conference call, several months later during a meeting at the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, the researcher had further conversations with some of the Public Policy Institute representatives. These conversations were to solicit and confirm their interest and support and discuss the research methodology—the most efficient approach for inviting trustee participation. The Public Policy Institute representatives determined, with the researcher, that they would act as gatekeepers. As gatekeepers, these representatives initiated and facilitated contact with the trustees, provided trustee contact information (i.e., e-mail address and telephone number), and assured their trustees' participation in the study. Following the initial contact, the researcher officially contacted each participant via e-mail with an electronic letter and participant consent form attached. Both the letter and participant consent form explained the nature of the research and formally requested their participation in the study. A copy of the trustee letter was also forwarded to the PPI representative. The researcher followed up the e-mail and electronic letter with a personal telephone call. The calls to the PPI representatives were to provide notification that the researcher had officially contacted the trustees. For

each trustee who did not respond to the initial request to participate in the study within one week of the initial contact, the researcher again contacted the gatekeeper and trustee electronically and via telephone in order to schedule a convenient interview date and time. The PPI representatives were advised prior to any contact with their respective trustees.

A total of 15 letters were mailed—ten to NIFI community college trustees and five to PPI representatives. Table 6 displays data on the number of institutions in the NIFI Network, the number of community colleges in the Network, the number of participant letters and consent forms disseminated to the study’s potential participants, the number of participant consent forms returned, and the number of interviews conducted.

Table 6

Population and Sample

n=National Issues Forums Institute Network Institutions	n=National Issues Institute Network Institutions’ Community Colleges	Participant Letters and Consent Forms to be e-mailed	Participant Consent Interview Consent Forms Returned	Participant Consent Interview Consent Forms Not Returned	Total Interviews Conducted
38	5	15	14	0	14

The researcher collected data for over an 18-month period, beginning in the fall of 2005 and continuing through the spring of 2007. The Morgan State University Institutional Review Board and each community college PPI representative approved the data collection protocols and procedures. Prior to participating in the study, each participant signed an Informed Consent Form

(Appendix B), which explained the purpose, procedures, and benefits of the study and advised participants of their right and freedom to withdraw from the study and the opportunity to ask questions. There were no perceived risks to participants. The data was stored and not available to the public for scrutiny.

Data overload is a possible risk in a qualitative study, which includes the time for processing field notes and coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to control data overload, the researcher followed Miles and Huberman's recommendation to streamline data collection by developing a pre-structured case data display. The researcher used the display as a critical tool and outline for controlling, organizing, and managing the quality, relevancy, and quantity of this study's data (Appendix G).

Standardized Interviews

For this study, the researcher followed a qualitative research design because the concept of community college trustee public engagement is underdeveloped; there is a lack of previous research; and there is an absence of theory (Douglas, 2005). The researcher collected data in the form of "words rather than numbers" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1). The data was collected close to the situation (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1980). The data collection emphasis was on people and their lived experiences, which was suitable for discovering the meanings that people place on the "events, processes, and structures of their lives" ((Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). This study's inquiry was

. . . grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations and that these constructions tend to be transitory and situational. The dominant methodology is to discover these meanings and interpretations by studying cases intensively in natural settings and by subjecting the resulting data to analytic induction. (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1996, p. 767)

The researcher followed Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) advice by studying the phenomena of trustee public engagement in its natural setting to make sense of it, and interpret it "in terms of the meanings" that trustees bring to this phenomena (p. 2). A qualitative research design also allowed the researcher to discover the characteristics of the study's social environment and assemble it based on each person's interpretations, which could later be interpreted by the researcher as situational (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The researcher used Patton's (1980) theory on the purpose of qualitative research as a guide and a means to construct this qualitative study "to inform action, enhance decision making, and apply knowledge to solve human and societal problems" (p. 12). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) defined qualitative research as "multi-method" in focus, which involved an interpretive naturalistic approach (p.10). The multi method approach was used to enhance the study's validity. The notions of Patton and Denzin and Lincoln were followed in conducting a qualitative study and collecting data by using interviews.

A standardized interview is considered one of the most important sources of case study information (Yin, 2003). In this study, interviews were conducted for a variety of purposes, including (a) finding out what is on someone's mind, (b)

getting an individual's perspective, and (c) finding out things that are not readily observable (Patton, 1980). The key informants were considered critical to the success of this case study (Yin, 2003). Therefore, the researcher used open-ended questions, the most commonly used in case study interviews. The key informants provided evidence that was both corroboratory and contradictory (Yin, 2003). Standardized open-ended interviews were a practical research strategy for this study because:

- The interviews with the participants were limited to a specific time period.
- The interviewees were only interviewed once.
- The researcher desired to obtain the same categorical information from each person interviewed.
- It reduced interviewer variation and judgment.
- It made organizing and analyzing data easier and more efficient. (Patton, 1980)

As recommended by Yin (2003), the researcher's "own line of inquiry," was followed, as "reflected by the case study protocol" (p. 90). The researcher asked "actual (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner," which also served the needs of the study's "line of inquiry" (p. 90). In this study, each informant was asked interview questions about community college trustees in five key categories—(a) role and responsibilities, (b) definition of public engagement, (c) public engagement practices, (d) barriers to public engagement, and (e) how to make public engagement more effective. The trustees were asked to share their perceptions about what it is like to be a trustee, describe the work

of trustees, and describe their public engagement experiences, successes, and challenges. This allowed them to identify and describe a significant occasion that exemplified the board of trustees' commitment to public participation and public engagement practices and identify and describe a significant occasion that does not exemplify the board's/institution's commitment to public participation and public engagement practices with the public.

A potential weakness of a standardized open-ended interview is that it offers little flexibility for particularizing and relating the interview to the individual and circumstances, and its standardization limits a more naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 1980). Yin (2003) identified some strength of interviews, including its targeted focus and its insightfulness, which can provide causal inferences. Some potential weaknesses of interviews are the bias resulting from poorly constructed questions, informant bias, "inaccuracies due to poor recall," and "reflexivity" (i.e., the informant tells the interviewer what they think he/she wants to hear) (p. 87). Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher controlled for the weakness in the interviews by asking subject-area experts (i.e., PPI representatives) to review and comment on the interview protocol. These experts reviewed the interview questions and protocol to assure that its content, scope and focus were relevant and provided a context for the researcher and informants to stay on target.

Documentation

Institutional documents were collected, reviewed, and analyzed for content and themes associated with public engagement, the functional areas of

democratic practices for public engagement, and the essential elements for public participation. The documents that were reviewed included mission and vision statements, trustee bios, board of trustee agendas, board meeting minutes, strategic plans, board orientation packets, and governance policies. The boards of trustees' Web sites were accessed to obtain information about the site, issues that trustees discussed, and the policy decisions trustees had made. A Web-based search was conducted on each of the community colleges to collect information about each community college site.

Documentary evidence is considered relevant to case study research (Yin, 2003). As a source of evidence, documents “can take many forms,” including—letters, memoranda, agendas, minutes of meetings, reports, announcements, formal studies, newspaper clippings, articles, press releases, etc. (p. 85). An important use of documents is to “corroborate and augment evidence from other sources,” verify information mentioned in interviews, and make inferences (p. 87). Also, documents were examined for meaning and themes that were related the study’s conceptual framework.

Yin (2003) stated that there are some strengths and weaknesses in the use of documentation. The strengths included its stability, in that documents can be retrieved repeatedly, contain exact information (i.e., names, references, details), and provide broad coverage of information over a period of time. Access and irretrievability of documents and reporting bias can be potential weaknesses of documentation as a source of evidence. The researcher used Yin's case study model, which identified five key steps for conducting case study research—developing theory, selecting cases and designing data collection protocols, conducting case studies, and writing individual case reports. In a multi-case study, the final step entails cross-case analysis; modifying theory and concept, developing policy implications, and writing the final cross-case report, which is illustrated in Figure 2.

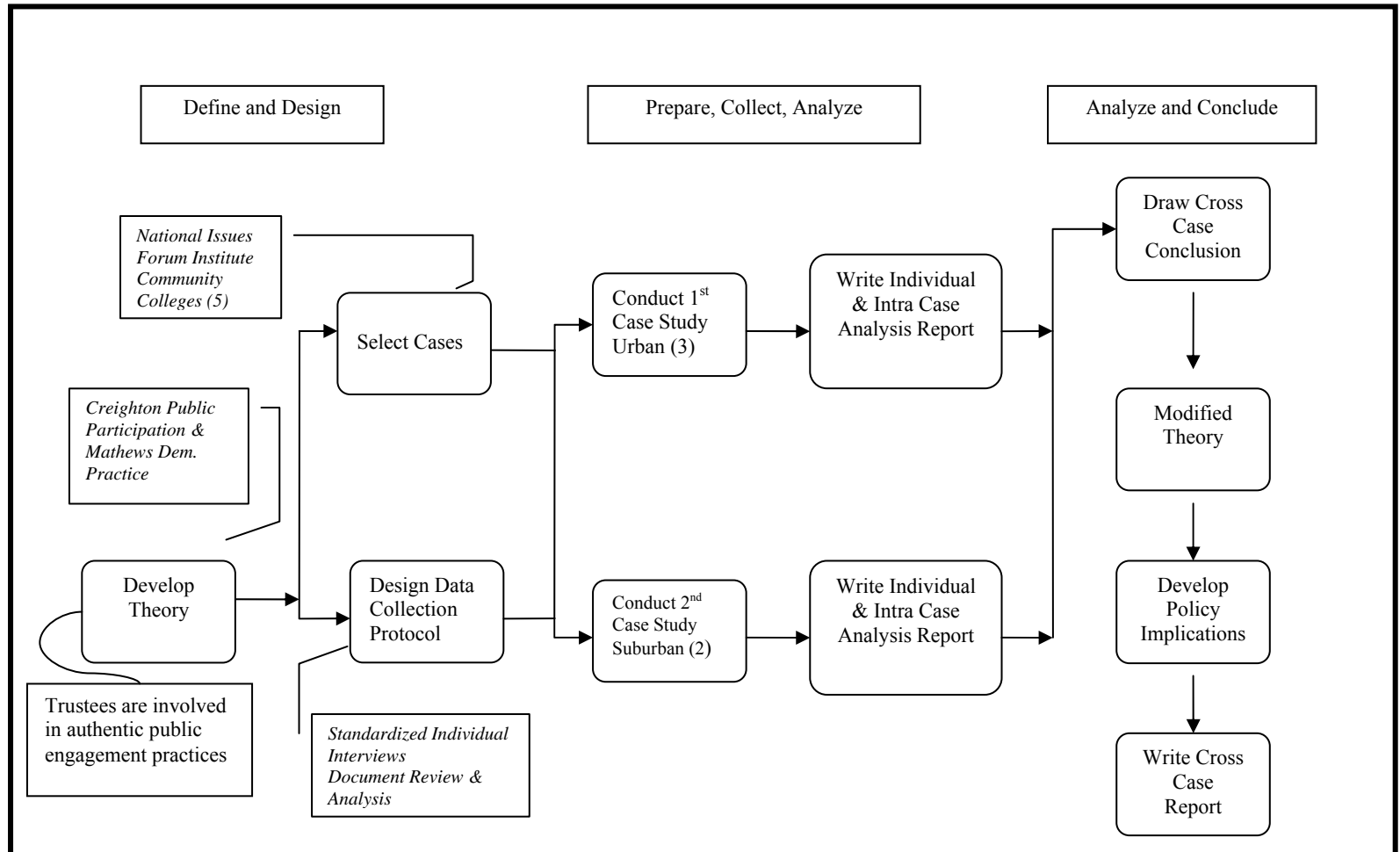


Figure 2. Application of Yin's key steps for conducting case study research.

Source: Yin, R. K. (2003). Case study research design and methods. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

According to Yin (2003), the opportunity to use several sources of data is a major strength of case study; and the use of multiple sources of data “exceed other research strategies, such as experiments, surveys, or histories” (p. 97). In this case study, multiple sources of data allowed the researcher to uncover a broad range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues. The most important use of multiple sources of data is the convergence of the lines of inquiry, which increases the likelihood that the findings will be more convincing and accurate (Yin, 2003). Denzin (1978) and Patton (1980) discussed four types of triangulation—data, investigator, theory and methodological (p. 291). The specific characteristics attributed to each type of triangulation are: (a) Data triangulation, which is the “use of a variety of sources in a study”; (b) investigator triangulation, which is the “use of several different researchers”; (c) theory triangulation, which is the “use of multiple perspectives to interpret the results of a study”; and (d) methodological triangulation, which is the “use of multiple methods to study a research problem” (Onwuegbuzie, 2002, p. 292).

Data triangulation was used in this study, as a variety of source data were collected and analyzed (Denzin, 1978). During the data interpretation phase, both sets of data were converged to “strengthen the knowledge claims of the study or explain any lack of convergence” (Creswell, 2003, p. 217). Data triangulation allowed the researcher to corroborate the same facts or phenomena, thereby ensuring that the facts of the case study were supported by multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2003).

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 5), and data analysis can begin at most any moment during the data collection process (Stake, 2001). Generally, data analysis concludes when the researcher is prepared to share some interpretations and meanings of the data (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Qualitative researchers “build toward a theory” through “observations and intuitive understandings gleaned from being in the field” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 5). In this study, the data and findings were organized and analyzed in the form of “themes, categories, typologies, concepts, tentative hypotheses, and even substantive theory,” for the development of possible theory (p. 5).

Since “quotes and excerpts contribute to the descriptive nature of qualitative research,” commonly, data in the form of quotes from documents, field notes, participant interviews, excerpts from video-tapes, electronic communication, or a combination thereof are always included in support of the findings of the study” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 5). As such, for this study, data analysis began after the first interview. This approach to data analysis allowed the researcher to begin transcribing and reviewing the participant interview, identifying quotes, organizing a code book for managing in-depth data and analysis from subsequent informant interviews, and analyzing institutional documents and field notes.

In order to conduct data analysis, the researcher was guided by Creswell's (2005) six steps for qualitative data analyses and interpretation: (a) organize and prepare data for analysis; (b) read through all of the data; (c) begin detailed analysis with coding process; (d) use the coding process to generate a description of setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis; (e) advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative; and (f) interpret the meaning of the data (p. 191-195). The researcher established a data file for each college, each informant, and informant transcript to organize and prepare data for analysis. Each data file contained the informant's interview transcript, field notes, and any additional data, which was sorted and organized by source and topic.

Each of the interview transcripts, which were organized and transcribed for content analysis, was thoroughly read at least four times to obtain a general sense of its perspective, meaning, and tone (qualitative data) (Patton, 1980; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A more detailed data analysis was conducted by utilizing the Atlas.ti program—qualitative data analysis software. Atlas.ti was used as an aid to organize and categorize data, establish code names and code data. Ultimately, Atlas.ti aided the researcher with identifying patterns and emerging themes, and reporting data in rich narrative (Creswell, 2003, 2005; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Within each area of inquiry for this study's investigation, the researcher developed tables to categorize, display, and compare the themes that emerged from the research and informant interviews

and the documents reviewed. Using the literature and the conceptual framework, the researcher developed categories to code the informants' responses about public engagement. This qualitative data was analyzed by using the constant comparative method of exploratory thematic analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which involved:

- reviewing interview transcripts;
- specifying and listing each idea or unit without categorization;
- benchmarking for public engagement and public participation, which served as the *a priori* context for creating the thematic categories; (The categorization of each unit was not limited to the engagement and public deliberation benchmarks, as new themes might have emerged from the informants.)
- clustering themes used to identify similar ideas/units and match with public engagement and public participation benchmarks, and to determine if themes unrelated to the benchmarks emerged; and
- ensuring final thematic assignment by reviewing and comparing ideas/units.

The Researcher as an Instrument

The researcher co-founded a Public Policy Institute at a community college within the National Issues Forums Institute network, facilitated workshops across the nation on convening and moderating deliberative dialogues, and conducted research on public engagement. The researcher acknowledges her

personal interests and biases for assessing public engagement with dyadic communication between public institutions and the public. Philosophically, the researcher contends that dyadic communication requires democratic public engagement processes that involve the public in identifying, naming, and framing issues to reach common ground on solutions for the common good.

Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of the qualitative case study research design, which is considered a pragmatic research philosophy, and data analysis. There was also a discussion of the study's site selection and population sample (i.e., purposeful sampling), data collection, data analysis procedures, and the application of Yin's (2003) case study model. A discussion of the qualitative interview procedure was also provided, as well as a review of relevant literature related to these topics. Chapter IV will present an analysis of the study's findings.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the current system and bring about conformity, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

Paulo Friere (2000)

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings from this qualitative descriptive case study and is organized into four sections. Section one consists of a brief of overview of the purpose of the study, central research questions, and the data collection process. Section two consists of an overview of the case study unit of analysis, demographic data on the case study informants, and the pseudonym assigned to the community college sites and the informants. Section three is a synopsis of the content and context of the informant interviews and includes a cross-case composite. Section four provides a summary of archival documents from each of the community college sites.

Overview of Study and Data Collection Process

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the public engagement practices of community college trustees. Public community college trustees' public engagement perceptions and practices were the focus of the study. There were two central research questions that guided this study.

1. What is the process by which community college trustees engage with the public?

2. What factors contribute to trustee public engagement practices?

The researcher conducted structured open-ended interviews to examine trustee public engagement perceptions and practices. The interviews were divided into five categories: (a) role and responsibilities, (b) definition of public engagement, (c) public engagement practices, (d) barriers to public engagement, and (e) how to make public engagement more effective. Prior to the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose and background of the study. The researcher explained, as stewards of the public trust, community college trustees have a critical responsibility for connecting their college to the community and the community to their college. This responsibility can be especially critical in the trustees' public engagement practices for decision making and policy development. However, to be more effective stewards of the public trust, there is limited information that trustees can rely on, which examines trustees' public engagement processes and practices. Additionally, the researcher explained to the informants that their public engagement perceptions and practices are important to this study as well as to research on community college trustees and that their participation could also provide insight on the role institutional trustee leadership plays in supporting, facilitating, and sustaining public engagement with the community.

In order to establish rapport with trustees, the researcher began each interview by asking them to describe their work and role. During the initial conversations with the trustees, public engagement was not mentioned directly

or indirectly as the trustee's role or work. Therefore, the trustees were next asked to define public engagement, which led to the researcher also asking the trustees to characterize who they considered as the public and the community. To provide a context on how the trustees' definition of public engagement enabled them to accomplish their work and role, such as representing and understanding the needs, interests, and concerns of the community, the trustees were asked a follow-up question. As such, the trustees were asked to elaborate on their public engagement practices. The researcher further probed by asking individual trustees to share experiences that they believed most exemplified the board's commitment to engaging with the public. The researcher next inquired about how the board determines when it is necessary to engage the public and who determines the trustees' public engagement process. The trustees' conversation regarding the definition of public engagement and their personal examples of public engagement in practice segued into the researcher asking about barriers to public engagement. Based upon the trustee's public engagement definition, practices, and perspectives about barriers to public engagement, the researcher then asked how these trustees thought public engagement and public participation might be more effective. Finally, each trustee was asked to describe the board's relationship with their Public Policy Institute Center and their understanding of the Center's work. Although each trustee and Public Policy Institute representative was asked to respond to the same set of questions within

these five categories, each interview was subtly the same, yet distinctly different.

The researcher conducted reviews and analyses of archival institutional documents. These documents were collected so that the researcher could gain perspective on the institutional and board mission and vision statements, organizational priorities, strategic plan, trustee bios, board of trustee agendas, board meeting minutes, issues that trustees discussed, the policy decisions trustees made, board orientation, and governance policies. The institutional Web site was also used as a possible source for ascertaining information about the community college as a site, the board of trustees, and public policy institute.

For this study, the data gathered consisted of 16 digitally and electronically taped interview files; approximately 415 pages of interview transcripts; several pages of field notes; 150 sets of monthly board meeting minutes and 150 sets monthly board meeting agendas (n=150) covering a period of 30 months—2004, 2005, and 2006; institutional and board of trustee information from Web pages; and institutional and board documents, including mission, vision, and values statements; board role and responsibilities; board policy and bylaws; and state policy governing boards of trustees.

Overview of Case Study Unit of Analysis and Demographic Profiles

Case Study Sites

The case study consisted of three urban and two suburban community colleges. More specifically, the case study's unit of analysis was the five

community colleges in the National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) Network. Accordingly, a total of ten community college trustees and five Public Policy Institute representatives from these community colleges were selected as participants for this study. However, one trustee had to withdraw from the study for personal reasons. Within the NIFI Network, there are only five community colleges, and these colleges are located in five states—Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, and Oregon.

Characteristics of Informants

The selected community colleges' trustees were characteristically varied and, therefore, thought to support a broad perspective on public engagement, which would provide a range of meanings on the similarities and differences in trustee engagement practices among these institutions. Table 7 provides the demographic data of each informant in this study. The aggregated demographic composition of the informants and classification of community college sites studied follows:

- Gender: (5) Females; (9) Males
- Ethnicity: (8) White; (6) African American
- Community College Classification: (3) Urban; (2) Suburban
- Age Range: (2) 50-54; (4) 55-59; (3) 60-64; (5) 65 or over
- Years of Service: (1) 0-2; (4) 3-5; (2) 6-9; (2) 10-12; (3) 13-15; (2) 20 or more

The aggregated demographic composition by informant category (i.e., trustee, Public Policy Institute representative) follows:

Trustees

- Gender: (3) Females; (6) Males
- Ethnicity: (5) White; (4) African American
- Community College Classification: (6) Urban; (4) Suburban
- Age Range: (1) 50-54; (2) 55-59; (2) 60-64; (4) 65-or over
- Years of Service: (2) 3-5; (2) 6-9, (2) 10-12; (1) 13-15; (2) 20 or more

Public Policy Institute Representative

- Gender: (2) Females; (3) Males
- Ethnicity: (3) White; (2) African American
- Community College Classification: (3) Urban; (2) Suburban
- Age Range: (1) 50-54; (2) 55-59; (1) 60-64; (1) 65-or over
- Years of Service: (1) 0-2; (1) 3-5; (2) 13-15

Table 7

Case Study Informant Profile

Institutional Type	Gender	Race	Age	Years of Service
Suburban	F	B	50-54	0-2
Suburban	M	B	55-59	3-5
Urban	M	B	55- 59	3-5
Urban	M	W	65-or over	3-5
Urban	M	W	55-59	3-5
Suburban	F	W	60-64	6-9
Suburban	F	B	55-59	6-9
Suburban	M	W	65-or over	10-12
Suburban	M	W	50-54	10-12
Urban	M	W	60-64	13-15
Urban	M	B	60-64	13-15
Urban	F	W	65-or over	13-15
Urban	F	W	65-or over	20 or more
Urban	M	B	65-or over	20 or more

Case Study Summary

The following case study summary provides salient highlights of the content and context from the informant interviews. In this study, the selected informants were trustees and a Public Policy Institute representative from the community colleges within the NIFI Network. The researcher assigned each informant a pseudonym to protect his or her anonymity. The trustee informants are referred to as “T” and assigned a subscript number as an identifier such as, T₅₀; the Public Policy Institute representatives are referred to as “R” and assigned a subscript number as an identifier such, R₅₀.

For the case synopsis, the researcher employed the techniques of *textural, structural, and textural-structural* narratives to summarize the perceptions and experiences of each informant (Creswell, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Verbatim transcripts involved descriptions of the informants’ experiences

(Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Structural statements are those using the researcher's own account or interpretation of the participants' meanings (Creswell, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Finally, *textural-structural* statements are a combination, reaching the essence of each case study by "constructing an overall description of the meaning and essence of the experience" (Creswell, 2003, p. 150).

Interviews with Informants in Case Study

This section of the findings contains a summary of the structured interviews conducted with the trustees and the Public Policy Institute representatives participating in this study. Each summary is organized to provide the informants' responses to interview questions in five categories—(1) trustees role and responsibility; (2) definition of public engagement; (3) description of trustee public engagement practices; (4) barriers to public engagement; and (5) making public engagement more effective.

Interview with T₁

Trustee roles and responsibilities. An elected trustee at a suburban community college, T₁, has served on the board for less than 10 years. T₁ made several observations about the role and work of trustees, which included "it is sometimes overwhelming," "interesting," and "never dull." T₁ continued, "As I like to remind some of our State senators and State legislators, we actually represent more people than they do." Additionally, "It's always a crucial and essential part

for us to understand what the community needs, what our district needs, and how we go about making sure that we meet those needs.”

Definition of public engagement. During T₁'s initial conversation about the work and role of trustees, public engagement was not mentioned directly or indirectly. As a result, the researcher redirected the conversation to focus on public engagement. It then became evident that T₁ had perceptions about public engagement, as a trustee's role, and began to share personal examples of it in practice. T₁ discussed public engagement in two very specific contexts—running for elected office and participation with and membership in civic associations. For example, T₁ stated, “The public parts or the public engagement part of being a trustee is we are elected within our entire district. . . . Just running for election is an act of engaging the public.” In describing and defining public engagement, T₁ stated that public engagement is

. . . mingling with the public, a way of getting people to interact, making sure citizens are informed and they participate, a way to understand what's going on, making sure the public feel comfortable going to a trustee or a board member or whatever and saying, you know, this is what I need, involves seeking out input, going out into the community, being involved and making sure, that [I] introduce myself as a trustee of the College.

The community was characterized by T₁ as “the taxpayers” and “the voters”; whereas, T₁ consistently used three words when speaking about the public—“elected officials,” “business and industry leaders,” and “civic leaders.” T₁ mentioned personal volunteer work as a public engagement activity. The informant, however, made clear that it was decidedly not considered a trustee's

role and stated, “In some of the other work that I do outside my work as a trustee, I do a great deal of volunteer work.”

Trustee public engagement practices. T₁ elaborated on the public engagement practices that were used to enable their work as a trustee. The informant spoke about how the practice allowed her to understand the needs, interests, and concerns of the community. “As an informal means of understanding the community needs,” T₁ declared, “Trustees bring to the board their diverse interests, experiences, and what they do in their daily lives as different feelers” as well as “connections in communities.” T₁ inferred that the board relied on the president and staff to inform them about the community’s needs and to be actively engaged with the community. For example, T₁ stated, “Our staff, from the president on down, is very actively engaged in the community.” We have people who go to chamber meetings” and the “the president is out in the community constantly.” . . . So, I think sometimes as board members, the staff is taking care of it and report back to us.” T₁ expressed, “The board needs more formal public engagement processes.”

According to T₁, “The monthly board meeting” was the “formal process” trustees used to understand the community needs, interests, and concerns. T₁ further remarked, “As a formal process, I don’t think we do a very good job. I don’t think that we have a formal process in place, other than having a portion on our board meeting where the public can make comments where if we have one in six months, that’s a big deal.” T₁ shared concerns about the monthly board

meeting being viewed as the only way that trustees need to communicate with the public by stating, “We have one board member who believes that the only way that we need to communicate with the public is through that public comment session.”

T₁ recounted an experience that exemplified the Board’s commitment to public engagement. The informant shared that the college president convened a public hearing to discuss a potential bond issue or fiscal matter. The informant indicated that the president obtained a consultant to construct and coordinate the public engagement process over an extended period of time. Continuing to share the story the informant indicated:

We began a series of public engagements. . . . We had to go to the public to ask for more money for a building...for expanding our campus. . . . We invited everybody we could think of basically to come to the college and look at our facility’s master plan and engage with us. . . . We always started with a presentation on budget, financials, and the facility master plan. . . . The meetings were both informational and interactive. . . .We didn’t want people to come and just sit for two hours and listen. . . .We assigned people to tables so they weren’t with people who were just like them as far as background and what they did. . . . Roundtables were always used. . . . We invited thousands of people, but about 200, from every walk of life, attended. . . . We really made a special effort to not just concentrate on the business leaders, or people in education, but really expand and bring in as diverse a group in our community as we could.

T₁ explained that the only time that the trustees determined to engage the public is when there is specific need. The informant stated, “Honestly it’s unfortunate, but I think the most obvious one is when we need more money” “when there’s a problem,” “when we have a group that is not being served by the college,” “when we’re not fulfilling our mission,” and “when we hired a new

president—when we went through a presidential search.” Further inquiry revealed that the Board relied on the “advice from the staff” to determine when to engage with the public. The chair and vice chair are involved with the president and staff in determining the process.

Barriers to public engagement. T₁ spoke discouragingly about the challenges of public participation, getting the public to participate at board meetings, and getting the public to participate at other occasions established for public engagement. The informant shared several observations about public participation, which included, “getting the public to participate took some effort,” “required casting a broad net for participation,” and “developing a large guest list to ensure public attendance.”

The informant further indicated that the public was “too busy,” “disinterested,” and “as long as things are going well, 99% of the community doesn’t care. Continuing to reflect about barriers to public engagement, T₁ stated, “They [the public] don’t know how,” “they have no clue,” “not only can they not name who the trustees are, they don’t understand what a trustee does, or that that’s a way of communicating with trustees or with the college,” “just a lack of knowledge or information,” and the “concept of everything’s fine over there. I have what I need, so I don’t need to be engaged,” and “just don’t raise my taxes and keep things going and I’ll be a happy person.” Moreover, the informant claimed, “I don’t think that’s the college’s fault. I think you find the same thing in government.

Making public engagement more effective. T₁ seemed frustrated, exacerbated, and concerned about not being able to offer strategies to improve public participation or make public engagement more effective. As a strategy, however, T₁ mentioned, “the media” could be a potential resource for publicizing, informing, and increasing the interest of the public in board business. The informant stated, “We aren’t getting a lot of PR. . . . And our PR people work very, very hard” and “we don’t even have a reporter at board meetings.”

Responding to what it would take for trustees to define their mission of public engagement differently or make public engagement more effective, T₁ emphatically stated, “A crisis, I’m being very blunt. A change in the Board’s behavior would depend on a crisis. I think our trustees believe that they are representing the community. I truly believe that.” T₁ further explained,

I don’t know. I personally, I feel that I have a pretty broad circle with whom I communicate. I know that is isn’t broad enough. But because of my involvement in an organization that’s affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation, a community organizing group, I feel like I touch groups that maybe most—well, I know none of the other trustees touch, the Muslim community, Hispanic community, because of my work. I’m not tooting my own horn here, saying, wow, I’m wonderful; it’s just a chance thing. I think all of our trustees have a wide circle of people that they talk to, and I think that they feel that that’s how they get their information.

Finally, the informant commented that the relationship between the board and the Public Policy Institute, as well as the informant’s understanding of the Institute’s work was “minimal.” The informant seemed apologetic and said, “I’m not sure that I even understood that we were one of five in the country,” “I didn’t

have a clue, which is kind of embarrassing.” At the conclusion of the interview, T₁ stated, “I am going to get in contact with the Institute director.”

Interview with T₂

Trustee roles and responsibilities. T₂ is an appointed trustee at a suburban community college and has served on the board between 10 and 12 years. Before the official interview, the informant shared stories about the many nonprofit boards on which the informant had served. The informant proudly stated, “Serving on the community college board has been the most fulfilling.” T₂ officially began the interview by sharing that their community college board is a “good board,” “focused,” “attentive,” and “do not micromanage.” Offering more details about the board, T₂ stated, “It is fortunate for the college and the board that there has not been a crisis of confidence with the community or in the community.” The informant indicated that the board is “here to support and work with the administration of the college.” Describing the board’s work and role, the informant stated, “The trustees’ primary responsibility is doing a search to select a good president and then support that president,” and “I don’t think there’s any greater responsibility that comes close to that.” Providing more insight about the work and role of trustees, the informant emphasized, “A trustee’s role is outreach, “advocating for the college . . . in terms of getting the public funding necessary,” “working with our county executives, county council, the State legislature and the governor,” “spreading the good word about the college throughout the community,” “being a source for them [community] for

information,” “being accountable to taxpayers,” and “listening carefully to the president, faculty, staff, and students as they talk about the school, what they need, and what they want from the school.”

Definition of public engagement. During the interview, the informant indicated the role of the board in public engagement by stating, “It’s the responsibility of the board to create the opportunities then encourage and facilitate interaction with the broader community. Next, the informant was asked to expound about how trustees listen to the community. Initially, the informant gave examples of issues that trustees hear about from faculty, staff, and students; however T₂ provided no definitive examples of the processes used to listen to the public and community. Although T₂ earlier mentioned that trustees hear about issues and concerns from the college staff, T₂ was hesitant when the researcher asked how trustees used public engagement as a means to listen to the public. Somewhat avoiding the question, T₂ provided a philosophical perspective on the importance of listening and stated, “I think you have to come to at least some feeling that I don’t have all the answers . . . so certainly you have an opportunity and sometimes you have to make opportunities, but you have to be available and listen when you are there and not be trying to tell them.” Ultimately, T₂’s examples of listening opportunities and related activities became the informant’s definition of public engagement. Thus, the informant’s definition of public engagement included “going to public hearings,” “testifying at public hearings,” “[monthly board] dinners with each of the stakeholders,” “campus

visits,” and “public information and release of public information.” T₂ explained, “You just take advantage of every opportunity you can to interact with people. Sometimes you ask questions so that they feel like you are concerned and interested. I think you just have to pause, look, and listen.” Much later, during the interview, the informant referred to public engagement as

. . . public outreach to provide information, inviting legislators and elected officials on the campus to meet with us, to be able to talk about and explain what we’re doing, going out to raise money . . . working with the foundation, supporting the foundation. . . . That’s public engagement, and you can only do it if you spread a lot of good will.

T₂ often referred to the public as “elected officials” and “legislators.”

Toward the very end of the interview and after a lengthy conversation about the “college’s role and need to address community problems and identify solutions,” T₂ suggested, “Public engagement implies a two-way interaction. Outreach often doesn’t get to the second.”

Trustee public engagement practices. The informant described a public engagement experience and elaborated about personal public engagement experiences. By recalling an occasion where the college president requested the informant to serve as a member of a regional council to bring a four-year degree-granting institution to the county, the informant shared a rather long account of a ballot initiative. Choosing to discuss the ballot initiative, T₂ provided an example of the board’s commitment to engaging with the public

The ballot would limit the council’s ability to raise the public dollars they need to support their programs. Well, if you limit the amount of taxes you collect, then the college is going to have a harder time filling its budget

requirements and we're likely to end up receiving cuts. So that, to me, it's a no-brainer. If someone is attempting to limit the amount of revenue the county can collect through taxes; that is not in the long-term interest of the college and we had to interfere with that. We had to try to stop that from happening.

T₂ recalled, "The college had been part of a coalition of people that has succeeded in doing that on several occasions. . . ." The informant remembered serving as the convener of the council and that its membership "included a number of groups from the League of Women Voters," "the Committee for [the County]," "Chamber of Commerce," "public employee unions," "teacher unions," "firefighters, policemen" and "a group like community ministries." The informant qualified participating as a coalition member, "I might have done it even if I hadn't been a trustee." Further, the trustee commented, "We're pretty careful about getting into politics." Furthermore, T₂ recalled, "I even participated on a panel last time on this ballot question in a public forum . . . where I went head to head against somebody from the taxpayer's league who was advocating for the cut."

The informant seemed concerned about the college's missed opportunities to engage with the public, and stated, "I'm not sure that we are yet the center for public debate and discussion that we could be on all manner of issues that are of concern in our community . . . and I don't think it's easy to do." The informant offered, "I don't know that we played a role in that or in facilitating the community to come to some consensus on it. . . . I'm not sure maybe we couldn't have successfully done that, but I'm not sure we shouldn't have tried."

As a follow-up, T₂ stated the following regarding who has the responsibility to convene the public around issues that impact the larger community:

I think if you had an institute for public policy discussions within the walls of the college, and you had some resources there with—a professor for leadership—that could work. . . . They could both be working with students and educating them and in the process of bringing people together to address community issues of concern. But they could also be doing some public opinion polling. . . . And I think if you had that kind of institute that the community knew, recognized, and respected, they would often come saying we need help with this. You helped us with that can you help us with this. . . . I think we ought to do that, but that isn't required of us. That's sort of something I would like to see us doing. But I'm not sure it's a responsibility. But it's something I'd like to challenge us to do as an extra.

As a trustee, T₂ stated, "I learn about the interests, needs, and concerns of the community by living in the community" and "openly asking questions." T₂ indicated that the board also relied on "each other and their diversity of experiences, ethnicity, gender, and professional background," as an information resource. In addition, the monthly board meetings were identified as the formal opportunity for trustees to understand the community needs, interests, and concerns. T₂ mentioned,

We have the formal opportunity for people to come out to our board meetings and say something, but no one ever has. I think the whole time I've been on the board—maybe three people attended in 10 years. And so that vehicle, while the opportunity's there, is obviously not a real good one.

T₂ suggested that the board meetings could be televised to engage more people.

They could watch the meetings and then they might become interested in commenting on them . . . , but personally I'm not suggesting we do that... cause I think there are side effects? Some of the side effects are not worth the trouble.

Toward the end of this interview, T₂ stated, “I think either the administration, board or both, have to create opportunities for people to interact with them.” Explaining how the board determines when it is necessary to engage the public, the informant commented, “The public has high expectations of the college, and those expectations are being satisfied.” The process of selecting a new president was identified as a necessary reason for engaging the public. According to T₂, generally, the board makes its decisions about its public engagement process with the direction and input from the college president and administration. On the other hand, “If the college administration is the source of the crisis, issue, or problem, the board has to make the decision about the appropriate public engagement process.” The informant claimed, “There is sufficient expertise and experience among the board members to identify a process with style flexibility to engage the public.”

Barriers to public engagement. Regarding barriers to public engagement and public participation, T₂ expressed concern that the “college had missed opportunities to deliver a service to the community and problem solve,” as well as the “community not looking to the college to help facilitate a process that may lead to a solution.” Additionally, T₂ claimed, “If we had done that on a few big things, we’d find the decision makers turning to us on a fairly regular basis saying, ‘can you help us on this?’” The informant suggested that the college had not “ventured in the direction of being a community convener for public problem solving.” Moreover, T₂ suggested that it is the “board’s responsibility to enable the

college to be a convener of the public and provide public space for public dialogue and debate.” T₂ even suggested that the college should establish a public policy institute.

Making public engagement more effective. The informant’s conversation about public participation at monthly board meetings and the suggestion to establish a public policy institute was the context of T₂’s perspective about making public engagement more effective. Furthermore, T₂ was unresolved about whether there is a role for a trustee in cultivating the civic life in the community. The informant commented, “It’s not very clear to me that as a trustee I’m responsible for enhancing civic life.”

Expounding, the informant indicated that it is the board’s responsibility to “breathe life into being a convener of the public and center for public dialogue and debate.” T₂ also indicated that would “require the board to allocate appropriate resources, identify leadership, and promote it to ensure success.” The informant’s suggestion that the college establish a public policy institute provided an opportunity for the researcher to remind the informant that the college already has a public policy institute. While the researcher inquired about the relationship that the trustees and board had with their Public Policy Institute, the informant responded, “You mentioned we had one and we were one of five schools, and I was immediately skeptical because I wonder if the other four were...are as invisible as ours is.” As a final note, the informant commented,

“Now all of a sudden I’m feeling like I’d like to see the annual report of the Institute and I’d like to see what they have done.”

Interview with T₃

Trustee roles and responsibilities. T₃ is an elected trustee at a suburban community college who has served on the board between 10 and 12 years, as well as served as the board chair. T₃ began the interview by elaborating about being an elected trustee. In describing the work and role of a trustee, the informant stated,

Once a person puts his or her name on the ballot, they have to have the understanding that they will oversee and work for one entity and one entity only, and that’s the stakeholders of the community that owns that institution. So, basically, we are given the opportunity, if elected by the stakeholders, to oversee their institution.

“Stewardship” was identified as a role. The stakeholders were characterized as the “people who pay taxes to that community—that own that institution.” Clarifying who the stakeholders are, the informant stated, “When I look at stakeholders, I look at the overall picture. Not how some trustees would look. I look at everything and everybody.” The informant expressed concern about how this role is sometimes interpreted and said,

That’s where things get lost, because I’ve seen individuals in the past thinking of the institution as their institution whether it be a board member, administrator or faculty member. . . . And we have to understand, we’re there to work on behalf of the actual people who own that institution.

The informant revealed that the relationship with stakeholders was favorable because “our institution and the people who have been on the board in

the past, and the presidents in the past have done an excellent job in maintaining an outstanding institution, so we have great curb appeal.” T₃ inferred that as a result of having good “curb appeal,” the college and board had less involvement and engagement with the public.

Definition of public engagement. The conversation about representing stakeholders was a perfect segue for T₃ to define public engagement and to speak about the trustees’ public engagement practices with the stakeholders. T₃ chose to share a story about the educational priorities within the informant’s community claiming,

Essentially K-12 is the educational priority established by the community, and that makes it difficult for the community college and trustees to compete with the K-12 agenda. The most important thing in education with the stakeholders is the grade school system, the high school system and the community college system comes in a distant third.

T₃ described public engagement as “assessing the community and the community needs,” “interviews,” and “dialogue.” The informant had no specific preferences for an engagement process and indicated that the board relied on a consultant to recommend two to three processes for trustees to consider for engaging with the public.

Trustee public engagement practices. Although public monthly board meetings were identified as a formal means for the board and public to engage, T₃ remarked, “All the years that I’ve been a trustee, not one stakeholder has shown up to discuss, dispute, or anything, about our budget,—not once;...and

I've been on the board for almost 10 years." The informant recounted an experience that most exemplified the board's commitment to engage with the public, which was a workforce development need determined by local business and industry stakeholders. The informant also chatted about how the board recognized the need to enter into dialogue with the stakeholders (i.e., taxpayers) to raise money for constructing a building. The informant explained that the community did not want to incur the cost to expand the academic program, which would require a larger facility. The informant emphasized, "Once the stakeholders spoke, the board knew that they needed to enter into dialogue. . . . We brought people from business and industry." The dialogue participants were described by the informant as "executive directors of all the area chambers," "superintendents," "directors of hospitals," and "citizen groups and leaders."

According to the informant,

The purpose of the dialogue was to sit down and to go over everything to make sure that we really did need this. . . . Our stakeholders said, "We're not going to pay that much." So we scaled it back, and they then passed the building part of it; the educational part will have to be more handled by the users.

Further elaborating and describing how the trustees learned about the interests, needs and concerns of the community, T₃ mentioned, "The diverse backgrounds and experiences," and "community connections" of each trustee was the source relied on to determine the needs of the community. T₃ shared several stories about the trustees' "personal interactions," "professional relationships with members from the business and industry community," and

“attendance at social events.” These interactions were described as the occasions and opportunities for trustees to directly hear and learn about the issues, needs and concerns of the community. T₃'s stories included examples about how these relationships have been a source of information for the board to determine the workforce development needs and the academic programs necessary to meet community needs.

When AMA came out and said more and more people are dying in hospitals because there is a lack of nurses, well, that, as a trustee, told me I don't have to go out and ask the individual stakeholders, “What do you want?” That tells me, we need more nurses.

T₃ spoke about the industry growth in the region and the need to “develop a workforce to respond to the industry needs, entice students to come to the college for their educational and vocational training, and respond to the changing demographics and language diversity by providing ESOL programs.” There seemed to be a sense of satisfaction that the board of trustees had taken actions and implemented programs that were timely and responsive to these needs. Another example of the board responding to the community needs was the decision for the college to “meet the employee ESOL needs of an international business that recently located in the district.” The informant acknowledged that the public is not usually and readily available, which mitigated a need for trustees to make decisions independent of public input. T₃ explained, “So, did the stakeholders come in and say they need that? No. It was just us as trustees finding out what is needed in our community.” In providing yet another example, T₃ reiterated,

Again, in talking about the stakeholders, the dentists in the area came to me. That was probably even more so how I got elected to the board the first time. It is because I went to the dental association in our area that has 2,000 dentists, and they backed and supported me . . . and we now have a dental hygiene program.

Personal and professional relationships and interactions with business and industry leaders and elected officials were the informant's most referenced source for determining the community's needs and, ultimately, proposing and making board decisions. The informant seemed disappointed about the lack of stakeholder participation with the board, and explained, "You don't look at the community and see if there are any missing pieces . . . and can we help supply those missing pieces. Otherwise, nothing or very little will get done."

Barriers to public engagement. The conversation about public engagement was interwoven with concern about the difficulty of getting the individual taxpayers,—the "owners of the institution,"—to engage with the board of trustees, as well as attend a public board meeting. Nearly three times, T₃ remarked, "I've been on the board for almost 10 years," and "all the years that I've been a trustee, not one stakeholder has shown up to discuss, dispute, or anything, not one."

The barriers to public engagement and public participation were reiterated by the informant stating, "Again, when you're a distant third, you have great curb appeal. The College,—it's doing a great job, and there's no problems, and they [the public] know that the board members are very conservative." Another of the informant's observations regarding barriers to public engagement and public

participation, “In our area, because there’s so much going on, it’s just not a top priority. . . . We are a metropolitan area of almost nine million people.”

Making public engagement more effective. As a result of the informant’s interview conversation regarding public engagement, barriers to public engagement and public participation and the college’s “curb appeal,” T₃ was asked to think about what it would take to make public engagement more effective. In light of informant’s stated notions regarding the college’s non-business stakeholders’ public participation behaviors, T₃ responded, “Unfortunately it would be something that would be negative, not positive. And that’s the sad thing about it. . . . I’d like to see it [public engagement and public participation] constantly; but, unless there’s a conflict, it won’t happen.” Implying that the public board meetings were not optimizing the opportunity to engage the public, the informant seemed to complain, “We have no suggestion boxes, and we have no community forum on our Web site.”

Although T₃ spoke favorably about forums that the college held saying, “Since I’ve been on the board, early on we had, I think, two different forums. . . . Just open forums for our community to come in, and no one showed up.” Despite the attendance at the forum, the informant still favored them and stated, “The more [community forums] the better.” The college’s radio station was identified as a resource that might be helpful and useful for engaging with the public. During the tenure of T₃ on the board, “Twice our meetings were held out in the community.” Although “no community members attended,” the community

meetings, the informant recommended that more board meetings be held out in the local community. Additionally, T₃ indicated, “I would love to see the public take more of an interest, be present and accountable, and one thing the public could do is let the board know that we are the right track.”

Finally, the trustee indicated that there was no relationship between the board of trustees and the college’s Public Policy Institute, and there was no knowledge of its work.

Interview with T₄

Trustee roles and responsibilities. T₄ is an appointed trustee at a suburban community college, who has served on the board between 6 and 9 years and served as board chair. T₄ made several comments in describing aspects of the work and role of trustees, which included:

. . . to provide the policies that support the mission of the institution. And in terms of community college, supporting the mission of the institution, which means that we’re supporting or developing policies that are in the best interest of the students who attend the institution. . . . We need to be at least broadly knowledgeable of what is taking place in the surrounding community and at least broadly knowledgeable of what’s taking place at the State level as it effects many of the policies that might be developed . . . supporting the president, supporting the practices that the president is attempting or has put into place as those practices relate to the welfare, the well-being of students, administrators, staff, and faculty.

T₄ spoke about how the board of trustees accomplished generally being knowledgeable about constituents’ needs and said,

I think the beauty of our board of trustees, and maybe many good boards of trustees, is that you have a collection of people who themselves are representative of those different constituencies; and, because of that, I think they bring not only the broad knowledge as individuals, but they can

also bring specific knowledge so that collectively we would have the broad knowledge that we bring to all of this.

Offering a word of caution about the work of trustees, T₄ stated,

I think the board has to be very careful in its policy deliberations not to get too much into the administrative or managerial work of the president and staff. I think you run the risk when you become a little too specific of dipping over into that area as a board where you don't need to be.

Finally, T₄ summed up the trustees' work and role by stating, "I guess the big answer is to support the mission of the institution through the development of policies."

Definition of public engagement. Since T₄ mentioned that the work and role of a trustee was to be "broadly knowledgeable," further inquiry was made regarding the process used to become broadly knowledgeable. The inquiry was pursued in two areas: (a) how the informant defined public engagement and (b) how the trustees actually engage with the public in order to develop policy. In response, T₄ stated,

Being involved with the constituents that impact, or are in a position to impact the goings on as a college. Being involved through getting to know, for example, who the public officials are at the county level, at the State level, on increasingly it seems at the Federal level. Being involved with county, State, officials that are involved in any funding decisions that affect the college. . . . Also I think we have a responsibility to learn who the key players are in the community, not necessarily at a legislative level, as with the county and State people involved in funding. But also at a service level and at an organizational level. I guess for me it might involve health groups, community health groups or arts and humanities groups, so that we're aware of the constituents that the college is, or could serve.

After a short pause, T₄ emphasized the need to be broadly knowledgeable, saying,

I guess it's just being involved, again in a general way with the constituents that the college is serving or could be serving, and I'll use the same phrase again being broadly knowledgeable about the roles of those various constituents and how they could or do impact the activities of the college. I would have to underscore the word broadly, or generally knowledgeable because it is a vast constituency.

Although the topic of discussion was public engagement, T₄ had not referred to the trustees' work using the term "public engagement." The informant provided examples of the work of trustees, such as, "being involved with the constituents" and "knowing who the key players are." However when T₄ was asked to define public engagement, T₄ responded, "I don't know what public engagement is. Maybe the best way to characterize it . . . to me, it's all about governance. That's what governance is to me. . . . And if it's done effectively, it's sort of like leadership in governance." In order to determine the interest needs and concerns of the community, T₄ explained,

You interact with the community by attending community events . . . becoming a part of the community by keeping your eyes and ears open . . . listening to those within the college community who are knowledgeable about what various segments of the community may be doing or saying. And I think, here, the president and staff are key. . . . You become involved in other aspects or other organizations, other groups that's within the community that will help keep you attuned . . . reading the county newspapers, magazines, and professional journals.

According to T₄, the public board meeting was a means for determining the interest, needs, and concerns of the community. For example, the informant remarked,

The board meeting is where we have our public comments period. . . . I can't think of any public forums that we would have as a board where we would invite the community to talk specifically to us. . . . I think the public forum during the board meetings is probably the best.

Inferring that that the board meetings provided a safe and controlled venue for the public, T4 explained,

I don't know if I would be comfortable with the board having its own forums with the community because I think it runs the risk of the board being in a position of trying to satisfy certain needs that it might not be able to satisfy because it's too much into the actual management of the institution.

Trustee public engagement practices. The inquiry regarding public engagement practices began by continuing the previous conversation about leadership in governance. T4 shared a story about a book by Chait and Taylor, which addressed this notion as its topic. The informant further expounded, "I do not think AGB liked it very much because it kind of promoted trustees as leaders, not as micro-managers, but as leaders." T4 explained,

I liked it because it suggested that it's very important if a board of trustees wants to be effective, whether at the community college or four-year institution. It's very important that they train themselves how to be leaders in governance. And that to me says they train themselves on how to be engaged with the various constituents that could impact the institution or are impacting the institution in a proactive way. And that sort of is my understanding or how I would define public engagement.

In discussing public engagement practices, T4 commented, "I think, for me personally, it has been that of educating myself, which I am still doing, about the legislative aspect of the county and state legislative roles and how they affect the college." T4 also offered several more examples, "Becoming an advocate at the county and state levels . . . knowing who the players are and interacting with the players, I think a trustee needs to be able to interact with faculty." T4 provided other examples, such as, "attending an event that supports whatever group we're

trying to advance,” “a press release,” “an interview or comments from board members that are part of a press release promoting an idea or a particular cause the College is trying to move forward” and “letters.”

Initially, the informant was a bit challenged with trying to identify a significant occasion that exemplified the board’s commitment to engaging with the public “I am blocking on an occasion” uttered T₄. However, after a long pause the informant shared, “dealing with local legislators,” “county council and the work we’ve done there as advocates,” and the “presidential search process open forums.”

Barriers to public engagement. T₄ identified several probable barriers to public engagement, which included “public indifference,” “some people just don’t think they’ll make a difference,” “people who may be intimidated by the whole structure,” and “ignorance or lack of knowledge about what’s going on and what the issues are might impede participation.”

Making public engagement more effective. Prior to sharing perceptions regarding making public engagement more effective, T₄ voiced, “This question presupposes that it needs to be more effective.” Although not immediately offering suggestions for making public engagement more effective, T₄ stated, “I guess a general answer would be increased communication.”

Finally, T₄ indicated that there was no “formal” relationship between the board of trustees and the college’s Public Policy Institute. However T₄ did have some knowledge of its work.

Interview with T₅

Trustee roles and responsibilities. T₅ is an appointed trustee at an urban community college who has served on the board between 3 and 5 years and as the board chair. In describing the work and role of a trustee, T₅ identified several major activities. “The trustees’ work and role . . . is primarily to make sure that the college is fully sound. We must make sure that the funding that’s supporting the programs for the college is in place.” In addition, “ensuring that programs are in place to support our students, ensuring that we have the proper infrastructure to support those programs and provide facilities and buildings that are up to date with the best technology in order to support the students” were identified as the trustees’ work and role. As a final note, T₅ stated, “As a trustee, I felt it was my job to make sure that we had the programs to support those individuals who are working on improving their lives in the community.”

Definition of public engagement. “Service to the public” was the context in which T₅ described public engagement. In defining public engagement, T₅ offered, “I would probably define it as having programs that allow the public to actually have a meaningful purpose. By that I mean like the nursing program or first responders, firefighters.” The informant explained, “Those programs directly

impact the community. . . . The public has a role to play; once they've gone through these programs and once they've completed their program, they are now protectors of the community.” The researcher then asked T₅ to describe the personal role of engaging with the public, as trustee, to which the informant responded,

... primarily assisting the president when he goes to the legislature to actually secure funding for the community college. Our role is to go there and assist the president in making sure that we have adequate funding for a lot of our facilities and buildings . . . speaking to the legislators. . . . Sometimes we had forums in which all the community colleges trustees would get together and map out a strategy as to how we're going to approach the legislators during their session.

In determining the issues and concerns of the community, T₅ disclosed, “I'm involved in a lot of organizations; I have a fraternity; your face is recognizable because the photos are in the lobby at the College for people to see you. And so people will actually address you, and in church.”

Trustee public engagement practices. Describing trustee public engagement practices as well as an occasion that exemplified the board of trustees' commitment to engage with the public, T₅ selected the college's annual Foundation banquet. The informant stated, “Typically, the board of trustees was always recognized at those functions. We always had a majority of the board in attendance. And so you're interacting with the public during that particular function.” The informant also stated, “I guess the other engagement would be the monthly board meetings. The public is invited to attend the monthly meetings.” Although the monthly board meetings were mentioned as public engagement, T₅

stated, “I was on the board for five years, and only one time do I recall the public or a person actually came to the board meeting. And they’re open to the public. That was the only time.” Some other examples of public engagement T₅ shared included, “Our names are publicly displayed at the college and we get letters from some of the public constituents concerning some issues. And they would actually send them directly to the board of trustees.” At the very end of the interview, T₅ elected to share a story about public engagement at the college, remembering that the college and board held what was described as, “deliberative dialogues” with the public to discuss a land use issue. The “dialogues were organized and the issued framed” by the Public Policy Institute; the dialogue schedule was “announced in the newspaper.” In talking about who should determine the participants for the dialogues, T₅ said, “I would think the board should rely on the president.”

Barriers to public engagement. T₅ spoke about the barriers to public engagement, within the context of having served as a trustee for five years and recalling only one occasion that the public engaged with the board at the monthly meetings. The informant explained, “I believe that the public should actually make sure that the board is actually doing its job as far as making sure there are the educational opportunities for the community and youth in our community. And you’ve got to actually take them to task to make sure that that’s being done.” T₅ elaborated about the public’s perceptions.

The perception is that this community college really does the job as far as educating and providing scholarships for students in our community. . . . I think that the feeling is that College is a community asset, and a lot of people have that feeling in the community. So there are very few problems that people feel they have with the College.

Making public engagement more effective. Expressing concern about the public's attendance at monthly board meetings, T₅ remarked, "Even if things were not so wonderful, I would make sure that I was in attendance at each—and every board of trustees meeting—to be there and voice my concern. That is the outlet that the board of trustees, the president and also the legislators established for the public to have that opportunity . . . and so that's how I would engage the board of trustees. I would be there at every meeting." The informant also suggested creating more opportunities for public forums and scheduling board meetings at a more convenient time might make public engagement more effective.

Interview with T₆

Trustee roles and responsibilities. T₆ is an appointed trustee at an urban community college, who has served on the board between 3 and 5 years. In describing the work and role of a trustee, T₆ began by stating, "We act as a board to look at broad policy and long-term direction. We also act to serve as a clearing board for the responsibilities of selecting contractors and reviewing building progress." The informant continued by talking about the contract that the trustees have approved.

We [trustees] had a number of capital improvement projects that were going on while I was on the board, and the board itself did the selection of the bidding on the projects. A subcommittee of the board made recommendations to the entire board for final selection; the board selected from that. And we established partnership boards as the capital projects went along.

In addition the informant explained, “We, in fact, acted primarily as a kind of a go-between, intermediary between the college and not only the community, but also some of the politicians and the legislature, so that we could try to make the needs of the college known.”

The informant identified the primary college community as the students, stating,

I’m thinking of our surrounding county and the areas around that probably are the primary source of the students. Our students come from everywhere. I’m speaking primarily of the local community and the community we serve. The community we serve primarily is probably the local counties.

The informant spoke about the community that trustees are responsible to and revealed the community “taxpayers” and “students,” and an even broader entity “I don’t think it’s primarily voters, property owners or business people—it’s all of them.”

Definition of public engagement. T₆ was familiar with and had experience with the Public Policy Institute, and defined public engagement as

. . . bringing all segments of our community together, have them involved in a vigorous discussion of the issues that the community as well as the nation faces. I think of that you bring in all the students and all the classes within the community. It’s kind of an opportunity for people to make their voices heard and to hear what other people are thinking. . . . Well, it’s where you’re bringing people with widely varying points of view together to

explain why they feel the way they do. The goal is that rather than thinking of the response or trying to make an argument, they're listening.

In response to the researcher's request for the informant to elaborate further about experiences, successes and challenges with public engagement, the informant asked whether the experience had to be in their role as a trustee. After clarification, the informant stated,

As a trustee, I can't say that there was a lot of public engagement opportunities with our primary duties. We were inward focused toward the college itself and that's where our responsibility is. And, of course, we [the college and the trustees] do try to hear the community and concerns as expressed—as they relate to the college; however, we didn't get a lot of that. There was not a lot of public input. We would hear from individuals who had a specific issue they were concerned about, but that was about it.

T₆ revealed that during the public board meetings, there was not much engagement with the public and explained,

It was probably because we didn't have many issues. Things were running smoothly; people had confidence in the leadership of the college. They could see what the college was doing, and they were happy with it. And there was not much public involvement. People won't go out of their way to go to a meeting unless they have a real concern about something.

The informant did not recall a significant occasion that exemplified the board of trustees' commitment to engaging with the public. T₆ paused for a long time while trying to recall an occasion and was not able to identify specific commitments to engage the public.

I'm thinking and I don't recall any specific things of that nature or special areas of commitment. We involved some specific segments of the community on issues, for instance, we did have some capital projects, and so in moving ahead on those we involved a number of people who had a background in the environment, construction, and primarily people that we were going to hire to be part of our team. We were drawing segments of the community—architects, building contractors, environmental people

and all that sort of thing, but they were invited in rather than coming to present an issue.

Usually, specific experts and professionals were invited by the board to attend the meetings and engage with the board, according to T₆. The researcher questioned the informant about opportunities to engage with public, to which T₆ replied,

We did not feel that we missed an opportunity to engage the public or exemplify the board's commitment to engaging with the public and part of that was that we didn't have any real issues impacting the public. At one time, we did look at and address the tuition issue, what other colleges were doing, and how they were addressing tuition. But there was not much opportunity to engage the public because information was passed down from above—the president's office. We didn't have a whole lot to say about it but we did at that point ask for input from the students and the faculty. Again that was kind of inward, because that was directly affecting them.

The informant spoke about how the students and faculty were informed about the tuition issues and the opportunity to engage in deliberations. “The issues that the board takes up are publicized; and, since it is a public meeting, that was part of it. Passing the word informally as well, and those concerned about it [tuition] needed to be there.”

Trustee public engagement practices. In describing the process trustees used to learn about the interests, concerns and needs of the community in order to make policy decisions, T₆ indicated that it was primarily through interactions with other areas of the community. Offering specific examples, the informant stated,

I'm involved in civic clubs, Rotary Club, church and in other organizations that are service-oriented, and I'm involved in the Chamber of Commerce. All those give me a sense of how the community views the college. And then, of course, I have a business and through that I hear about such needs. Moreover, each trustee comes from a diverse set of interests and backgrounds, so each of us through our normal activities would pick up any concerns—the good and bad. Then, of course, we had some capital fundraising projects that were pretty substantial during that time for our foundation. Dealing with people about that, you'll find out the good and the bad, ultimately how they feel about things.

Next, the interview conversation focused on the question of how the informant thought the community interacted with the board of trustees to discuss issues and concerns. T₆ replied,

I'd have to say there weren't many instances where this happened, but there were on occasions. People knew who the trustees were and on occasion we would get a call from someone and they would say hey, what are you guys doing about this? Or why is this happening? That would give us an opportunity to explain. If we had a lot of controversy, I'm sure we'd get a lot more of those, but were blessed and have still been. The college was doing well, people were aware of it and involved in it; and so we didn't have a lot of that.

The informant spoke about the role of trustees and the public in engagement, and indicated that the role of trustees in was to “be aware and even solicit information regarding how people feel about the college, any concerns they might have about the directions the college is going in.” As an example, the informant shared,

There are some times when in some of the capital projects, not new buildings, but things like renovations and so forth, there were issues with priorities and either more money was spent in an area because there were large investments in equipment. The board had to ask how do we weigh that against the needs in another area of the college.

T₆ remarked,

The board's involvement is regarding strategic direction primarily internal. We deal with the department heads as they made their needs known and with the students. We had some students come in and talk about what they were trying to do, but we were looking primarily for the direction of the college, and so with that we leaned a great deal on the leaders and staff of the college.

In expounding on the role of the public in public engagement, the informant stated,

I think it would be good if the public were more involved. I think the general trend, and it's not the best but the trend is that if people are upset about something, they are much more likely to make their views and presence known than if they're happy with the way things are going. I guess that's the nature of the public. If you go to a restaurant and you get bad service, you're going to tell a lot of people about it, and if you go and get good service, you may not even mention it.

Much later during the interview, T₆ clarified some previous comments made about public engagement and stated,

I don't mean to say that we didn't get any public input. It's just those weren't usually at board meetings. Now at other events, I would hear from people and they'd say things look like they're really going good out there and they like what they are seeing. We have reports to the public from the college, and at different times presentations at civic meetings or things of that nature, through the newspaper, and television to let the public know what's going on. We share things like the fact that the students who attend the community college go on to finish their last two years at a four year university, and usually do better a job and have a higher grade point average overall, during those last two years than people who started at the four year university. So, a lot of positive things like that are shared with the community and we get a lot of positive feedback from the community college acting as a host for events. The Public Policy Institute probably helped that a little bit. One of the purposes of the PPI was to make the community college a meeting place for the public to come together and deal with issues and things of that nature.

The informant elaborated about the interactions that the board of trustees has with the Public Policy Institute.

Our emphasis has been with the community, and I don't know if it's unique at all. But the PPI has been accepted very well at the community college, and a number of the staff as well as instructors and professors have been involved in it in varying degrees. I know one other trustee, other than myself, went through the PPI training, and then we were involved in a number of PPI meetings and forums. So I think the college did that to a higher degree than anybody else, and they certainly did it well. They college and community embraced the PPI as a way of bringing the public discourse to the community and into the community college.

T₆ was asked how the board integrated the dialogue and discourse training from the PPI in its work. Then T₆ stated, "They had not framed an issue that the board was facing and put it up as a forum but, rather, used the PPI type method to involve the public in visioning and long range planning for the entire community." T₆ shared, "The structure and process used in the PPI method tends to bring a little more civil and hopefully workable tone to some issues. . . . It required that people listen." The informant spoke about being invited by the county commission to conduct a forum using the PPI model and stated,

It was somewhat successful. It didn't resolve all of the things, but it certainly had the commissioners taking and listening to each other and the public. The commission suffers from the same problems as the college, the people come when they have something that they're passionate about and they don't like what's happening—and so a lot of times that dominates the meetings. By using the public discourse method of the PPI, it's limited that and brought out some of the other things, so I think it was a useful method of trying to resolve problems.

As it related to the board and the college, T₆ identified an occasion that exemplified the board's commitment to engage with the public, and selected an experience that involved the "PPI method."

On the larger scale, we had a visioning project for the county and we brought in a consultant and had meetings at the college, the college acted as the main forum for most of the meetings, although we did move the site

around to other segments of the community. We had a series of meetings where we invited the public to come and talk about what they felt. We specifically invited people from different segments of the community to become our core group. The PPI consultant came in to help. So it was a pretty big project. When we revisited that about three years later, we thought it was time to update and to see how we were doing. We had the community college involved. . . . We had meetings conducted in a PPI forum type basis on each of those topics. It's all about the process.

Personally, I've seen it work," stated T₆ in referring to the process of using the PPI forums, "and some others in the community had seen that it works. That was a big factor in it." As a follow-up, the researcher asked whether the board made recommendations to the president about incorporating this approach into their visioning process. T₆ stated,

No, the visioning part was driven by the Chamber of Commerce and the commissioners. They knew it was time for an update and wanted to see something happen. Then, the community college was actually proposing the way to do it and we accepted that.

T₆ suggested that the experience among the board members influenced the processes used to learn about the interests, concerns and needs of the community. "I would say, if an issue came before the board and if it was an issue that needed a good bit of public discourse, I think we would probably lean to the forum type method using the PPI." Additionally, the informant commented, "I think it's been our experience with the forums, in taking national issues as an example, there is a way to hear the others, and to bring together lively, varying viewpoints to some sort of compromise that people can live with. And that's generally what you are trying to do in most of these other problem areas." The

informant offered, “It takes the leadership of the board to help shape the direction of the institution in seeing the value of that kind of a discourse around issues.”

T₆ described the board process used to ensure public participation in public engagement.

It’s primarily the notification of the issues that are coming up before board meetings. If it’s an issue that they [the members of the board of trustees] feel like they need more background on or need some assistance at coming to a decision, we usually ask some people who have experience in those particular areas, or who might be affected by what we are deciding.

The researcher further inquired to determine who the people are that might be affected. As example T₆ indicated,

When the college was trying to set up trainings at the various campuses and the board needed to consider where to set it up because there were not many choices. Someone gave us a piece of property. I knew some people who lived around that area and asked them would that be something that they would want or not. Individuals from the board made it a decision and thought it was important to ask the community—it could be a detriment or a good thing.

T₆ discussed the college staff’s involvement in communicating with the public and community to engage them in decisions that the board will make and commented, “There’s a certain amount of impact review that they [the staff] have to go through as well. But, I think the board members probably engaged the public on their own to get first hand feedback on an issue.” The informant emphasized,

There was no forum or formal format for hearing from the community regarding the property issue. It was just informal; it wasn’t a specific event. If there had been a controversy, then we would have conducted a formal process. I think we do forums when it’s obvious there is a real diversity of opinion and we feel like we need to have that public discourse so that

people can hear each other and listen and maybe understand a little better so it's not just two factions fighting all the time.

Barriers to public engagement. The informant was next asked to discuss barriers to public engagement. The context of the barriers was mentioned relative to the public perception of a controversial matter. The informant observed, "The public pretty much only shows up when there's some controversial issue. Otherwise, maybe the board doesn't necessarily hear from the public in any kind of a formal way, as such." In considering what would make public engagement more effective, the T₆ stated,

I don't know the answer. I think unfortunately, we're all busy people. Time is a very important resource...and not many people are going to take the time to get involved unless they think it's something that really impacts them or the things they hold dear. . . . Ultimately, if there is no personal stake in the issue, there's no real reason to be present. Although, there are many other things where they do have personal stakes and they're going to spend their time doing those.

The informant also indicated, "Trustees know that they are representing the interests of the community through their contacts and personal contacts. But that leaves a large segment that we don't hear from, that's for sure." T₆ shared some insights about how trustees can reach out to the large community segment that they don't hear from.

I guess that you could try to make a conscious effort to try to find out who some of those people that we don't hear from are, and see if we can talk with them. But I'm afraid we're going to run into the same problem.

Making public engagement more effective. As a final note about trustees engaging the public in decision-making, the informant remarked,

The standard of measure may be that if we've got a smooth operation going at the college. But, I don't know if that wise. Trustees act to bring some of the outside issues into the college, because the college can get sort of self-contained. In some ways that gives the college a buffer on policy decisions and anything that might be controversial. Then it's the board making the decisions, and not the college president or the staff.

In closing the interview, the informant commented,

I don't think, you can say that we're doing such an exceptional job because everything is quiet. It's the fact that the staff is doing a good job, students are getting what they need and they're pleased. All the board is doing is looking at broad policy issues, and they don't change that often.

Interview with T₇

Trustee roles and responsibilities. T₇ is an elected trustee of an urban community college, who has served on the board for 13 to 15 years. T₇ used a variety of activities to characterize the work and role of trustees.

Policy maker, advocate for the institution, advocate for the student, helping build the infrastructure for institutions, providing vision for the future of the college, making sure we lobby to get funds for the institution to grow, and servants to the public. It is not the other way around. iur responsibility is to serve the students.

T₇ emphasized the role of "setting policy" and explained that it "does not mean we are micromanagers; we hire good managers, a good president, good chancellors to lead institutions, and we set policy for them to govern themselves by and to run the institutions." The informant also fervently expressed, "My role is to look after interests of African Americans." Furthermore,

There are members on the board that can look after the interest of the majority community, and they do, which is supposed to include everybody. But just in case their interest is not in that direction, my direction is to bring the issues that affect African Americans.

Definition of public engagement. Although serving the public and students, lobbying, policy making, and advocacy were mentioned as the work and role of trustees, the informant did not specifically mention the term “public engagement.” Therefore, the conversation was redirected to allow T₇ to share perceptions about the role of public engagement in achieving this work. T₇ offered that public engagement is

. . . constantly touching bases with the street people. . . . I touch bases with street people, everyday working folks, folks that are disenfranchised . . . to embrace their [community, public] interests. In other words, to see their need before they understand they have a need . . . to make sure that the public is nurtured, whether they recognize it or not. In other words, so they can build for the future. That is to take them out of their comfort level and say, you don’t have to be afraid of education.

The informant inferred that public engagement means being accessible, making “sure that you are approachable, visible to everybody in the community.” T₇ added, “My business is right in the inner city, and guys come by.” Public engagement was also described as “embracing the broader community, being able to touch bases with the mayor’s office, serving as a member of commissions and chamber of commerce, and advocating for the broader public.”

“Connecting” was a term used by the informant to summarize public engagement. T₇ made it a point to speak about the importance of trustees’ understanding of the “cultural nuances of the community, not being hostile, too

threatening to and with the community, and feeling comfortable and open to everybody.” For example, the informant cautioned, “If you’re going into a certain community, certain things you don’t say, certain words you don’t use because it’s interpreted a certain way. So, in that process, the board has to constantly educate and challenge themselves.”

Trustee public engagement practices. T₇ further elaborated about how the trustees learned about the interests, needs concerns of the community, stating,

Well, the board—we are moving around. . . . and then we collectively invite each other into our different zones. . . . I’m out there all the time. . . . So, I’m always out there in different functions. . . . And then the other board members are in their areas. . . . We invite each other into our different zones and talk as a collective body. Well, our challenge is really to keep the public interested in knowing that education is to their benefit. And that by them investing in education, benefits the whole of the community.

T₇ recalled an experience that most exemplified the board’s commitment to engaging with the public. The informant shared a story about passing a bond letter, which involved the college trying to expand the campus by purchasing properties in the city that would have been condemned. The details of the conversation included T₇ stating,

...About five years back, we passed a bond letter that the public--the citizens passed a bond letter for some a hundred forty-something million dollars, to expand the campus. And in that process the public voted for it, it was a hundred and forty something million dollars. . . . So we had over 26 meetings in this particular area-in the urban center. I live to talk to people and educate them to what we were doing. . . . We met a lot, I mean a lot of meetings, maybe 26 meetings were held inside the community’s urban center. But we also had to educate the broader community. . . . We did not want them to feel that we were just coming in trying to railroad them, because they had voted to expand the campus, but we couldn’t

expand the campus unless we acquired property around...so though sometimes there was a conflict in view, we had a positive exchange.

In describing important characteristics of public engagement activity, the informant further explained,

Number one, you want to make sure that the public recognize that they are not being used or misused...but, definitely treated with respect. . . . We value the cultural diversity that they all bring to the table, but it's sort of like an atomic missile fallout. It doesn't just fall on the white community, the black community, it falls on everybody, the Asian community, it falls on everybody. So the success of a city, or as an educational institution, the fallout benefits or harms everybody. . . . So, we had to continue to educate—we're not just trying to run you out of the area.

The informant provided some details about how the public engagement process was organized and the target audience, and mentioned,

Our public affairs people, the relationships with the African American Chamber, the League, the City Chamber of Commerce. We worked in concert with all those entities. The City Development Commission, our city, we interfaced with many different agencies to educate them, church communities. . . . So we let people know all the way down the line what was going on. So they were more receptive because they had input all the way. We placed ads in all the major newspapers and all of the community newspapers—Hispanic, Asian, African American, our local radios, the hip-hop stations—everybody, to let them know these meetings are going on.

The informant responded to how trustees learn about public issues and concerns and determine when it is necessary to engage with the public by stating, “

We try to be in listening mode. The only restrictions we put on it is that we ask people say what is on their mind, but in a respectful manner . . .and we try to make sure that everybody, as many people as possible in a three hour period can get a chance to talk, so we give them five minutes intervals. So those are really pretty much the only restrictions that we have. And, we also ask them to make sure it is education-related. It can be on the broad edges, but it has to be education-related. It's not just something you just come to holler about, because we make it clear our

role is about education. It's not about how the highway is going to be repaired. It's about education.

The informant provided a very specific response about how the board determined when and how to engage the public. The context of the informant's comments was framed in terms of who determines the engagement process.

The chair of the board, the vice chair, the board and the rest of the body, and the district president, and the campus presidents determine if we're going to have a town hall meeting, a public hearing, whether to have tables in a circle, and whether we're going to be listening. . . . The board sets the scope. . . . The staff doesn't tell us what to do. We tell them. The public affairs people do an outline and bring recommendations to the board and then we approve it.

Barriers to public engagement. In a word, T₇ determined the barrier to public engagement was "racism." Expounding on this perception the informant stated,

Racism is based on people not being secure, in who they are. And that is the biggest barrier that we have in education, because we don't have those discussions. We don't make people have discussions. . . . We all have negative histories in our families. We all have heroes and sheroes in our families, and until we have those discussions, we will not be able to get on the stage that we should be on in education and growing in a positive way. And that will always be the roadblock until we deal with the fact that racism is a part of the fabric of this society and confront it in a positive way.

Making public engagement more effective. The informant was then asked about what would make public engagement more effective. After philosophical perspective about how trustees should view themselves and their relationship with the public, the informant made several suggestions. T₇ began by stating,

Some people think they've arrived because they get elected or appointed in certain positions. And, you are being honored to serve people. They chose you to represent them, and if you forget that, then put them at a disadvantage coming out of the gate, because you've lost sight on your responsibility. My responsibility is to stay up to date—number one, to be humane, to be compassionate, to show love and respect to myself first and foremost. Nobody will ever be able to say that I didn't give them respect. I didn't say I would always agree with them, but they know I gave them respect. And when public officials stop respecting the public, and put themselves on a lofty position, they defeat their purpose and they shouldn't be in that position. In fact, they are a disgrace to the organization and the position in which—and the people they represent.

The informant acknowledged that public engagement could be more effective. As such, the informant offered several observations.

Trustees must recognize that the public is your boss, and connecting with the public is essential...making sure that you're listening, and hearing and doing due diligence and being accountable for really representing the interests of the public. You have to stop being afraid of yourself, and being afraid to address the issue of race. That is the unspoken fabric that is woven through everything in this society, politics, business, and education. Let's be honest about it. Race is there. If we acknowledge it, embrace it, talk about it, then we can move in a positive direction. But, if we stay in denial, we won't reach that lofty position in a positive way. We should be working with the public. And until we start moving in that direction, we're going lose sight of what our responsibilities are.

Finally, the informant generally spoke about the Public Policy Institute.

Although the informant does know the Public Policy Institute representative, the researcher was not convinced that the informant was aware of the work of the Institute and did not provide discernable evidence that the board had a relationship with the Institute.

Interview with T₈

Trustee roles and responsibilities. T₈ is an elected trustee at an urban community college, who has served on the board for more than 20 years and also served as board chair. Prior to the official interview, the focus of the conversation was the informant's successful re-elections to the board, political and civic activism, the importance of voting, and the difference between governance and management. T₈ was conversant about "John Carver's policy governance" model and made clear that the trustees' role is as "a policymaker." Also mentioned among the trustees' work and role were:

. . . approve contracts, advocacy, understanding the needs of the community, to be active in the community, to be out in the community, to know what's going on in the K12 system, to talk to people, to be part of other organizations [and individually and as a group] lobbying elected officials at the state and national level.

The informant pointed out, "Board members have to be very careful that they don't mix the management and the policy part of their job because they are distinctly different and we are not managers, and must not be managers."

Definition of public engagement. Although the T₈ did not specifically use the term public or civic engagement in describing the role of trustees, it was alluded to it in the interview conversation about "voting," "lobbying elected officials," "advocacy," "understanding the needs of the community," being "active in the community and out in the community," knowing "what's going on in the K12 system," "talking to people," "going to forums and listening and interacting with people," and being "part of other organizations." The informant preferred using

the term civic engagement and said, “I don’t call it public engagement; I call it civic engagement. . . . It’s different in every community. Civic engagement is involvement in the political process. And involvement in that political process is more than just voting.”

Civic or public engagement was described as “running for office, interaction between you [trustees] and the policy maker, and educating people about public policy.” The informant’s description of public engagement was explained within the context of being an elected trustee.

When I run for office, I’m very much, in terms of getting myself elected in going to whatever venue I can to get an audience. And in a huge county with a very uninteresting office, it’s very difficult to get an audience. All you can do is go to schools and political party meetings. Even with 400,000 constituents the trustees’ role is still a little office, . . . and they [the public] don’t watch me because it just isn’t much to watch in that sense...other than, if the district has a scandal, they don’t know what’s going on.

Trustee public engagement practices. The informant shared several examples of civic engagement activities, which included making sure the public “knows what the board does in office, activity, voting, public participation, understanding public policy matters, and involvement in the political process.” The trustee spoke about the importance of understanding the “legislative process,” and “encouraged “letter writing” as forms of civic engagement. The presidential searches or chancellor searches open forums and “strategic conversations” and the open board meetings were cited as examples of the engaging with the public. During the interview conversation about public

engagement, the informant described the board's role in public engagement by commenting,

The board as a whole needs to on occasion take a position on an issue that directly affects their college or district. Very rarely, though, do you do that because not everybody agrees. But, I don't believe there is any common thing that you could do other than be sure that you get the information. More than that, I don't really think that the board has much of a role. That's not our business. We just have to be sure that what is adopted or not adopted at the legislature or congress we are aware of, on occasion, the chair of the board will sign a letter.

The public and community were identified as "business and industry community" and the "educational community" who came to the college for "workforce training." The informant was asked to elaborate more on how the interests, needs, and concerns of the community were discovered. The monthly board meetings were characterized as a "kind of open forum" and a way the board interacts with and listens to the public. T₈ suggested that trustees, "go into the community, and then also depend on the community coming to you to tell you what it is that's needed." However,

I think, in the 27 years that I'm there, we've had two or three people over the years come in and tell us about the budget—and they didn't want us to raise their taxes two cents. We should be, dependant on our senior administrators to flush that out. At the monthly meetings, the board relied on government relations folks get up and tell about the number of bills in the state legislature that are affecting us, or would affect us if they were passed.

Further, "As individuals we are urged to contact our legislatures and express an opinion. Trustees are involved with the community and bring information to the board about the community needs." Later T₈ spoke about how the business community advisory boards met with the college a couple of times a

year to discuss curriculum needs and relied on personal and professional relationships. Some other examples included:

“I read, read, read,” “reading the newspaper,” “listening to the news,” and “get stuff off the Internet”; being “active in the community,” “talking to people,” “being part of other organizations,” and having “conversations with business and industry tell us what it is you are needing and then it is up to us as trustees to be sure that our colleges are providing”; “we rely on the board members” and “city council members”; and attending “city council meetings.” Our presidents and chancellor are active in the community and so they get the information from those people and then bring it in and suggest to us that this is the direction that the colleges need to go. I would say that a lot of that responsibility is up to our administration also, to be out in the community, to be members of the chamber, to be members of the various organizations where they on their level interact.

A billion dollar bond ballot issue was identified as an experience that most exemplified the board’s commitment to engage with the public. Regarding the structure of the engagement, T₈ recalled,

We held an open meeting, a board meeting at each of our college campuses. And we have nine campuses. We went to those nine sites and we had a meeting inviting the community. Each of the colleges invited their community. We had a formal program that we told them what it is we said we were building.

Upon further reflecting about specific roles, T₈ interjected,

I was out in the public making speeches . . . bringing literature, informing the people in that audience about our election which is at the general election time it’s a question on the ballot. . . . I would inform them about the provisions on the ballot and urge their support for the bond . . . specifically as chair of the board going out into the community as an individual talking about the bond and trying to influence voters . . . specifically as chair of the board going out into the community as an individual talking about the bond and trying to influence voters.

As a follow-up, the trustee responded to how it is determined when it’s necessary to engage the public, by saying, “When we need their help—to be

truthful . . . and the other time that we need to engage the community is when we're running for office.”

Barriers to public engagement. The trustee's perspectives about the barriers to public engagement and public participation were influenced by personal experiences, national data, trends and criticisms. Expressing concern about a national trend regarding the lax in public participation, T₈ stated, “Most of the United States citizens are not involved. To me, that is one of the big serious difficulties that we are in. Democracy, from my perspective, will not survive with a 25 or 30 percent participation in the process.”

Continuing to share stories and examples of grassroots efforts, the informant exasperatedly exclaimed, “There is a general lack of public interests” and “a uniformed public, on public policy matters.” T₈ mentioned the work needed to register citizens to vote and disappointedly expressed, “Those efforts did not result in significant numbers of actual voters.” The informant described the public as “too busy” and “disinterested, and who believed, “as long as things are going well and taxes are not being increased, there is no need to be involved.” The informant quipped, “Days a week and weekends should be for families, not for having public meetings.”

Making public engagement more effective. Notwithstanding T₈'s story about the national data and trends on the poor quality of public participation on matters of public policy, the informant did not indicate that it was necessary to

make public engagement more effective. The informant recommended, “Public engagement could benefit if trustees were all out and about in the community and listening.” Additionally, “college facilities must be welcoming and open to the community,” and the “college must have good marketing.” T₈ implied that taking steps to schedule board meetings at a time that is convenient for the general public to participate would make public engagement more effective. The informant reiterated, “Days a week and weekends are not for having public meetings.”

Finally, although the board had a role in establishing the college’s Public Policy Institute, the informant indicated that there has been no formal relationship or interaction between the board of trustees and the college’s Public Policy Institute, and there was limited knowledge of its work.

Interview with T₉

Trustee roles and responsibilities. As an elected trustee at an urban community college, T₉ has served on the board more than 20 years. The informant explained the nuances about being an elected trustee and the scope of his responsibilities to represent the voters in the local district. T₉ described the work and role of a trustee as “being responsible for and managing the funds of the taxpayers for the district, representing the district, and meeting the educational needs of the community from a global perspective.”

Definition of public engagement. In defining public engagement, T₉ referred to the same activities mentioned as the trustees' work and role. The informant continued by saying, "Basically, those activities that I just mentioned are engaging with the public, although the public might not be there, but we do have the public at our board meetings periodically." T₉ commented, "We visit the college and students, go to community organizations and churches where we engage with the citizens who put up the funds to support the college." According to T₉, public engagement entailed a range of actions such as

. . . letting people know what you do as a board member . . . telling people about the college . . . getting people aware and involved in attending events on campus . . . community members participating on committees at the college, like the mathematics committee . . . and interesting the community in educational opportunities for themselves, children, and neighbors to attend the community college. In general, public engagement is a broad scale of interaction.

Trustee public engagement practices. A few other examples that T₉ shared as evidence of the board's commitment to engaging with public included "attending the swearing-in ceremony of new citizens as means of endorsing" and "going out to various community organizations, especially when you are running for re-election for office." The informant identified "e-mail," interacting with people at different organizational meetings," and "conversation in general in the community to inform them about the community college" as some ways that the informant learned about the interest, needs and concerns of the community.

"When asked about the role of a trustee in public engagement, T₉ mentioned,

Keeping the public informed as to how you are using the finances that they put up for the school, keeping the public informed about what the colleges are doing, keeping the public informed about what students are doing and how they are achieving and becoming successful in their lives.

Whereas T₉ explained that the role of the public is to

. . . mainly listen; and, if they are convinced that you are telling them the truth, then go out and be positive in terms of supporting the school . . . and to do what they have to do to get involved in some way, whether it be voting, whether it be sending their children or friends to community college, or serving on committees.

T₉ shared several examples of public engagement practices and consistently mentioned that public engagement involved interacting with different people; however, the informant did not seem to favor any particular engagement process. According to T₉, public engagement did not require a specific process.

I am not sure that there is a specific process that you would use other than interacting with the people, and when you meet with different people you have know to act in different ways. For example my community involves a lot of Hispanic people, and so I try my best to learn as much as I can about Spanish and speaking Spanish letting those people know that they have as much right as anyone else to be in the community college.

The benchmarks for public engagement were being visible, accessible, and having membership in and service with and within civic and community organizations. Sharing a plethora of examples of public engagement activities, T₉ pointed out,

As an elected trustee, I am always engaged with people and we are always out there in the public eye. . . . People approach me almost everywhere I go voluntarily to speak at churches and colleges on the bond issue. I am invited to speak with community groups about the community college. We try to reach as many people as we can. . . . Sometimes I even go and speak with senior citizens at the senior citizens' facilities. At church, people come up and ask me about employment opportunities at the college or how to get their children enrolled at the college. I am on the

Boy Scouts board and active with the Boy Scouts. I am on the NAACP Board. . . , I'm engaging with people at that level.

The trustee's role was likened to that of a politician, legislator, or senator, according to the informant.

My position in being an elected official, you're always engaged with the public in some form or fashion because you're always going to some type of community program or organization, and you're on other committees. There are a variety of ways of engaging with the public. But you're always engaging people because you're always out there in the public eye. It's almost like being a politician in the legislature, House of Representatives or the Senate or something like that. You're always out there in the public eye.

The bond issue was identified as the occasion that most exemplified the board of trustees' commitment to engaging with the public. The informant shared,

In 2004, we went to the voters and we asked them to give us a bond election to add new colleges and to expand existing colleges, and we asked for about 950 million dollars in bonds. . . . Well, basically, the chancellor and the president got together and determined what they feel is needed to keep the system operating and to keep it moving forward based upon how they see the changes in population and things like that taking place. They then presented this to the governing board, and then the board said okay, let's go forward with it. So the public relations office began to send information out through all of the colleges, through the newspapers to encourage and let people know we're trying to do this. And board members went to meetings in various communities to talk with the people about the bond and encourage them to support it. I think once the people see their representative [trustee], the person they had voted for, also supporting it, then they feel a little more confident that it is worthwhile and they'll be willing to vote for it.

In sharing perceptions about public participation at the monthly board meetings, the informant stressed,

Basically, the majority of the people at any given board meeting usually consist of members of the staff or the faculty, or sometimes they'll have student groups who come in and make reports. Occasionally you the public will come in, if they have a specific issue and they'll show up in

quantities about that issue. But by and large most of those board meetings would consist of faculty, staff, administrators, and then student groups that are coming in making presentations in terms of what they do on their campus. . . . Only if there's a controversy do you get large numbers of the public there.

As a caveat, the informant suggested that there is no reason to be concerned about the public's participation at monthly board meetings and implied that the trustees are not alarmed about the public's absence. While sharing an observation about the limited public participation and attendance, T₉ remarked,

Well, I think it's good. If there's a controversy, they should be there. And if they're not there, it shows they have a confidence in the people that they have elected to carry out the functions. . . . They feel that they don't need to be there.

Speaking about processes that the informant considered useful for ensuring that the public is participating in public engagement opportunities, T₉ explained,

I think one of the things is they're asking you questions. And a lot of times you can look at people and tell whether they are actually involved or they're turning you off. But a lot of times their questions—the fact that they will come to me or they will be there, and that's an indication that they are involved or they're concerned or they're interested or what have you to say.

Barriers to public engagement. The researcher and informant had a conversation about barriers to public engagement, and T₉ offered the following observations:

The main barriers are that the average person has so many things to do and that they have to take care of. Because most people are working 8 to 5 and don't get home until 6:00 or 7:00. They have to take care of their meals, their children and whatever they need to at their house. And a lot of them just don't have that time, I think, to go to meetings, and that's not just public education. If we look at the state legislatures, you don't have a lot of the public there, unless they have a special interest that they want to try to

market and sell. The Congressional people in Washington the same thing is true. You have mostly Congressional people and you have politicians or either the lobbyists who are there, and that's basic of the whole system, the whole country.

But on the other hand, you had colleges and universities that over hundreds of years turned out a lot of people. So do you really need to have large numbers of public engagement based upon what has been done in the past? I think maybe the biggest place where you should have public engagement is at the elementary level.

Making public engagement more effective. The interview concluded with a conversation about how to make public engagement and public participation more effective. T₉ responded,

I don't really see it as broken. I see that you have limited engagement. But the system itself still works. And as far as, I am concerned this is the best system in the whole planet, including all the countries in Europe that's been going on for hundreds and thousands of years. The system is still working. . . . You might improve by getting more people or increase the percentage of people showing up at public meetings. But here again I think the most important place is at the elementary level which where they should be really engaged.

As a closing remark on the topic, T₉ asserted,

Well, you know, the assumption is that they [the public] need to be there, and I'm not so sure that's actually true. What they do if they feel there's something going wrong, they will then go and vote the people out of office who were there doing wrong, and that's probably the highest level of involvement by the community is to vote in positive people, to vote out negative people.

As a final note, the informant shared there was no relationship between the board of trustees and the Public Policy Institute, and the informant had no knowledge about the Public Policy Institute's mission and activities.

Interview with R₁

Trustee roles and responsibilities. R₁ began the conversation disclaiming any actual knowledge about trustees and the work they do. The informant expressed uncertainty about the work of a trustee, and stated,

I'm not sure what it's like to be a trustee. I think trustees make policy decisions. They oversee large policy issues and the budget. I think trustees like to be in the spotlight and they like their schools to look good and make them look good.

Further elaborating about the work and role of a trustee, the informant commented, "A trustee should serve as a conduit between the college and community, branch out and encounter a broad spectrum of the community, as well as assess the needs of each constituency." Next, the informant shared several opinions that are sometimes attributed to the knowledge, work and role of trustees.

Frequently they don't know much about the college outside of their board meetings and what the college may highlight to them. . . . They know nothing about the nuts and bolts of the down to earth, day to day, nitty-gritty. . . . Some people who are trustees are genuinely motivated to do some community service. . . . For some of them, it looks good on their resumes . . . makes them look good that they're doing something in the community. . . . Their awareness of the institution is, at best, superficial.

The informant continued conversing about trustees and candidly said,

They should be also advocates for the practice of democracy. They should be out there encouraging people to be participants in a democratic society and in the democratic process. And if they're not doing that, then they're just showcasing.

R₁ explained, "They need to talk the talk and walk the talk of democratic practices." The informant suggested, "It's unfortunate that public engagement

has to be desensitized for trustees and the college.” R1 implied that trustees are concerned, “about their image, and about reputation. “And if our college only attracted students who were uneducated, ill-prepared and from lower and working classes, most trustees would not be attracted to the appointment.”

Definition of public engagement. The informant was asked to define public engagement. R₁ defined public engagement as,

. . . going out into the community where the people are and bringing them together to talk about issues that are of concern to them. I think that you don't invite them to the college so much as you go to where they are. So you try and make it as convenient as possible for them to be there so that you can facilitate dialogue between people in the community about what concerns them, and you help them come to some sort of policy direction that they can live with, common ground.

Trustee public engagement practices. The informant identified a role for trustees in public engagement and claimed, “I think trustees should be people out there who are helping to set these things up and facilitate them. I'm not aware of our trustees ever having done so.” In a critical tone, R₁ expressed, “Our trustees, to my knowledge, operate like most trustees. They sit back and make their decisions in a vacuum. Few people come and talk to them—that's not a dialogue, that's not a deliberative dialogue, certainly.” R₁ suggested that trustees bring important connections with them to the college.

With their connections in the community, they should be out there in the forefront encouraging the community to connect with the college and Public Policy Institute so they can address concerns. They should bring value to the community by utilizing their college's Public Policy Institute to build toward a sense of community, not just within specific neighborhoods,

but across the community, across neighborhoods . . . and building a sense of community between the community and the college.

The informant was very specific about the relationship that trustees should have with the Public Policy Institute, and suggested, “Trustees should approach the Institute and say, “Look, we’ve had a problem in this community what can we do to help?” R₁ also indicated:

This board other than establishing a center...in my estimation’s done absolutely nothing other than read the annual reports, ask an occasional question and that’s that. I think this board for most of the existence of the Public Policy Institute, had virtually no clue or understanding as to what kind of work the center did, or how it did its work. They had no understanding other than what the Public Policy Institute wrote, or what they read in the annual reports byline. They had no understanding of the kind of community building that was taking place...in large part because they haven’t been a part of a democracy education program or initiative. Therefore, they couldn’t appreciate the kind of work that’s involved with leadership development and democracy building in their own community or the need for it.

It was the impression of R₁, “The board allowed the Public Policy Institute to be created, but was not instrumental in sustaining it or modeling the Institute’s philosophy of engagement as a practice.”

In discussing some ideal public engagement practices that trustees must begin to consider, R₁ determined that it should include, “setting up forums, dialogues and engaging in dialogues with members of the community.” R₁ indicated that it entailed a variety of complimentary activities, such as “finding venues in the community,” “putting up flyers and leaflets in the community to announce your forum,” “and contacting people in the community who know people to encourage them to come.” And as a final note, R₁ stated, “You bring

these people together and you talk about an issue of relevance of concern to them.”

Barriers to public engagement. While identifying barriers to public engagement, R₁ quipped, “We could all talk about democracy ‘til we’re blue in the face and be talking about different things. In this country, everyone wants to be democratic as long as my rights come first, my interests come first.” The informant inferred that there is limited interaction between the board and the public, and criticized, “The fact is, the public is in a more subservient role when it comes to dealing with trustees. And the public comes before the trustee, answers a few questions, then waits for the board’s answer.” The informant also argued, “Age is a barrier to the public engagement process. . . . They’re a bunch of old people, who have been doing things the same way. Knowledge is power,” declared R₁, “and not having the knowledge of the process is a significant barrier to the idea of public engagement.” Expounding about the barriers, the informant proposed,

I think ignorance of the opportunities, ignorance of the process. . . . Some did not have an opportunity to interact with people in the community to see their reactions, the public’s responses to and their appreciation for public engagement. . . . The problem is that the college and trustees don’t seem to recognize that public participation is vital to their processes. You also want people in the community to feel engaged. You want them to feel like they’re participants in a democracy. Don’t call it a democracy and then you don’t engage the people.

Making public engagement more effective. In concluding the interview, the informant was asked to share some recommendations about making public engagement more effective. R₁ responded,

The college on occasion needs to go out into the community and survey to find out what the needs are in the community...what the concerns are in the community. But the community also ought to feel like they can approach the college to say, we've got an issue.

The public need to be active participants. The public needs to understand what its' role can be. That it can approach government. It can approach the college and say listen, we are members of the public and we have some needs and we need your help in addressing them. That should be the role of the public.

The public should be aware that there is an issue, the public should be concerned about these policy makers and what kind of decisions they are going to make and whether their voice has been heard in the decision making process. They're to be actively engaged in the democracy.

As a final remark, R₁ urged, "The process would be more effective if you require all new trustees to participate in a couple of forums so that they can learn about it."

Interview with R₂

Trustee roles and responsibilities. The interview with R₂ began with the informant sharing quite a lengthy discourse on the history of community colleges, trusteeship, and the history Public Policy Institutes. The informant spoke about the time commitment involved in being a trustee, and commented,

The thing is one of them would have been the head of the trustees right now. He was in line. He was the vice chair and would have been the chair. But he had to give it up because of his job. He just couldn't get that much time off work. So ideally we would right now have the chairman of our board. . . . What happens with trustees, they come and go and you might have one that's very interested and then he's out of there. His term is

over. So that's the danger you're going to run into. That's going to be the situation at our college.

R₂ continued the conversation by providing an historical context of community colleges in the state and proudly exclaimed, "We were the first community college in our state." Uncertain about trustees' terms of appointment at the informant's respective college, R₂ explained, "I don't know how long a term is...four years, I'm not sure." The informant's insight about the composition of the board of trustees at the college was, "Our trustees are from each of our counties that are represented by our community college. So it's really a broad spectrum in our trustees. . . . It's a small group, but it really reflects the population and the needs of the population."

"The average citizen would just think the trustees run the college or keep the president in line," R₂ said. In describing the role and responsibilities of trustees, six were identified as key: "institutional support, attend certain forums, provide financial support, set the policy, set the budget, and essentially determine how the college works."

As an aside, R₂ shared several observations about how some people generally might perceive trustees.

Trustees don't do much work. They just show up for the meetings. . . . Most trustees are a rubber stamp; and, if they have a good working relationship with the president and with the administrators, they are a rubber stamp. The president brings before trustees things that are really important that they need to rubber stamp. Most trustees of a college just show up for the meetings. And if you look at the meetings of a big college, they only meet about four times a year.

Much later during the conversation, the informant seemed to be more comfortable and offered other observations about trustees, trustee work, and the trustee and CEO relationship.

Every college president trembles when they go before the trustees because they know their job is on the line. Think about it. That's the one group that the college president knows he or she has to have on their side because they hire the president.

Definition of public engagement. In discussing public engagement, R₂ provided both a definition and some examples of public engagement practices.

It is the way you get anyone in the community who wishes to attend, together to deal with a problem, an issue, or strategic planning to share different viewpoints. . . . If you have a problem arise in the community, it is a way for the public in trying to find a solution . . . getting people together to meet with candidates running for office . . . providing community space. Public engagement is just getting people to talk in a meaningful way. You have to be sure and keep your neutrality in order for people to want to come. You can never have an agenda.

R₂ suggested that president and trustee leadership impact the sustainability of public engagement at the college, pointing out,

. . . Over time things have changed and the current trustees probably don't even know what a forum, public engagement or a public policy institute is . . . Trustee X left. If X had stayed here, it might be different. . . . When we think about the work that X has done and the president in the public engagement arena, you might have the impression that this engagement work had become a part of the culture of the institution. . . . So that even if a trustee or president leaves it would continue. . . . Well, it has for 15 years, and that's pretty long. . . . So, you see some of the success also means you lose some of the key players. But you never know what's going to happen in the future. . . . A lot of people have retired. . . . They've reorganized the college some, so that it's different. So you know, some things change over time, and so some of the structure of the institution has changed somewhat.

Trustee public engagement practices. Examples of public engagement practices were “community forums, focus groups, deliberative dialogues, and public hearings.” R₂ characterized the public hearing form of public engagement as, “Everybody lines up and says what they want to say.” R₂ briefly spoke about the college’s monthly board meetings.

Every meeting, they have those two components and it’s always up front on the board agenda. When they call the role of the trustees, because I’ve been to a lot of the meetings, then they say who from the community is here? If somebody from the community wants to say something they acknowledge themselves at that time, then later there’s a time for them to speak. The problem is I don’t think Joe Blow down at the barber shop even knows when the trustees meet.

Barriers to public engagement. According to R₂, some significant barriers to public engagement, in general are “time, identifying a broad cross-section of participants, and finding participants, who are both knowledgeable and ignorant on the subject.” Elaborating about “time” as a barrier to public engagement, R₂ contended, “Do you realize that those people give up a day’s wages to come to a forum or board meeting?” Further clarifying “a broad cross-section of participants” as a barrier, R₂ explained,

When I say diversity, to me age is the biggest diversity. For example, when you are doing a forum on social security, you’ve got to have some people there who receive checks. People who never have worked, in particular young people who have that first job and they get that pay check and they say where is all this money they took out of my paycheck . . . and folks from all walks of life.

The informant spoke quite differently about specific barriers to public engagement at their community college. Implying that there are no barriers, R₂ indicated,

I think our college is maybe a little unique in that we are pretty open. I think a lot of people really do see the community college as the community's safe space. So a lot of things are unique at our college. I think our college has probably a bigger role in engaging with the public than a lot of schools do.

Making public engagement more effective. The perception of barriers to public engagement, notwithstanding, R₂ did share some perspectives and provided advice on ways to make public engagement more effective. The perspectives identified a specific role for the president and trustees, in that, R₂ advised,

You have to create buy-in from the leaders, the president and trustees. . .if the head of the institution thinks it's a good thing, it'll trickle down. If the president and trustees are all for it, it's going to have a greater chance of success. . . . Once a year, have an open forum for whoever or whatever group, whether it's the faculty or administrators, the community at large, students or whoever. Have an open, deliberative forum, so that it's a once a year event.

Interview with R₃

Trustee roles and responsibilities. The interview with R₃ began with casual conversation about the Public Policy Institute, public engagement, and trustees. Prior to speaking about the work and role of trustees, R₃ disavowed having any "real knowledge about trustees" and stated,

I think . . . to pass on the perceptions and the desires of the community as far as how the community college serves them. . . also to manage and

oversee the management of the operations of the community college to make sure that it runs efficiently and effectively.

The informant continued by providing a context of trustee work relative to trustees' interactions with the public, and then remarked, "Trustees have to be out there involved in community based organizations. . . . They need to be present so the public gets the feeling that what they are sharing is important."

Definition of public engagement. The informant's remark about the "need for trustees to be present" led to asking R₃ to define public engagement. R₃ identified two terms, public and civic engagement, which were terms the informant indicated that they often used interchangeably to talk about public engagement. The informant, however, made a clear distinction between public and civic engagement. In describing civic engagement, the informant stated, "Civic engagement is a responsibility, such as voting, volunteering, and the things that you would do to make a civil society." On the other hand, public engagement was characterized in a variety of ways, which included, "being a precinct captain or PTA member" and "caring about not only yourself, but also the quality of life others in your community, to the extent that you take action when you see things that are not detrimental to the community." The informant continued characterizing public engagement and offered,

On the flip side, public engagement is when you see ways that the community can be improved and you take action. And the action might be in forums, getting together with other people in the community to talk about issues, it might be running for political office, and "it could include voting.

Trustee public engagement practices. Providing some examples of public engagement practices, R₃ spoke about several personal practices and observations of trustee practices, one of which was a community leadership forum. According to R₃, these forums had been specifically important practice to the trustees when the trustees “need more money, want to engage with the public, run for office or when there has been bad publicity.” Another example of a practice used was the “development of alliances with outside organizations.”

The informant gave critical insight about the culture of engagement that exists at the college and commented about how the board determined when it is necessary to engage with the public.

I think several things could happen. One is when we need more money; then they want to engage with the public. Another is when there’s been some bad publicity they want to reach out to the community and engage with them. . . .We’ve had a couple of shootings and murders not exactly on the campus. When they’re running for office or re-election, let’s see now. I think that’s all I can think of, those three instances.

R₃ then elaborated on some other public engagement processes relied upon more for one reason or the other than those three reasons. For example R₃ stated,

When they are running for re-election, then they may show up more at chamber meetings, formal events, parades, and things like open meetings of community groups. If it’s bad publicity that makes them want to engage more with the public, then it might be having a speaker to come, like Barack Obama or bringing other guest speakers that are big name draws to the community.

The informant spoke about the engagement process, practices, and programs of the Public Policy Institute and explained, “Training is provided twice

a year.” During the Institute training, participants were taught “the fundamentals of deliberative dialogue public engagement, and naming and framing issues.” R₃ shared,

I don't think that's an engagement process that's used regularly by the board. I don't think they engage the public like that. They may engage the college employees that way, but not the community. It takes a lot more effort to get the community to show up, and I don't think they've figured out how to do that. We're still trying to figure out how to get the college employees to show up. We're still working on what's the best way to communicate with people. And people have just gotten busier and busier. And they express an interest in issues, but they don't show up, and then you get a handful of people.

Barriers to public engagement. The interview next focused on significant barriers to public engagement. R₃ reiterated, “People have just gotten busier,” and added what seemed to be internal institutional barriers to engagement.

Communication is a barrier. The communicating is done in various silos. There's a service learning group that communicates with the community. We have the community development office. We have non-profit academy. We have various faculty members who are really deeply involved in certain causes on their own, pet causes. And everybody has their people that they know they can turn out for their event. . . . The missing piece of this whole puzzle is collaboration amongst those various silos of interests. . . . We're kind of fragmented. . . . I don't know whether the board of trustees would at their level, be involved in dealing with the collaboration piece, but they could in the sense that they approve realignments of the organization and of the departments.

There's the immigrant population that has become that's growing by leaps and bounds in the community and I think that they would the immigrant population would really, particularly Hispanics, would benefit from having a candidate a board of trustee member that represents their views.

I think trustees should be present. I don't think they should necessarily be a part of the forum, but I think that they should be present to hear people and hear first hand what's important to people. They need to be present so the public gets the feeling that what they are sharing is

important since the trustees decided to come out. The board members would be a big boost to the community's involvement.

Making public engagement more effective. R₃ made several suggestions for making public engagement more effective—"alliances between external and internal organizations, acceptance of different modes of thinking and buy-in from the administration and faculty." For example the informant proposed,

You set up an alliance between external and internal organizations, then that would improve the communication and we'd be better positioned to hold deliberative type forums that involve more people.

The public policy institute has to have buy-in from all sectors of the college, the faculty, the students, the support staff and the administration. You have to get the buy-in from your vice president, and go across vice presidents, really from the president, it has to come from on high because people are very territorial. They're protecting their own turf and to get them to work together it really has to be a mandate from the top.

I struggle to try to train faculty to be moderators and record keepers so they can train their own students to do that. It's difficult, unless it's a mandate coming from above. A lot of this means that money is involved from their department. And they have to come up with the money to pay for them to attend the training. Or if it's going to be free they have to have the release time. So there just has to be buy-in from the top.

I think, in order to engage the public, there needs to be an acceptance of the deliberative method in the institution first.

Interview with R₄

Trustee roles and responsibilities. R₄ provided a philosophical context and description of the role and responsibilities of trustees.

Trustees are people from the community that are entrusted by the community with the responsibility for administering and overseeing the activities of the community college. In the truest sense, they are the people elected by the citizens to set the course for colleges and outline what things the colleges ought to be doing, not at the nuts and bolts level, but in terms of broad policy, what programs ought to be undertaken, how

they should deal with the changing nature of their communities in terms of what new programs need to be put in place.

Obviously, most colleges don't just rely on their trustees for this kind of judgment. They have lots of different advisory groups that pull together citizens, but ultimately when all is said and done it's the trustees that ultimately have that responsibility.

The informant observed, "Some trustees seek opportunities to reach out to the public, specifically in strategic conversations at my college."

Explaining the structure of monthly board meetings, R₄ commented,

During the two monthly board meetings, one is typically a policy decision making meeting while the other is a time to explore issues in greater depth. . . . Trustees should be availing themselves to engage the public and get them talking about what they are concerned about. . . . A trustee cannot rest on just attending bi-weekly meetings.

Furthermore, the informant decried and urged, "The responsibility of the trustee is to the public that elects them, and a trustee needs to deliver on that responsibility."

Definition of public engagement. While defining public engagement, R₄ used the term "civic engagement . . . which is a new term used for service learning." Recalling the past terms used for defining public engagement, the informant recalled, "In previous days, the idea of public engagement included stepping up to a microphone and voicing your concerns. . . . That's the old way of public hearings." Further elaborating, R₄ shared,

What our experience has been is to engage in partnerships with groups in the community that want to bring the public together and to get them deliberating on an issue, help to figure out how to frame that issue, create some kind of discussion guide, and train people to moderate the forums and then convene the public...in as many forums as we mutually agree—we're going to try and convene and then write up the results of the

conversation, in such a way that the partner has some write up of what the community deliberated about.

Trustee public engagement practices. Two examples of public engagement practices at the college level were provided, “listening forums” and “public hearings.” As R₄ described, “Listening forums were very tightly scripted, and the premise was wooden and formulated.” In elaborating about public hearings as an engagement practice, R₄ maintained,

A public hearing is fine because it is people that attend the session and the people actually get a chance to talk about the issue with each other, rather than to sit in an audience and hear people presenting about the subject and listening to board members talk about the subject. It actually gives people from the community college district the chance to be interactive with each other about the subject.

The informant chose to talk about a different approach colleges could employ to engage the public. For instance, R₄ spoke of “a new social contract, bringing people from the community onto the campuses and asking them questions around what colleges should be doing, and what are the challenges that we face.”

Barriers to public engagement. The informant discussed and identified barriers to public engagement, within the context of trustees. R₄ stated,

My general sense is that our trustees think that what they need to hear from the public is going to be said at one of their board meetings and not outside of one of their board meetings. . . . Trustees could have the bias that if the public needs to talk to us, they know where to find us. . . The fact that our public officials do not think that engaging the public is a huge part of their agenda.

Next, R₄ offered some points of views about the public's rights and expectations to engage with elected and public officials, proposing, "Apathy may too often occur. . . . In all sectors of public life, each person has every right to insist that his voice is heard and ought to be in the face of each elected official lobbying." R₄ continued, "There are few instances when people would go to a public official and ask could he or she come to the next board meeting." The informant attributed other barriers to the public's understanding of their role and responsibilities, and claimed, "If they wanted something different, they would figure out how to make it happen. And they would elect people that would care more about this stuff and want their elected officials to be doing more deliberative stuff." "According to the informant, "I think trustees believe they're doing this [public engagement] already, so that's why you can't really bludgeon them into a different approach." R₄ quipped,

We still seem to perpetuate this system that elects people and sanctions that they don't need to talk to the public, because they've been elected to represent the public. . . . And they don't need to, if they're a white businessperson elected to represent the public. They don't necessarily feel they need to go out and talk to Blacks, Latinos, women and others because they were elected to represent the point of view that they said to their citizens they would represent when they were campaigning. . . . Now obviously, most politicians have a more sophisticated view of the public than that. They do recognize that if they take too narrow a view, then they get un-elected and removed from office.

Making public engagement more effective. R₄ suggested that public engagement could be more effective if enabled by efforts to recruit trustee participation and attendance at forums, not relying solely on monthly board

meetings, and the need for professional organizations to establish it as an organizational priority and trustee role. R₄ proclaimed,

I'm not saying necessarily that in every single one of our forums we've actively identified trustees as people that we need to have at the meetings and have gone out and recruited them to participate. You know, we haven't been deliberately reaching out to trustees, either. So, I'm just saying that if an event is being held in a community and my kind of default notion of what's been happening is that by and large trustees have not been participating or invited to participate in these events.

Public officials, who are purposeful about pursuing opportunities, will not just use the bi-weekly meetings to seek out information.

I think what you would probably need is recognition by the [trustee and community college professional organizations] sector itself, that it needs to be doing more of this [public engagement], and I don't necessarily think that's the case. I think what you would need is an organization like AACC, ACCT, or the League for Innovation or some group like that really would crystallize around this notion that we need to be promoting this more, and making techniques more available to people so that they can figure out how to get more engaged with the public.

As final note, R₄ shared,

By and large, my experience with community colleges is they don't see the engagement of the public as real high on their agenda. We do work in community colleges; and, therefore, I think we're more fertile ground for this than universities.

Interview with R₅

Trustee role and responsibility. The interview began with a discussion about the informant's interaction with the board, which included "serving as a liaison, attending board meetings, and being aware of all their processes and activities." In describing the work and role of trustees, R₅ offered a disclaimer regarding being knowledgeable about a trustee's work and role, "It's hard for me to answer that. Trustees are responsible for the overall administration of the

college and helping to promote it to the community. I am not sure what is like to be a trustee, I am not one and have never been one.”

Definition of public engagement. The informant defined public engagement as,

. . . providing opportunities for the public to deliberate on matters of concern, critical issues of the community, and local issues. It also allows opportunity for staff, students and faculty to become involved and engaged with the public. A major challenge was having people available to help with public engagement events. This includes internal staff and the general public.

Trustee public engagement practices. Some significant occasions that exemplified trustees' commitment to public engagement were, “surveying the public, which is rarely, probably every five to 10 years, conducting focus groups of various constituents, and bringing the public in for open sessions and forums.” R₅'s assessment of the surveys was, “They did not necessarily provide a good response; however, phone surveys and participant level was good based on those that responded.” Although “focus groups were not always well attended” it was an example of an approach used to identify the needs, concerns and issues of the public. Another example of engaging the public the informant selected was an “urban renewal building process.” R₅ elaborated, “In the past, the trustees/college have contracted consultants to conduct the initial research for embarking on a major building project, holding focus groups, telephone calls, and research.” In reference to the project, R₅ implied public engagement occurred when,

. . . trustees and college concurred on a building project, and the consultants were kept and engaged to provide continued guidance throughout the entire process. The responses from the surveys and conducting focus groups, helped identify community needs, views of the college, and strengths and weaknesses of the college, which was considered sufficient enough to obtain information and create agendas for areas of interest.

“District-wide press releases, announcements and notices on college Web sites, and mailings of schedules to all residents within the districts” were also identified as forms of public engagement. The informants presumed that these varieties of approaches were effective based on “the overall approval rating of the college within the community.” There were no negative examples, according to R5, of the trustees’ lack of commitment to engage the public. “We are very open to the public.” The informant confidently stated, “There is no occasion where the college missed an opportunity to engage with the public.”

“People in my position,” stated R5, “meet with the public on a regular basis and speak with the student body of the college. “We are out in the community, building relationships in the community, having open dialogues, and forming advisory groups consisting of the community which are people who work in specific technical areas and fields that make up the committees” in order to learn about the interests, concerns, and needs of the community.

R5 referred to trustees as public officials. “Public officials have their own way of interacting with their constituents, based on individual relationships within the community. From the community, it is an individual thing.” And their role as trustees in public engagement is,

They are elected officials, responsible for communication with the community to identify needs, and have different relationships. The trustees should be communicating with constituents, identifying what the needs are and how well the community college is meeting the needs and attempting to make sure the community college is addressing and meeting the needs of the community.

These were determined by R₅ as the processes by which the trustees ensured public participation in public engagement. “It is based on their contacts within the community to get the people involved.” Although R₅ stated, “I am not quite certain how the community should engage with the trustees,” the informant commented,

The role of the public is as citizens. The public have a responsibility to engage in the community, address critical issues in the community, and address policymakers regarding their needs and opinions, ultimately participating in issues that involve and concern them. . . . In the local area, the public is involved in community activities, citizen engagement, and people expect to be heard. It is important to have their voice recognized by policymakers. . . . There are many neighborhood associations, community groups, forums, hearings, town hall meetings, etc. People or the public are encouraged to provide input into decisions.

R₅ further remarked,

The public should be engaged on an ongoing basis. The officer of the college [College President] is very visible in the community, and engaged in various community organizations, boards, and the public at large. Trustees, President, and officers address specific needs and questions of the public.

According to R₅, “There is no formal process for engaging the public. . . . It is just by being out there.” And as it relates to the trustees, “They themselves are the ones involved in determining the public engagement process that will be used to learn about the interests, concerns, and need of the community. . . . It is based on the individual trustees’ and how they communicate with the community.” The

informant reiterated that the process to ensure public participation in public engagement is, “by issuance of public notices, word-of-mouth, press releases and networking with local libraries.” While the college does have “a process for assessing the effectiveness of the various engagement processes,” however R₅ did not mention any specific metrics. Moreover, one assessment R₅ indicated the college used for determining public engagement effectiveness is, “If people or the public do not come out to the meeting that is a good sign. . . . A lack of participation is a good sign that there are no specific needs—if there isn’t a problem, people don’t come out.” When the public feels satisfied there is no participation or input, R₅ emphatically stated, “No participant usually means that all is well. . . . We give the public opportunities to engage . . . and all of our surveys have high favorability ratings.”

Barriers to public engagement. R₅ was not aware of any barriers to public engagement at the college. However, the informant stated,

The only problem and/or biggest problem is getting people to participate; they are so busy they do not have time to come out. If there is no problem, people don’t come out. . . . If people are happy with things, there is no need to come out. Barriers are that people are so busy...it’s all a matter of whether they have time.

Additionally R₅ expounded,

This is a philosophical thing. Society has lost the need to be civically involved, which includes understanding that their rights and responsibilities. Part of being a citizen in this country is that you have rights and responsibilities. Our society has lost civic instruction. . . . I think that people don’t always understand, especially young people, that part of being a citizen in this country you not only have rights, but you have responsibilities. And part of that is to be able to help policy makers make

some choices and decisions. A lot of people have forgotten or never knew maybe, that they need to be involved in doing that. People are more concerned about themselves than the people immediately around them and with the good of the whole community. Maybe it's generational; I don't know. But I have to say it reflects our society generally becoming more self-centered. They're not concerned about things around them.

Making public engagement more effective. The informant spoke briefly about how to make public engagement more effective. R₅ stated, "If more decision makers became involved in public engagement, there would be more public participation. The public needs to see more results. They would feel better about getting involved. Policymakers are not there to listen to the community."

In concluding the interview, R₅ spoke about the relationship between the board and the Public Policy Institute.

Well, there really isn't one. They are supportive of it, but have not been involved with it. They like what we do; they think it is a valuable addition to the college and it provides a great service to the community, but as individual trustees/Board have not been involved. The board is supportive by allowing it to continue as a part of the college, when it comes time to talk about various programs and whether they should be maintained or cut. It's one that has been able to continue on.

Cross-Case Composite

This section provides a composite of all the informant interviews, from which the researcher developed themes about community college trustee public engagement practices. In this study, the informants were comprised of nine males and five females, of which eight are white and six African Americans. There were two suburban and three urban community colleges. The informants' ages ranged from 50 to 65 and over; 12 of 14 informants were between the ages

of 55 and 65, and 90% of trustee informants were between the ages of 55 and 65 and over. Approximately 64% of the informants had years of service that ranged from 6 to 20 years or more, and 70% of the trustee informants served on the board for between 6 and 20 years or more.

The narrative composite describes the perspectives of the informants from the five community colleges that are within the National Issues Forums Institute network. The researcher used the findings from the informant interviews to develop the major themes that emerged. To show the wide range of the informants' perspectives, the researcher developed tables (Tables 8-12) to show the comparison of the informants' perceptions within the five research categories under investigation. The first column in the table represents the major themes that emerged from the analysis of the informant interviews. The remaining columns provide a method for displaying the individual informant responses by research category.

Since there similarities in the demographic characteristics of the informants, there was no significant evidence that the trustee demographic characteristics impacted the informants' perspectives about public engagement. Furthermore, the influence of demographic factors on trustee public engagement practices was beyond the scope of this study.

Roles and Responsibilities of Trustees

Whether an urban, suburban, appointed or elected trustees or a Public Policy Institute representative, a consistent perspective was provided regarding

the roles and responsibilities of a trustee. Representing the interest of the community, advocating on behalf of students, and establishing policy emerged as both the trustees' self-reported and PPI representatives' perceptions of a trustee's work and role priorities. The informants indicated that the CEO and the board of trustees are responsible for creating an environment to successfully achieve the mission of the institution. The informants also indicated that trustees work for the public, and the CEO works for the board.

In all cases, the trustee informants used a variety of terms to identify whom they serve and made definitional distinctions about community, constituents, stakeholders and the public. The informants indicated that they are accountable to and represent the interest of the community—taxpayers, voters, students, faculty, staff, and administrators at their colleges. Almost invariably, trustee informants identified the public as business and industry leaders, civic leaders, local politicians, and local and State elected officials. In describing their work, trustee informants were less definitive about the role of the community and public; however, trustees were more specific about their interaction with the public. On the other hand, Public Policy Institute representatives used the terms public, community, stakeholders and constituents interchangeably and identified these references to be inclusive of internal and external members of the colleges' surrounding communities as well as the college faculty, staff, students and administrators. The informants shared a variety of examples of the role and responsibility of trustees, which is illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8

Comparison of Informant Perceptions of Trustee Roles and Responsibilities

Trustee Role and Work	T ₁ S	T ₂ S	T ₃ S	T ₄ S	T ₅ U	T ₆ U	T ₇ U	T ₈ U	T ₉ U	R ₁ S	R ₂ U	R ₃ S	R ₄ U	R ₅ U
Accountability	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Act as Servants to the Public		√												
Advocate	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
A Source of Information for the Community		√	√				√	√						
Get Public Funding	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Leadership				√										
Listen Carefully to the President, Faculty, Staff and Students		√		√		√	√							
Outreach	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Oversee and Work for Stakeholders of the Community that Own the Institution			√											
Policy Maker	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Represent Public Interests	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Select and Support the President		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Spread the Good Word About the College Throughout the Community	√	√					√	√	√					
Stewardship		√												
Understand Community Needs	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Work to Support College Administration	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Work with County Executives, the County Council, the State Legislature and the Governor	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					

Defining Public Engagement

While the trustee informants reported their involvement in a variety of activities within the community on behalf of the college they did not refer to these activities as public engagement. The trustee informants were not able to provide a definition or clearly articulate a public engagement definition. Public engagement was described as an event, occasion, or practice. The context and words that trustees used to describe public engagement included—debate, dialogue, forums, surveys, town hall meetings, bond hearings, public hearings, campus visits, dinner with stakeholders, mingling in the community, making speeches about issues, voting, monthly public board meetings, press releases, involvement in the political process, press conferences, state of the college addresses, serving on civic boards, attending civic association meetings, attending business and industry meetings, attending chamber of commerce meetings, attending community gatherings, attending fundraisers, and meeting and advocating with elected officials. The Public Policy Institute informants used different words to define public engagement, including:

- Bringing the community together to talk about issues;
- Facilitating dialogue between people in the community;
- Getting people in the community together to deal with problems, issues, or to share different viewpoints;
- People talking in a meaningful way in trying to find a solution;
- Providing community space for public dialogue and deliberation;

- The community taking action together;
- Engaging in partnerships with groups in the community; and
- Deliberating on an issue to help to figure out how to frame that issue and create some kind of discussion guide, and then convening the public.

Trustee informants characterized public engagement as anticipating the needs of the community, being approachable, and solving and responding to issues. The examples of the informants' descriptions and definitions of public engagement are illustrated in Table 9.

Table 9

Comparison of Informant Perceptions and Definitions of Public Engagement

Public Engagement Definition	T ₁ S	T ₂ S	T ₃ S	T ₄ S	T ₅ U	T ₆ U	T ₇ U	T ₈ U	T ₉ U	R ₁ S	R ₂ U	R ₃ S	R ₄ U	R ₅ U
Advocacy	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Asking Questions	√		√	√		√	√			√	√	√	√	√
Assessing Community Needs		√	√	√		√	√			√	√	√	√	√
Attending Social/Public Events	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Being Visible	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Campus Visits		√					√							
Dialogue			√	√		√				√	√	√	√	√
Direct Relationship with Public			√	√		√	√			√	√	√	√	√
Discussion	√		√	√		√	√			√	√	√	√	√
Getting People To Interact	√	√		√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
Going Out Into The Community Being Involved	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Going To Public Hearings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Interacting with the Public	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Introduce Yourself As A Trustee	√	√	√		√		√	√	√					
Listening to the Public/Community		√	√	√		√	√			√	√	√	√	√
Meetings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Mingling	√							√						
Monthly Board Meetings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Outreach	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Presentations	√	√	√				√	√						
Process Whereby Citizens Are Informed	√	√	√	√	√			√	√					
Providing Information	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Self Educating				√										
Service to the Public					√									
Speeches							√	√						
Strategic Planning						√								
Surveys		√	√				√	√		√	√			
Testifying At Public Hearings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Two-way Interaction			√	√		√	√			√	√	√	√	√

Public Engagement Practice

Trustees used four strategies and tactics to learn about issues, concerns, and interest of the community, which formed the foundation of their public engagement practices. As a strategy, trustee informants primarily relied on (a) each other, (b) the college president and staff, (c) business and industry leaders, and (d) board meetings. Another strategy was public forums, which were used for discussing fiscal or bond matters. Public engagement practices were characterized in the informants' definitions and descriptions of engagement. The public engagement practices included making speeches, voting, lobbying elected officials, going out into the community and being involved, introducing yourself as a trustee, going to public hearings, testifying at public hearings, hosting discussions, hosting dinners, attending meetings, making presentations, self-educating, mingling in the community, being visible, advocating, participating in dialogues, and conducting surveys. Examples of the informants' public engagement practices are illustrated in Table 10.

Table 10

Comparison of Informant Perceptions of Public Engagement Practice

Public Engagement Practice	T ₁ S	T ₂ S	T ₃ S	T ₄ S	T ₅ U	T ₆ U	T ₇ U	T ₈ U	T ₉ U	R ₁ S	R ₂ U	R ₃ S	R ₄ U	R ₅ U
Assessing Community Needs		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
Attending and Convening Citizen Panels	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Attending and Hosting Community Events	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Attending Business and Industry Meetings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Attending Chamber of Commerce Meetings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Attending Civic Association Meetings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Attending Community Gatherings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Attending Fundraisers		√			√			√	√					
Campus Forums		√		√		√				√	√	√	√	√
Convening Dialogues		√		√		√				√	√	√	√	√
Meeting and Advocating with Elected Officials	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√			√
Monthly Board Meetings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Presidential Search Process	√	√	√	√										
Press Releases				√										
Public Hearings		√	√	√	√	√	√							
Reading County and Local Newspapers, Magazines, Professional Journals			√	√			√	√						
Relying on President to Listen and Hear From Faculty, Staff, Students and Community	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Serving on Civic Boards	√	√	√		√		√		√					
Surveys		√	√	√		√				√	√	√	√	√
Taskforce		√												
Town Hall Meeting	√	√	√					√						
Writing Letters to Elected Officials, Groups and Organizations				√										

Barriers to Public Engagement

Although there was no consensus among the informants that there are barriers to public engagement, the findings indicated that informants share two common perceptions about barriers: (a) the public does not have the time and (b) the public is too busy. The informants offered a variety of individual observations about barriers to public engagement, which included the trustees' perceptions, practices, and processes; poor communication from the institution with the public; poor inter- and intra-organizational communication and organizational silos; lack of inter- and intra-organizational collaboration; trustees; ineffective organizational and administrative structures and processes; the college, board, and public's indifference; intimidation about the process; engagement is not an institutional priority or an institutional or board agenda; trustee ignorance of the opportunity; lack of knowledge on the part of the community; lack of knowledge on the part of the board of trustees; institutional and board perceptions about their positive image within the community; missed opportunities; and securing public participation. Examples of the informants' perceptions about the barriers to public engagement are illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11

Comparison of Informant Perceptions of the Barriers to Public Engagement and Public Participation

Public Engagement Barriers	T ₁ S	T ₂ S	T ₃ S	T ₄ S	T ₅ U	T ₆ U	T ₇ U	T ₈ U	T ₉ U	R ₁ S	R ₂ U	R ₃ S	R ₄ U	R ₅ U
Board Accountability to the Public										√	√	√	√	
College as Convener										√	√	√	√	
College as Link to Community										√		√	√	
Community Doesn't Care			√					√						
Difficulty Getting Public Attendance	√	√	√	√		√		√		√	√	√	√	√
Ignorance about Issues	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	
Ignorance or Lack of knowledge about what's Going On	√			√						√				
Opportunity to Engage	√	√	√	√		√				√	√	√	√	√
People Don't Think They'll Make a Difference				√						√				
People Intimidated by the Whole Structure				√									√	
Perception of a Positive Image in the Community	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Perception that College and Administration have Good Curb Appeal			√											
Perception that the Public Only Shows Up if There is a Crisis	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Perception that the Public is Satisfied with the Performance and Decisions of the College and the Board	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					
Public Disinterest	√		√	√				√						
Public Indifference	√			√										
Public Apathy	√			√				√						
Public is Under-Educated about the Issues	√		√	√				√		√	√	√	√	√
Public Too Busy	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√			√
Sufficient Staffing		√								√	√	√	√	√
Unconfirmed Public Satisfaction	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					

Making Public Engagement More Effective

There was no consensus among the trustee informants that present public engagement practices were ineffective; thus, there were no common perspectives for making it more effective. As one informant put it,

I don't really see it as broken. I see that you have limited engagement. But the system itself still works. . . . The assumption is that they [the public] need to be there, and I'm not so sure that's actually true. What they do if they feel there's something going wrong, they will then go and vote the people out of office who were there doing wrong, and that's probably the highest level of involvement by the community is to vote in positive people, to vote out negative people.

Another informant stated, "That's not our business. We just have to be sure that what is adopted or not adopted at the legislature or Congress we are aware of. On occasion, the chair of the board will sign a letter." An informant perception, such as "It's not very clear to me that as a trustee I'm responsible for enhancing civic life," was identified as an example of a need for reframing trustees' public engagement perceptions and an opportunity for making public engagement more effective. There was a relatively common observation among the informants that "crisis" is a motivator for broader, inclusive public engagement with the community. Some informants suggested more visible administrative leadership support and buy-in would make public engagement more effective. Some examples of informant sentiments include:

Create buy-in from the leaders, the president and trustees. . . . If the head of the institution thinks it's a good thing, it'll trickle down. If the president and trustees are all for it, it's going to have a greater chance of success.

As a once a year event, have an open forum for whoever or whatever group, whether it's the faculty or administrators, the community

at large, students or whoever. Have an open, deliberative forum, so that it's a once a year event.

Increase communication.

The college on occasion needs to go out into the community and survey to find out what the needs are in the community and what the concerns are in the community.

The community ought to feel like they can approach the college to say, "We've got an issue."

The public needs to be active participants. The public needs to understand what its' role can be.

The public should be aware that there is an issue.

The public should be concerned about these policy makers, what kind of decisions they are going to make, and whether their voice has been heard in the decision making process.

The public needs to be actively engaged in the democracy.

Require all new trustees to participate in a couple of forums so that they can learn about it.

Examples of the informants' perceptions of making public engagement

effective are illustrated in Table 12.

Table 12

Comparison of Informant Perceptions of Making Public Engagement More Effective

Making Public Engagement More Effective	T ₁ S	T ₂ S	T ₃ S	T ₄ S	T ₅ U	T ₆ U	T ₇ U	T ₈ U	T ₉ U	R ₁ S	R ₂ U	R ₃ S	R ₄ U	R ₅ U
Annual Open, Deliberative Forum						√				√	√	√	√	√
Board/College as Convener	√	√		√		√				√	√	√	√	√
College Approachable to Community							√	√						
Create Buy-in from the Leaders, the President and Trustees										√	√	√	√	√
Creating Opportunities	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
Crisis	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√					
Engaging Media		√					√							
Increased Communication	√	√	√	√						√	√	√	√	√
More Visible Administrative Leadership, Support and Buy-In	√				√	√				√	√	√	√	√
Public Actively Engaged in the Democracy								√		√	√	√	√	
Public Awareness of Issues	√			√			√	√		√	√	√	√	√
Public Concerned about Policy Makers					√	√	√			√				
Public Concerned about Policymakers Decisions							√	√		√				
Public Interests				√		√				√	√	√	√	√
Public Need to be Active Participants	√				√			√						
Public Need to Understand Its' Role								√		√	√	√	√	√
Public Questioning and Judging Whether Their Voice Has Been Heard in the Decision Making Process					√		√			√			√	
Require All New Trustees to Participate in a Couple of Forums						√				√	√	√	√	√
Resources		√								√	√	√	√	√
Sufficient Staffing										√	√	√	√	√
Survey to Find Out Community Needs	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		√				

Institutional Document Review

The researcher collected and reviewed institutional artifacts such as the mission, vision, and values statements, student catalog, trustee bios, board of trustee agendas, board meeting minutes, strategic plan, and governance policies from each college. The college and board Web pages were also reviewed and used as a resource to collect specific information about the institution. The artifacts and Web pages were then analyzed for evidence of content and themes associated with public engagement, functional areas of democratic practices for public engagement, and essential elements for public participation. Evidence of trustee commitment to engagement can be understood by closely examining artifacts from campuses that model these activities (Holland, 1998).

For the purposes of this study, each community college was classified as urban or suburban. Throughout the research and the informant interviews, the college governing board was identified in a variety of ways—board of trustees, board of directors, and governing board. Of the five community college sites, two have a student trustee member. On each of the college Web pages, there were board members' photos and bios. This section of the study provides a comparative descriptive profile of each community college and the board of trustees. A detailed description about the participating institutions is provided in Appendix H.

A review of documents from the Kettering Foundation and Public Policy Institutes as well as meetings and telephone conversations with the Institute

representatives provided the researcher with critical insights and evidence regarding the public engagement programs and activities of the Institutes. Over the past 14 years, collectively, these Public Policy Institute (PPI) sites have provided their respective institutions visibility in the community as conveners of dialogues and local and national forums. The Institutes have provided training on issue framing, convening and moderating deliberative dialogues, and democratic public engagement.

The work of the PPI representatives has been committed to the Institutes' programs and training demystifying public deliberation as an engagement practice. The Institutes have proactively responded to teachable moments and demonstrating the practical application of deliberative public engagement to their college and community. Through deliberative public engagement, two of the five Public Policy Institutes have documented efforts to assist the college's board of trustees with connecting the college with the community and the community with the college. For example, one PPI site document indicated that the board of trustees requested the Institute to convene post "September 11th" healing dialogues, which were convened and moderated at the college and within the community by the Institute staff. The board's request is documented in its public session minutes. In sum, the Public Policy Institute representatives have focused on establishing engagement as an organizational priority.

The data from the document review of institutional and board Web pages, board agendas, and board minutes revealed several findings. In Table 13 and

Table 14, there is a comprehensive matrix of the findings and a comparison of the institutional documents and Web pages reviewed. Some of the most significant findings included:

- Each community college had a Web page, which included a mission, vision, or values statement, or some combination of these statements.
- Each community college had a mission, vision, or value statement that mentioned one or more of the following words: community, civic life, citizenship, partnerships, engagement, collaboration, inclusiveness, participation, communication, or democratic principles.
- Three out of five of the board of trustees had a mission, vision, or value statement.
- Each community college had a board Web page.
- Information posted on Web pages varied by institutional site.
- Four of five board Web sites identified a board office contact person and provided a telephone number.
- Information about the identity of board members varied by site, in that some sites included a photo and biography, a biography, or just a photo of board members.
- Only one community college's board Web page formally invited the public to attend the monthly board meetings.
- Each community college public board meeting had a public comment period on the board agenda. By community college site, the public

comments period varied on the board agenda from the second or third agenda item to the last agenda item.

- At each community college site, it was posted that the public was allotted three or five minutes to speak with the board.
- Of 150 sets of board meeting minutes from among the community college sites, there were five documented occasions, within a 30-month period, where the public exercised its opportunity to formally interact with trustees during the public board meetings.

Table 13

Comparison of Institutional Documents and Board Web Page Comparison

Institutional Characteristics	CC ₁ U	CC ₂ S	CC ₃ S	CC ₄ U	CC ₅ S
Comprehensive	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Learning Centered	✓	✓			✓
College Web Page Postings					
College Vision Statement	✓		✓	✓	
College Mission Statement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
College Values Statement	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mission, Vision, or Value Statement mentions: community, civic life, citizenship, partnerships, engagement, collaboration, inclusiveness, participation, communication, or democratic principles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board Web Page	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board Web Page Postings					
College Vision Statement	✓				✓
College Mission Statement		✓		✓	
College Values Statement		✓		✓	
Board Vision Statement	✓				
Board Mission Statement	✓			✓	✓
Board Biography w/Photo	✓		✓		✓
Board Photo Only		✓			
Board Biography Only				✓	
Board Roles and Responsibilities	✓	✓		✓	✓
Board Bylaws	✓	✓		✓	✓
Board Meeting Date, Time, And Location	✓	✓		✓	✓
Current Board Meeting Agenda	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Archived Board Agendas & Public Meeting Minutes	✓	✓		✓	✓
Archived Board Agendas Only					
Archived Public Meeting Minutes Only			✓		
Process for Public to Address Board	✓				✓
Board Materials Preparation Process					✓
Guidelines for Submitting Documents to the Board					✓
College Operating Budget					✓
Resources Links to the State Statutes on Public Governing Boards					✓
Links from Board Web Page to Information about Nonprofit Or Public Sector Boards					✓
Process for the Public to Obtain Meeting Agenda	✓	✓		✓	✓
Board Office Contact and Telephone Number Identified	✓	✓		✓	✓
Board Message Encouraging Public to Attend Meetings		✓			

Table 14

Profile of Board Type and Board Meeting Operations

Community College Location	Institutional Type	Size Of Board	Appointed or Elected	Term Of Appointment	Public Board Meetings	Notice To Community About Public Board Meeting	Time Allotted For Public Comment at Public Board Meetings	Term Used For Public Comment Period on Board Public Meeting Agenda
Arizona	Urban	5 Members	Elected	6 year term	2/month	Institutional email and Web page local major newspaper	5 minutes	Citizens Interim
Florida	Suburban	10 Members	Appointed	4 year term	1/month	Institutional email and Web page	3 minutes	Hearing of Citizens
Illinois	Suburban	8 Members	Elected	6 year term	2/month		Non-specified; Determined by board, based on the number of agenda items for any given regular board meeting	Ownership Linkage— Comments from College Constituency Groups And Comments from the Public
Maryland	Suburban	10 Members	Appointed	6 year term	1/month	Institutional email and Web page	3 minutes	Comments Period
Oregon	Urban	7 Members	Elected	4 year term	1/month	Institutional email and Web page, Television, radio, local major newspaper	16 minutes	Public Comments on Agenda items, Public Comment on Non-Agenda items

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher provided a brief overview of the purpose of the study, central research questions, and data collection process. The findings from the informant interviews were discussed. The case study unit of analysis, demographic data on the case study informants, and the pseudonym assigned to

each community college site and informants were identified and discussed. The archival documents from each of the community college sites were summarized. Finally, there was a synopsis of the content and context of the informant interviews, which included a cross-case composite. Chapter V will provide an analysis of the findings from this study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The person who embraces a new paradigm at an early stage must . . . have faith that it will succeed with many large problems that confront it, knowing only that the older paradigm has failed with a few. . . . If a paradigm is ever to triumph, it must first gain some supporters who will develop it, improve it, explore its possibilities, and show what it would be like to belong to the community guided by it.

Thomas Kuhn

This chapter provides a summary and conclusions about the findings of this study. The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the public engagement practices of community college trustees. There were two central research questions that guided this study.

1. What is the process by which community college trustees engage with the public?
2. What factors contribute to trustee public engagement practices?

It was the intention of the researcher to ascertain trustees' perceptions about public engagement by pursuing a line of inquiry within five categories: (a) role and responsibilities, (b) definition of public engagement, (c) public engagement practices, (d) barriers to public engagement, and (e) how to make public engagement more effective.

The chapter is divided into the six sections, and the discussion in each section is organized around the themes that emerged from the literature review and interviews with the study's key informants. A brief background of the research problem is presented in section one. Section two provides a summary

of the trustee informants' self-reported and Public Policy Institute informants' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of community college trustees. The trustees' roles and responsibilities were examined for evidence of public engagement in representing the public's interests, advocacy, and establishing policy, which were determined by the key informants as a trustee's role priorities. Section three provides a summary of the key informants' definition of public engagement, followed by section four, which provides a summary of the key informants' perceptions of trustee public engagement practices. The fifth section provides a summary of the key informants' perceptions about barriers to public engagement. The sixth section provides a summary of the key informants' perceptions about making public engagement more effective.

For this study, the definitions of public engagement, public engagement practices, and barriers to public engagement were examined within the constructs and conceptual frameworks of the democratic practices of engagement and the elements of public participation. For clarity of flow, the informant perceptions of trustee public engagement are displayed in Table 15, which illustrates the five researcher determined categories—practice, process, purpose, place and participants. These categories reflect the context of the informants' conversations about public engagement. This structure allowed the researcher to frame the informants' responses to the five previously established lines of inquiry for this study.

Table 15

Informant Perceptions of Trustee Public Engagement Behaviors by Researcher-Determined Categories

Practice	Process	Purpose	Place	Participant
Advocating Being Visible Debate Dialogue Discussion Meetings Mingling Presentations Relationship-building Speeches Self- Educating Socializing Surveys	Assessing community needs Attending and convening citizen panels Attending and hosting community events Attending business and industry meetings Attending Chamber of Commerce Meetings Attending civic association meetings Attending community Gatherings Attending fundraisers Campus forums Convening dialogues Meeting and Advocating with Elected Officials Monthly Board Meetings Presidential search process open forums Press Release Public Hearing Reading County and Local Newspapers, Magazines, and Trustee Journals Relying on President to listen and hear from faculty, staff, students and community Running for election to Board Serving on civic boards State of College Address Surveys Taskforce Trustee names publicly displayed Town Hall Meetings Writing letters to elected officials and organizations	Advocating Budget approval Bond Approval Connecting Defining the issue Defining priorities Educating the public Encouraging support Establishing partnerships Facilitating transition Hearing Gathering information Informing public about problem Informing public about solution Learning about an issue or problem Outreach Persuading Public Relations Seeking buy-in Seeking feedback Seeking funding Seeking input Selecting a new President Self-educating Telling the public Visibility Urging the public	Business and Industry Meetings Campus Events Campus Meetings Civic Meetings Community Meetings County Council meeting District Council Meetings State Legislator Meetings	Board Members Business Leaders Civic Leaders College Leadership College President Elected Officials Faculty Staff Students School Board Members

The *practice* category is the operational strategy for the discourse that trustees use to engage with the public (e.g., deliberative, discussion, dialogue, debate). It includes such factors as whether the discourse strategy is considered political acting, democratic, expert-focused, situational, ongoing, an event, exclusive, inclusive, or participant-focused. The public engagement *process* category is the method or tactical strategy that trustees use to engage with the public (e.g., monthly board meetings, town hall meeting, public hearing, dinners, etc.). The *purpose* category is the intended outcome of trustee engagement (e.g., notification of problem and solution, outreach, seeking buy-in, advocacy, relationship building or maintenance, feedback, public relations, etc.). The *place* category is the site, space, or location in which trustee engagement occurs (e.g., campus, community, church, civic associations, business and industry meetings, county council meeting, Statehouse, etc.). Finally, the *participant* category is the internal or external audience or groups with whom trustees are engaged (e.g., taxpayers, voters, business leaders, elected officials, students, stakeholders, constituents, community, faculty, staff, civic leaders, etc.).

During data coding and analysis, more than 350 disaggregated themes emerged that were aggregated and categorized. Based upon the literature review and study's findings, five major thematic categories emerged—trustee role, relationship with the public, administrative and organizational structures, leadership, and policy.

Background of Research Problem

Over the past three decades, there has been pervasive public criticism of public administrators, institutions of higher education, and the leaders within these institutions regarding their decision-making processes and the quality of citizen participation in these decision-making processes. These institutions and their leaders have been accused of lethargically responding to the public and addressing local problems or issues, which has only served to exacerbate the public's demand for more accountability and more public engagement. The emergent national movement to create more publicly engaged institutions has provided evidence of the demand for more accountability from the public and legislators for higher education to move toward a more public agenda (PEW Foundation, 2004; Votruba et al., 2002; Weerts, 2005; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). Moreover, this criticism and demand for accountability has begun to focus on the significant role that trustee leadership and governance must play as a bridge to and from the community. These criticisms provide a foundation for investigating the problem being analyzed in this study.

Trustee Role and Responsibilities

Research question one asked the informants to describe the roles and responsibilities of trustees. In describing the roles and responsibilities of a trustee, the informants determined that representing the interest of the community, advocacy, and establishing policy are a trustee's primary responsibilities and priorities.

Dedicated Citizen Volunteers

Community college trustees are dedicated citizen volunteers who are committed to the civic obligations and responsibilities required to govern our public institutions. Several researchers described trusteeship as a civic calling (Mathews, 2005; McPhail, 2005; Polonio, 2006; Smith, 2000; Vaughan & Weisman, 1997). In this study, trustee informants continuously emphasized that trusteeship is a time-consuming, voluntary, and uncompensated appointment. These trustees self-reported dutifully donating their personal and professional time, especially by attending board meetings once or twice a month, advocating with elected officials, assuring policy is established to fulfill their fiduciary obligation, and ensuring the business of their respective institution is successfully administered.

Overwhelmed and Politically Fulfilled Trustees

Interviews with trustees quickly revealed that some are overwhelmed by the time demands associated with this civic assignment, as well as romanticized and politically fulfilled by their trustee role. As an example, one trustee remarked, “My position, in being an elected official, is almost like being a politician in the legislature, House of Representatives or the Senate or something like that.”

The language that trustees used to describe their roles and responsibilities parallels the trustee literature. It was evident that the trustees recognized that the political, economic, social, and cultural environment influences their governance. Consistently, trustees mentioned that the CEO and the board of trustees share a

common role and responsibility, which is creating an environment to successfully achieve the mission of the institution. This included creating an environment in which the CEO has the power to lead the college (Chait et al., 1993; Fisher, 1991; Sherman, 1999; Smith, 2000; Vaughan & Weisman, 1997). Several trustees echoed perspectives offered by Smith (2000), “Trustees . . . establish standards that work through policies they set” (p. 16), and “trustees work for the public, and the CEO works for the board” (p. 67).

Trustee Rhetoric, Role, and Rituals

Trustees have rituals, habits and practices that are tacitly perpetuated, modeled, and remodeled. Many of these rituals, habits and practices have resulted in a governance culture that has been prescribed by trustee research. Counted among the trustee informants’ roles and rituals is their pre-occupation with the bureaucratic and technical expert dimensions of governance rather than issues and concerns arising from the public (Douglas, 2005; McKay, 2004; McPhail, 2005; PEW Foundation, 2004; Votruba et al., 2002).

Although serving and representing the community’s interest are undeniably the roles most consistently identified by the informants, it is also the role that was performed with minimal meaningful contact with the community. Community colleges are bureaucratic organizations with a hierarchal character, which has rendered its leaders, including trustees, benignly oblivious to the interests, needs, and concerns of the broader community they represent. The researcher found that the current system of governance has trustees trapped in

the hierarchical abyss of the bureaucratic organizations that they claim to govern. Continuing in this direction will certainly create consequences for trustee governance, which will include running the risks of potentially compromising and relegating trustees to symbolic public and civic actors.

The trustee informants are embedded in the traditional roles and responsibilities of governance and invested in practices that perpetuate the status quo. Serving as stewards of the public trust, assuring the administration of the institution, and connecting the institution to the community and the community to the institution are the boards of trustees' time-honored traditional role and *raison d'être*. Although this traditional role has continued within the context of contemporary higher educational institutions, trustees have become primarily the institution's titular, moral, and symbolic public human face and a reflection of the institution's personality. The informants' perceptions about the trustees' roles and responsibilities align with the extant trustee research by Fisher (1991), Vaughan and Weisman (1997), Ingram (1997), and Smith (2000). However, it would seem important that further research be conducted to more closely examine and determine whether these are more titular, moral and symbolic roles rather than substantive roles.

Trustees occupy a seat that they hold in the public's trust and represent a much larger community than they are in relationship with. Consequently, trustee governance is running the risks of becoming potentially compromised and relegated to symbolic public and civic acting. In describing the trustees' role to

effectively serve their community's interests and make decisions with the public's participation, the notion of implementing a democratic engagement practice, which would require authentic public participation "is far down on the list of priorities, and only a partially identified one" for trustees (Mathews, 1999). For this study, it is not unreasonable to conclude that trustees have not identified or defined their role or mission to include public engagement.

Enhancing and maintaining public legitimacy will require trustees to move beyond the bureaucratic and technical expert dimensions of governance and to cultivate a governance culture with processes and practices that include democratic public engagement and authentic public participation in decision making. Trustees must be a conduit for a critical and meaningful connection to and with the college's community. The embodiment of this connection is modeled when a trustee first acts with the communities and then acts on behalf of the communities they represent. Trustee governance is important to ensuring American democracy, and it is important for trustees to enable higher education institutions to effectively function within the ideals of democratic governance.

This study amplified a perspective of MacRae and Wilde (1986) about policy analysis for public decisions. For example, whether appointed or elected, the trustee informants view themselves, their role and function as that of a public official. The trustees are responsible for overseeing the effective and efficient public administration of their respective institutions. In their decision-making role, trustees are charged with setting and establishing policy that represents the

greater good, common good, and community's interests. This trustee decision-making role aligned with MacRae and Wilde's profile of political communities. Trustees are citizens of a State, county, and town who influence choices by voting; trustees work as an organized group that talk and write to people to publicize their position on issues. Trustee decision making is considered "policy," in that, it significantly affects "large numbers of people" (p. 3).

Ideally, the board of trustees' decision-making behaviors should follow a course of action, which results in public policy and administrative decisions that facilitate a choices about policy, whereby the benefits, consequences, and tradeoffs are considered and weighed among possible policy options. This approach to decision-making will require trustees to allocate sufficient time and resources for systemic policy analysis.

Definition of Public Engagement

Research question two asked the informants to define public engagement. In this study, trustees reported their involvement in a plethora of time-consuming interactions, transactions, and activities within the community, on behalf of the college. These interactions, transactions, and activities were reflective of a one-way communication with the public, with little or no mention of dialogue or multi-faceted opportunities that would encourage engaging the public. The trustee informants did not refer to these activities as public engagement, had their own vernacular for public engagement, and the term public engagement was not included.

No Common Vernacular for Public Engagement

When asking trustees to define public engagement, it became apparent to the researcher that these informants considered public engagement expert terminology and technical language, and this sometimes stifled the interview conversation. As an operational construct, trustees generally seemed to struggle with defining public engagement, and their definitions were more descriptive rather than definitional. Prior to the interview question that asked trustees to define public engagement, several of the trustee informants asked the researcher to define public engagement. The researcher included among the interview questions an opportunity for trustees to reflect on an occasion that exemplified the board engaging with the public. Trustee informants were receptive to reflecting about an occasion on which the board engaged with the public. This provided an option to recount a public engagement experience within a specific context, which invariably resulted in trustees recalling the practice, purpose, place, and participants as well as the strengths and challenges of the process.

Among the trustee informants, there was no common vernacular for public engagement or consensus that public engagement is a trustee's role. For example, one informant asked, "Why is it necessary to engage the public . . . aren't I the public . . . and hasn't the public entrusted and empowered me to be their voice and represent their interests?" Another trustee informant questioned whether "public engagement is political or political acting". While another informant commented, "It's not very clear to me that as a trustee I'm responsible

for enhancing civic life.” An informant offered, “That’s not our business.” And yet another informant said, “The role of the public is to mainly listen.”

Different Benchmarks for Public Engagement

The trustee informants had different benchmarks for the definition of public engagement. As one informant stated, “I’m very proud to be a trustee. It’s a way of getting people to interact and to know what people are thinking. . . . I think, as trustees, we have to know what people are thinking and their perceptions of the college. It’s not an easy thing of gathering information.” A trustee informant indicated, “People know that I am on the board and approach me to praise the college and discuss issues and concerns at church or just through conversation.” While another informant claimed, “We visit the college and students and go to community organizations and churches where we engage with the citizens who put up the funds to support the college.” An informant remarked, “I even participated on a panel on the ballot question in a public forum, where I went head to head against somebody from the taxpayer’s league who was advocating for the cut.” An informant defining public engagement explained, “Public engagement is testifying at public hearings.” Public engagement was also characterized as anticipating the needs of the community, being approachable, solving and responding to issues.

By definition, public engagement and a publicly engaged institution have been characterized as being “fully committed to direct, two-way interaction with communities and other external constituencies through the development,

exchange, and application of knowledge, information, and expertise for mutual benefit” (Votruba et al., 2002, p. 9). Additionally, public engagement is considered a “genuine commitment to civic engagement” that entails entering into “long-term, democratic, reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships with the surrounding community” (PEW Foundation, 2004, p. 4). As a systemic institutional and leadership strategy, public engagement requires a “greater role for colleges and universities” in collaboration with the community to (a) name and frame critical issues, (b) “create space for public deliberation that offers exposure to different points of view,” and (c) enable “people to form, express, and discuss their own opinions” (p. 4).

The Public Policy Institute informants also used a variety of terms to define public engagement, and these informants concurred that engaging the public means that you cannot have a pre-established agenda or solution. The definitions of public engagement included.

- Bringing the community together to talk about issues that are of concern to them”
- Facilitating dialogue between people in the community about what concerns them, and you help them come to some sort of policy direction that they can live with, common ground”
- Getting anyone in the community, who wishes to attend, together to deal with a problem, an issue, or strategic planning to share different viewpoints”

- Getting people to talk in a meaningful way in trying to find a solution”
- Getting people together to meet and dialogue about issues and concerns with candidates running for office”
- Providing community space for public dialogue and deliberation”
- Caring about not only yourself but also the quality of life of others in your community to the extent that you take action when you see things that are not detrimental to the community”
- Seeing ways that the community can be improved and taking action, such as holding forums, getting together with other people in the community to talk about issues”
- Engaging in partnerships with groups in the community that want to bring the public together, and getting the community deliberating on an issue to help to figure out how to frame that issue and create some kind of discussion guide, and then convening the public.

There were noticeable differences between the trustee and the Public Policy Institute informants’ descriptions and definitions of public engagement. The three primary differences in the Public Policy Institute informants’ public engagement definitions are—(a) community was at the core of the definition; (b) the engagement process was dialogic; and (c) there was an expectation that the community must be a participant rather than a spectator. The trustee informants’ definition and descriptions of public engagement processes relegated trustees to (a) attending and hosting public events; (b) appearing at public

events; (c) participating in meetings; and (d) serving on civic and business industry boards. The public engagement definition focused more on the actions of trustees as individuals rather than the board of trustees' relationships, interactions, and dialogues with broader segments of the community to identify, define, and find mutually agreeable solutions to problems. As an informant shared,

When AMA came out and said more and more people are dying in hospitals because there is a lack of nurses, that as a trustee, told me I don't have to go out and ask the individual stakeholders, 'What do you want?' That tells me, we need more nurses. It was just us as trustees finding out what is needed in our community.

The trustee engagement definitions, perceptions, and practices suggest that trustees are not intuitive or motivated enough to make practical, process or policy changes without appropriate interventions. The perspectives of the trustee informants are indicative of Chait et al.'s (1993) theory about how trustees enhance their knowledge about the college and community, which was reaffirmed in a study conducted by Douglas (2005). Reiterating the Chait et al. (1996) theory, Douglas stated, "Most boards do not consciously or systematically create opportunities to expand their knowledge about the college or community, thus creating the need for the president or others to create these opportunities for them" (p. 134).

Service on Boards and Attending Business and Industry Meetings

Service on local, State, and national committees and boards and attendance at business and industry meetings were the trustee informants' most

mentioned and visible demonstration of engaging with the public. The trustee informants suggested that their levels of accessibility and visibility were legitimate public engagement opportunities to listen, identify, and think about solutions to issues and problems. Many of these opportunities were informal and, as one trustee informant stated, “The business and industry communities tell us what they need in terms of the community college.” Another trustee informant offered, “Obviously, we can go through things like chambers, educational groups”, and “we interact with the educational community.” During the course of an interview, it became apparent that one trustee informant was becoming a bit introspective about their public engagement practices, community representation activities, and philosophy about relating and interacting with the community. The informant then shared, “I think the community is from leaders in the community, politicians, our county board members, our mayors, our chambers, but also people who really aren’t involved in anything.” Collectively these informant perspectives are representative of the trustee informants’ perceptions and reaffirm that business and industry and political and civic leaders are the groups with whom trustees are most often engaged. It might even suggest that trustees are more focused on the entrepreneurial and political dimensions of governance.

The findings of this study aligned with previous studies and reports that established the rationale for and significance of the role of community college leadership in maintaining relationships with the community. The role of community in the community college mission has an historical context, and a

critical component of the community college's community education mission is interaction between the college and community and the use of the community as a resource for extending the broader context of learning (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Gleazer, 1994; McPhail, 2005; Wang, 2004). The findings of this study reaffirmed the need for trustee orientation and professional development initiatives to include the history and role of community in the community college mission.

The 1936 Truman Commission report determined that community colleges must be in relationships with their communities, and the report implied that engaging with the public is important. The report recommended that community colleges "must make frequent surveys of its community so that it can adapt its program to the educational needs of its full time students" (Gleazer, 1994, p. 19). Gleazer emphasized that the role of community colleges, through its leaders, should be to meet community needs, serve, and promote "a greater social and civic intelligence" (p. 18). Gleazer proposed that contemporary community colleges needed to develop and build on appropriate structures for "a new era of education and community service and to be in the vanguard of change required in policies, institutional forms, and citizen attitudes," which included a focus on "people—people in the community" (p. 22). This study's data and findings amplified and supported the observations of Gleazer. By implication, the findings suggest that in order to be in the "vanguard of change" and focus more on "citizen attitudes" and "people in the community," trustees need to assure that appropriate structures are in place as well as support such structures (p. 22).

The definitions of public engagement in this study augment an argument of Boyte's (2000) that civic engagement is (a) too narrowly defined, (b) more than community outreach or public service, and (c) more than something carried out "on behalf of the community, instead of in partnership with the community" (p. 4). Boyte's insistence that "engagement needs a more 'public epistemology,' one that emphasizes the art of public discourse, the cultivation of civic imagination and capacity, the importance of engaging alternative points of view, and the value of engaging in *public work*," challenges the current perceptions of trustees about community college governance, in this study (p. 4).

This study's findings supported other engagement research findings and recommendations, including the finding, "Too often 'engagement' is synonymous only with service and volunteerism" and the notion that . . . true engagement encompasses an institution-wide commitment to civic education and community problem-solving efforts that are much broader in scope" (PEW Foundation, 2004, p. 106). The data, findings, and recommendations from this study are also aligned with the findings of studies of the Association of State Colleges and Universities (Votruba et al., 2002), Weerts (2005), and Douglas (2005), which indicated that an essential role of higher education leadership is influencing and shaping its institution's mission, agenda, and processes for public engagement with its stakeholders and communities.

There is a constant plea from the internal and external communities of higher education for good governance. Accordingly, Robert and Carey (2006)

stated, “American education has never been more in need of good governance than it is right now.” These researchers criticized, “The structure many boards have inherited or created tends to stall or impede timely, well-informed, and broadly supported decision-making” (p. 19). MacTaggart and Mingle (2002) identified three agendas that trustees have in fulfilling their policy development role, and one is “a public agenda” (p. 3). The definitions of public engagement from this study are supported by MacTaggart and Mingle’s observation that the trustees’ public agenda tends “to be less defined but no less important.” This observation suggested there is some urgency to remind trustees that they and their respective community college “exist to serve the people” (p. 3). While it is important for trustees to understand the academic, economic, and social purposes of higher education in pursuing the public’s agenda, it is also important to be mindful of the need for strong executive and trustee leadership and the need to be both accountable to, but separate from, state government (MacTaggart & Mingle, 2002).

The data from this study implied that there is a need for comprehensive and topic-specific trustee development on governing contemporary community colleges, especially in the area of engaging the community. Community college boards of trustees need to be deliberate about connecting, interacting, and engaging with a broader and a more inclusive cross-section of the community in order to legitimately pursue the public’s agenda. There is also a need for trustees to annually and periodically conduct board self-assessments to determine how

effectively they are pursuing the public's agenda and engaging with and meeting the community's needs. Such assessments can provide opportunities for the board to be introspective, identify and celebrate successes, focus on challenges, and proactively develop strategies to enhance its efforts to pursue the public's agenda and engage with the public.

The Association of Community College Trustees, a professional organization for community college board of trustee members, has resources that might be useful to the informants, their college CEO, and their fellow board of trustee members. For example, the Association identified processes and practices for exemplary governance and board competency, which could be helpful in moving boards of trustees in this study beyond theory. Two of the critical board competency process and practice areas identified by the Association were community and affirmation and review. The community competency was a critical, primary guide and base from which all board decisions are made. Likewise, community affirmation and review was the source of reference for every action the board takes on behalf of the community. As a board assessment criterion, this will require reviewing board policy to determine and affirm its relevance to the college and the board's external environments.

Although advocacy was identified and implied in the informants' definitions of engagement, the current logic and context of advocacy can be limiting and have an adverse impact for trustees and the community at large. Advocacy has become a code word for limited, situational, exclusive, fortuitous, and purposeful

interactions between the expert policy makers and other individuals who have position, power, and privilege (i.e., trustees, elected officials, and business and industry leaders). As a process and practice, advocacy has become too expertized, and the average community members—citizens and taxpayers—either do not know how to participate or have been discouraged from participating all together by the seemingly complexity of the advocacy process. Formal trustee advocacy must be preceded by occasions for trustees to listen to the community in order to determine the needs and wants of the community, which then can be translated into actions that benefit the community. Strategically, this approach might serve as an affirmation and confirmation that the trustees' decision making does indeed and in fact represent the interests, needs, and concerns of the community and represent the public's agenda.

Public Engagement Practice

Research question three asked the informants to describe the trustee public engagement practices. As a practice, public engagement was characterized in the informants' definitions and descriptions of engagement. The most pervasive public engagement practices included making speeches, voting, lobbying elected officials, going out into the community being involved, introducing yourself as a trustee, going to public hearings, testifying at public hearings, hosting discussions, hosting dinners, attending meetings, making presentations, self-educating, mingling in the community, being visible, advocating, participating in dialogues, and conducting surveys. Although

informants identified a variety of public engagement practices, the most commonly expressed public engagement experience and purpose involved convening the public regarding a potential bond issue or fiscal matter and the monthly board meetings.

The researcher determined that the trustee public engagement practices frequently used are those commonly considered conventional practices, such as public board meetings, public hearings, town hall meetings, and debates.

Trustees were convinced that these commonly used and conventional practices of relating to the public are relatively effective, as well as preferred by the public.

Ostensibly, the strategies and tactics that trustees used to learn about issues,

concerns, and interest of the community formed the foundation of their public

engagement practices. The trustees primarily relied on four strategies (a) each

other, (b) the college president and staff, (c) business and industry leaders, and

(d) board meetings. Public forums were the fifth strategy; however, it was an

occasional strategy reserved and used to assemble the community to discuss

administrative issues such as a fiscal matter, presidential search, campus

expansion, or sensitive community problems. Moreover, the institution and the

trustees determined the public engagement agenda, issue, and process for a

predetermined outcome. There was no evidence of the public's involvement in

determining the engagement or public participation process, establishing the

agenda, or participation in naming and framing issues for the public forums. The

public's role was prescribed. There was also no compelling reason to believe that

trustees are actually involved in determining the engagement processes that are used. Trustee informants disclosed that on several occasions, the expertise of the public relations office was sought for structuring occasions and processes for engaging with the public.

Even with the best intentions, trustees spoke about the challenges of convening the public. Administrative issues form the foundation for understanding what influences trustee public engagement practices. Trustee informants spoke about their commitment to engage with the public over an extended period of time. The purposes of the engagement were primarily for public relations, establishing partnerships, informing the public, educating the public, providing expert knowledge about an issue, learning about an issue or problem, or seeking buy-in or consensus on an issue. Most often the purpose was to address a bond issue or some other fiscal matter that would impact local taxpayers.

Informing, Telling, and Presenting

The structure of trustee engagement activities consistently entailed the trustees informing, telling, presenting, and on occasions listening. According to Creighton (2005), informing the public is nothing more than a “one-way communication to the public”; thus, it does not constitute or facilitate public participation or engagement (p. 9). The college presidential search and selection process was identified as an occasion to engage the public. The context of this engagement was one of two examples the trustee informants provided that had

characteristics of a process, practice, purpose, place, and participants most closely aligned with democratic public engagement and the essential elements of public participation. Obviously, this is also the most infrequent practice, in that searching for a college president is situational and occasional. The engagement process for presidential searchers was a forum, whereby a broad cross-section of the college's internal and external communities were invited for the purpose of identifying critical qualities and leadership characteristics needed for the college's next CEO. The structure of the process implied that it was deliberative. The presidential forums were held both on and off campus within the community.

Public board meetings were identified as the commonplace and designated for formal interaction between the board and the public. Trustees revealed that it was rare that individuals other than the college and campus administrators and groups internal to college attended the board meetings. However of the 150 board meeting minutes from among the community college sites, there were five documented occasions, within a 30-month period, where the public exercised its opportunity to formally interact with trustees during the public board meetings. Trustee informants expressed concern and ambivalence about this phenomenon, which is disconcerting and has been rationalized by trustees. It is the conclusion of the researcher that trustees have tacitly observed that the external and internal college community is scarcely and rarely present at these meetings. Furthermore, the notion that there is a need to engage with the public in a deliberative way or that public participation could be more effective is

not a commonly held perception among trustees or some Public Policy Institute representatives.

Public Engagement Takes Special Effort

The trustee informants reported and inferred that their engagement processes and plan for public participation required special effort. This includes identifying and inviting participants to ensuring attendance. The interviews with trustee informants left the impression that the planning processes for engaging with the public have caused the trustees and their respective institutions a measure of stress and anxiety. Although trustees reported that they are most often engaged with elected officials and business and industry leaders, this is not the external audience that they indicated is commonly invited to attend bond hearings and forums. The forums and bond hearings seemed to be the most deliberate attempt by trustees to identify an inclusive, broader based audience of public participants.

Community, Constituents, and Stakeholders

In this study, the informants ardently expressed that they are accountable to constituents and stakeholders and represent the interest of the community, which they identified as taxpayers and voters in their respective county or district, students, faculty, staff, and the college administrators. Almost invariably, trustee informants identified the public as business and industry leaders, the Chamber of Commerce, civic leaders, and local and State elected officials. While the trustee

informants were less definitive about their interactions with the community, stakeholders, and constituents, they were, however, more specific about their interaction with the public.

Through the interviews with trustee informants, it became evident that the trustees philosophically believe that they represent the interest of a broad and inclusive public. However, trustees are in practice in engaged and relationship with a more exclusive public. There was limited meaningful evidence that trustees have established rapport, relationships or communication with a broader constituent, community, public, or stakeholder of the college. This is likely to become exacerbated without a common nomenclature for the public, constituents, stakeholders, and community; and it will continue to give the appearance that trustees represent specific interests and specific constituents, which Gleazer (1985) advised no trustee should do. The trustees' perspectives about the public are contrary to Creighton's (2005), who advised, "The public is not static, and changes from issue to issue. It is a self-defined subset of the total population" (p. 23). In order for trustees to more effectively assure accountability and legitimacy with the public, it is advisable that the trustees more broadly define their public to be representative of the total population.

Trustee professional interests, self-interests, and the interests of the institution influence the context of the trustees' engagement practices. Moreover, the community could consider the symbolic public presence of trustees perfunctory. For example, an informant offered, "When I run for office, I'm very

much, in terms of getting myself elected going to whatever venue I can to get an audience. And in a huge county with a very uninteresting office, it's very difficult to get an audience." Another informant indicated, "We are seen at events and functions . . . We interface, and we make sure that gets a lot of the PR time in that particular zone." Another informant determined, "Running for re-election, showing up at chamber meetings, formal events, parades, and things like open meetings of community groups" are important trustee activities."

To serve the community's interests, there is an undeniable absence of democratic public engagement practices and a lack of authentic public participation in trustee engagement process and practices. The findings of this study are reiterative of the findings of several researchers regarding public institutions and its administrators' public engagement practices (Boyte, 2000; King et al., 1998; Mathews, 2005; Novak & Johnston, 2005; Walters et al., 2000; Weeks, 2000).

Trustee Governance as the Public's Proxy

The trustees, in this study, are conceptually a form of representative governance. As such, their role and function is that of "representative democracy" (Kelly, 1998; Pimbert & Wakeford, 2001, p. 1; Pitkin, 1967). Representative governance and representative democracy philosophically presupposes, whether appointed or elected, the role of trustee governance is to represent the broadest and most inclusive cross-sections of the population which encompasses gender, race, age, disability, ethnicity, class, socio-economic

status, education, and occupations (Kelly, 1998; Pimbert & Wakeford, 2001). Neither espouses that serving as the public's proxy is the purpose of trustee governance, which seemed to be a pervasive practice of this study's trustee informants. In practice, trusteeship requires public participation and entails engaging with the public to establish a legitimate public agenda that represents and ensures the public interests and common good. Pimbert and Wakeford warned, "Democracy without citizen deliberation and participation is ultimately an empty and meaningless concept" (p. 1). However, a criticism of representative democracy is that it does not protect the interest of citizens (Pimbert & Wakeford, 2001).

The Public Relegated to a Spectator

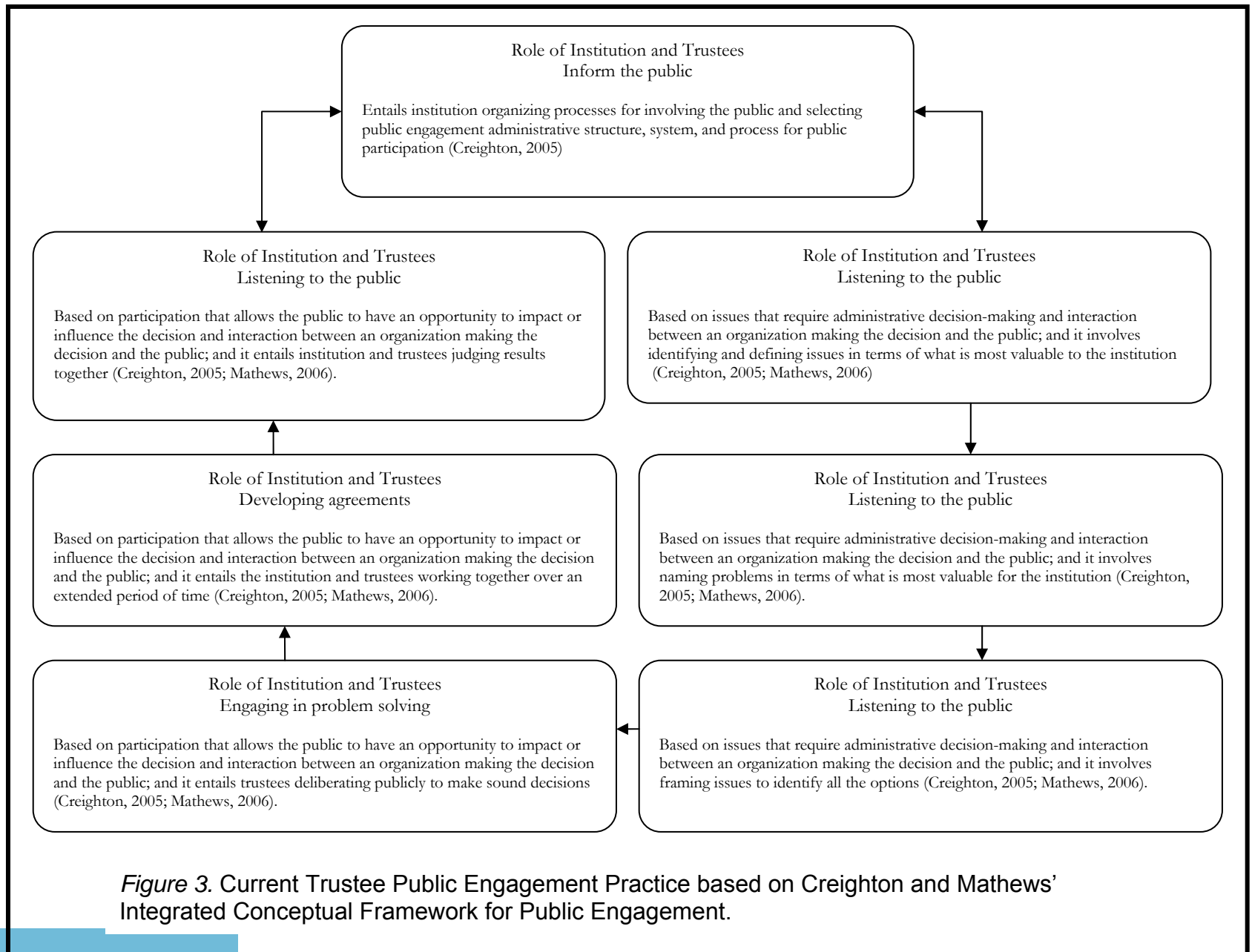
Within the current context of trustee public engagement, the institution and trustees have the prominent role in determining each component of the public engagement process; issues, problems and solutions are defined in the interest of the institution; and the role of the public has been determined as observers of trustees publicly deliberating. Based on the conceptual framework for this study, a significant finding was the relationship between the informants and the public, which can at best be described in within two contexts: informing the public and listening to the public. The primary functions of informing the public was defined by such activities as educating, identifying an issue for the purposes of obtaining buy-in, outreach, public relations, consensus seeking, and advocacy. The primary functions of listening to the public entailed the institution identifying,

defining, naming, and framing an issue, and on occasion creating opportunities for deliberation or dialogue with the public for consensus. The data indicated that frequently informing and listening to the public was a code for educating the community about an issue or pre-determined solution. Usually, the public was not involved in identifying issues; typically, the board or institution determined the issue, public engagement process and participants. As a practice, the trustee informants were embedded the informing stage of the conceptual framework.

Collectively, the trustee informants' perceptions about public engagement practices has relegated the public's role to that of a spectator for public relations, a photo opportunity, and listening to ultimately obtain buy-in or consensus. The data indicated that listening to the public was designed to gather information for framing an issue. More specifically, the informants noted that listening to the public included events where the discussion centered on campus facilities, a neighborhood watch, redistricting, and strategic visioning. However, the findings indicated the preliminary and final decision making was not inclusive of the public. Therefore, the public role's in public engagement typically was limited. Summarily, the informants' perceptions of public engagement and public participation reflected a limited relationship with the public. As a result, informants too often implied that trustees needed further knowledge, training, and development regarding public engagement practices and board roles and responsibilities.

Trustees Have Reserved the Right to Engage with the Public

Notwithstanding the research suggesting that educational institutions and their leaders are interested in identifying a more meaningful role for the public to participate in decision making, the data from this study suggested quite the contrary. Two of the trustee informants expressed a need for the board and their respective community colleges to identify and implement more meaningful public engagement strategies. Otherwise, the data provided no substantial evidence of consensus among trustees of any interests to identify a more meaningful role for the public to participate in decision making. While trustees have reserved the right to determine the process, practice, and participants with whom they will engage, the data and findings suggest that this right has indeed been reserved. In absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, perhaps this right has been reserved because trustees actually do not know how to engage the public. Using the study's conceptual framework, the current context of trustee public engagement practices is illustrated in Figure 3.



Barriers to Public Engagement

There was no concurrence among the trustee informants in this study that there are barriers to public engagement. Yet, there is evidence in the findings that trustee perceptions, practices, and processes create barriers to public engagement or public participation. The identification of barriers was exacerbated by the trustee informants' perceptions about the public, public engagement and public participation. Individually, the informants identified a variety of issues as possible barriers. Among these, the institution and the board of trustees were considered possible barriers. However, the data indicated that informants consistently identified interest and time as primary barriers to public engagement. To effectively and efficiently facilitate a public engagement process, time was identified as an issue, along with the public's availability to participate in those processes. A significant finding of this study is that the trustee informants' public engagement practices and public participation expectations have been shaped by the opinion that their respective communities have a public participation culture. Thus, the trustee and college's engagement processes and practices have been influenced by and organized based on a belief that such a culture exists.

Curb Appeal and Public Apathy

In this study, the informants have conjectured and drawn a variety of *a priori* conclusions about the absence of the public and the lack of public participation. Several of the key barriers identified are based on the trustee

informants' conclusions and observations about public participation at monthly board meetings and bond hearings. Some of the perceptions of barriers included: the public is satisfied with the performance and decisions of the college and the board; the public is too busy; the public is disinterested; the public is apathetic; the public only shows up if there is a crisis; the public is under-educated about the issues; the college and administration have good curb appeal and a positive image in the community; and there is "public indifference," "some people just don't think they'll make a difference," "people who may be intimidated by the whole structure," and "ignorance or lack of knowledge about what's going on and what the issues are might impede participation." Another informant stated, "There is a general lack of public interests" and "a uniformed public, on public policy matters." An informant explained,

I think it would be good if the public were more involved. I think the general trend, and it's not the best but the trend is that if people are upset about something, they are much more likely to make their views and presence known than if they're happy with the way things are going. I guess that's the nature of the public.

The trustee informants' perceptions and conclusions about the public have implications for trustees to embrace a new mental model about the public, as well as a new governance paradigm. The contention of public participation theorists that restoring public legitimacy will require governance to cultivate institutional public engagement practices that include public participation in decision-making are germane to the governance practices of the trustees in this study (Arnett,

1999; Furey, 2004; Grossi, 2001; Hawk, 2001; King et al., 1998; Mathews, 2005; PEW Foundation, 2004; Walters et al., 2000; Weeks, 2000).

The primary engagement practices trustees use will require public participation that entails engaging with the public to establish an agenda that is legitimate to the public. Additionally, the trustees should begin to assess the effectiveness of the boards' governance based upon the trustees' public engagement practices. And this assessment must include evidence of public participation processes based upon institutional collaboration with the public to identify, define, and solve public problems.

The trustees and community colleges, in this study, would be well-served to acknowledge and recognize that setting policy and making decisions without public participation will no longer be effective. Public participation must be inherent in public community college governance; it is fundamental to the definition of democratic governance. Therefore it should be a critical benchmark for the assuring democratic trustee governance practices. Democratic institutions must be models of democratic governance, in this case, that would mean community college trustees. Thus, conceptually and practically, trustees must play a decisive role to ensure governance in the community's interest by establishing a mission and practice of engagement that facilitates democratic public deliberation and authentic public participation.

The findings of this study aligned with Furey's (2004) observation,

Citizens have concerns and ideas to share about education, but are not afforded the proper amount of time and space to essentially discuss. . . .

There is not enough emphasis on soliciting the publics' opinion through a deliberative and purposeful process of civic engagement. (p. 6)

The monthly board meetings exemplified Furey's observations and Adams' (2004) criticism that public meetings are "useless democratic rituals that lack deliberative qualities and fail to give citizens a voice in the policy process" (p. 43). As a public meeting, the monthly board meetings have a role to play in fostering citizen participation in policy making.

The barriers to public engagement might be viewed through a point of view offered by Hawk (2001), "Oftentimes, what appears to be a participatory practice is really just smoke and mirrors, as participation is used as a tool of collusion, diversion, or purely to promote good public relations. Participants often become disheartened as they realize that their voices count little or may not be heard at all" (p. 3). The monthly board meetings, bond hearings, and the social nature of trustee public engagement are classic examples of practices that perpetuate barriers, within the context of Hawk's perspective.

Downs (1994) discussed public interests in a democracy and argued that most officials are "significantly motivated by self-interest when their social function is to serve the public interests (or some organizational purpose of their bureau)" (p. 87). Downs stated, "Although many officials serve the public interests as they perceive it, it does not necessarily follow that they are privately motivated solely or even mainly by a desire to serve the public interests per se" (p. 87). He argued that society has failed to hold public officials accountable for "proper institutional arrangements" that would cause public officials to stop

exercising their private motives and self interest—and therefore represent the public’s interest. “Whether or not the public interests will in fact be served depends upon how efficiently social institutions are designed to achieve that purpose. Society cannot insure that it will be served merely by assigning someone to serve it” (p. 87).

Public Policy Institutes as a Governance Resource

It is important to emphasize that the data from this study indicated that The Public Policy Institutes (PPI) sites are providing their respective institution visibility in the community as a convener of dialogues, local and national public issues forums, and training on democratic and deliberative public engagement practices. The PPI representatives have worked diligently to develop its organization’s public engagement capacities, identify the most effective practical approaches and strategies for ensuring adequate staffing and other resources for the Institute, and allocated concerted effort and time to achieve an institutional public engagement agenda.

At most of the community college sites, however, the Public Policy Institute seemed to be regarded as an ancillary unit and operation of the college, with programs and practices that have been underutilized or marginalized by their respective college. At three of the five community colleges, there was no observable relationship between the trustees and the Public Policy Institute. In general, the trustee informants and the board had no knowledge of the Public Policy Institute representative or its Institute’s mission, goals and objectives.

While the data from this study might suggest the disposition of the trustee informants is to maintain the status quo regarding the role of public engagement in trusteeship, there is reason to draw other conclusions.

It is not inconceivable that timely, appropriate, and systemic institutional interventions could transform the public engagement practices of trustees and enhance their legitimacy with the public they serve. Carefully crafted interventions could be a pathway to trustees and the board viewing and embracing democratic practices of public engagement and public participation as critical to their roles of decision making and representing the community's interests. Such interventions should include the CEO and trustees cultivating a relationship with and becoming knowledgeable about their Institute; the CEO and trustees attending the Institute-sponsored seminars on convening and moderating deliberative forums; the integration of a public engagement pedagogy in trustee professional development initiatives and trustee orientation; the creation of opportunities for the CEO and trustees to experience and practice more democratic public engagement in conducting public board meetings and board business; and the allocation of adequate institutional resources (i.e., staff and budget) for engaging with the public. These interventions might well render community colleges, CEOs and trustees as national exemplars of public engagement, pioneers in leading change, and authentic facilitators of representative governance and representative democracy.

Making Public Engagement More Effective

The research question five asked the informants how to make public engagement more effective. The barriers to public engagement and public participation can be viewed as some of basic ingredients in the steps and solutions for making it more effective. The informants' definitions of public engagement, descriptions of public engagement practices, and identification of barriers to public engagement provided real life examples of the potential detriment and liabilities of traditional trustee governance. There was no consensus among the trustee informants that their current public engagement practices could or should be enhanced, and there was no common perspective for making it more effective.

The Dichotomies of Crisis and Public Contentment

Similar to the case in identifying barriers, individually the informants identified a variety of issues and possibilities for making public engagement more effective. Initially the informants framed their perceptions within the context issues. The trustee informants consistently shared a disconcerting and significant perspective, which suggested the dichotomies of "crisis" and public contentment are the impetus and determinants that influence institutional and trustee decisions about engaging with the public. In general, the informants shared some other examples of issues impacting the effectiveness of engagement, which included the need for more visible administrative and trustee leadership and buy-in; institution and unit silos that in affect negatively impact collaboration and

cooperation; inadequate intra- and inter-organizational communication; insufficient staffing and resources to successfully implement and sustain an institution supported public engagement agenda; and a civically inactive, disengaged, and disinterested public.

Of note, however, were the consistent observations by the Public Policy Institute informants who deduced that trustee public engagement was inadequate and ineffective. The Public Policy Institute informants' objective introspection about their respective institution's public engagement culture and the board of trustees' public engagement practices provided a significant foundation for identifying strategies to make public engagement more effective. The strategies and tactics for making public engagement more effective include:

- The president and trustees must define public engagement as a key success factor in their role and responsibilities, and must demonstrate visible leadership to create systemic organizational buy-in within their respective institution.
- Community colleges need to reframe its administrative structures, systems and process to identify the evidence of and assess opportunities for enabling democratic institutional practices, democratic governance, deliberative public engagement, and authentic public participation.
- Community colleges should establish a reciprocal relationship with their communities to occasionally conduct a survey of community

needs, concerns, and interests. This relationship should be such that the community feels that the institution is approachable.

- The public must be encouraged to actively and vociferously participate in the civic life of the community and college.
- The community college should actively pursue civic education opportunities to re-educate the public and community about their role in restoring and sustaining the civic life, which includes education partnerships with K-12.
- The college and trustee leadership should routinely establish occasions for listening to the community.
- The college and board of trustees should establish occasions in order to hear and listen to community issues; identify, name, and frame issues with the community and in the interest of the community to develop possible solution options; deliberate with the public; and to evaluate the effectiveness of their collaborative decision making efforts.
- New trustees should be required to participate in a deliberative forum to better understand its structure, purpose, and possibilities in democratic governance.
- Trustee recruitment and selection criteria should include a requirement of experience, as well as commitment to democratic governance practices.

- The CEO and trustees should be purposeful about pursuing opportunities public participation and public deliberation within the context of the monthly board meetings.
- Professional affinity groups and organizations for community colleges and trustees need to recognize and establish public engagement as an organizational and membership professional development priority.

The Alarm Has Sounded

Previous research and the findings from this study have sounded the alarm warning that business as usual approaches to trustee governance and institutional deliberate indifference is weakening the democratic ideals that are the foundation of the community college mission and purpose. As an example, Chait, Ryan, and Taylor (2005) argued, “Too often, the board of a nonprofit organization is little more than a collection of high-powered people engaged in low-level activities,” and they suggested that could change if trustees were willing to embrace and perform the “new work” of boards (p. 36). The “new work” of boards “requires the engagement of the organization's internal and external constituencies. The new work generates high levels of interest and demands broad participation and widespread support” (p. 37). Based on the findings of this study, their perspective is expanded and the researcher urges that trustees must have a public engagement pedagogy.

The findings in this study concluded that the role and responsibility of trustees to represent the public's interest needs to be reframed for inclusion of

democratic public engagement practices. There is also a need for the public's role in democratic governance to be reclaimed. The role of public participation in trustee decision-making processes needs to be more closely examined. Ten conclusions were reached based upon the analysis of findings:

- A public engagement conceptual framework for public community college trusteeship has not been linked to establishing policy and decision-making.
- As a practice, public community college trustees' relationship with the public has been far down on [their] list of priorities and only a partially identified one.
- Community college trustee governance and public engagement paradigms of representing the community's interest have not been framed to successfully achieve this goal.
- Trustees have narrowly defined who they represent.
- Trustee engagement is limited to conventional forms of public engagement, such as town hall meetings, public hearings, and public board meetings, which are designed to inform the public of problems, issues and decisions.
- Trustee engagement practices render them almost completely out of touch with the grassroots public.

- As a priority and practice, public community college trusteeship and governance have not focused on public engagement or public deliberation in its relationship with the public.
- Trustees have not been facilitating authentic engagement with the public in its decision-making and academic policy development processes.
- Trustees are primarily focused on the bureaucratic, technical, and expert dimensions of governance.
- Trustees are comfortable with and committed to the status quo in their roles and responsibilities.

Reframing governance and moving it toward a more transformative leadership and democratic governance paradigm will require trustees to function as the master pedagogues and advance democratic public engagement practice as a new governance phenomenon. This must be accomplished in collaboration with higher education institutions and its leaders. The notion of trusteeship and democratic public engagement in governance as leadership is a philosophy that trustees must embrace as a role and demonstrate in practice.

The Publicly Engaged Board of Trustees

This researcher submits that the publicly engaged board of trustees will require a critical pedagogy for democratic public engagement practices to ensure effective trustee governance. There are uncharted opportunities to propose interventions and models for promoting such pedagogy. Building on the

conceptual frameworks of Mathews' (2006) six democratic practices of public engagement and Creighton's (2005) essential elements of public participation, the analysis of the findings from this research supports a new model for reframing governance. Accordingly the researcher proposes the *Democratic Public Engagement Trustee Governance Model*, which is illustrated in Figure 4. The model was developed based on the necessity of including public engagement and reclaiming the public's role in democratic trustee governance. The researcher asserts that the model can help to actualize public engagement as a dimension of the role and responsibility of trustees, while strengthening governance at community colleges.

Democratic Public Engagement Trustee Governance Model

Acknowledging an observation of Creighton (2005), "There is no one size fits all public participation," the Democratic Public Engagement Trustee Governance Model is an approach for beginning further national dialogue and conducting more scholarly research on how to make trustee public engagement and public participation more effective. Some of the key principles of the model are as follows. The Democratic Public Engagement Trustee Governance Model philosophically and practically begins, whereby the trustees/institution determine and organize with the public the processes for involving the public and selecting a public engagement administrative structure, system, and process for public participation. The model has ten key principles:

1. Sorting: The institution and trustees determine with the public whether an issue requires engagement and the kind of public participation required to reach a decision for the public good.
2. Communication: Public engagement is a two-way communication between the institution/trustees with the public and it assures that public engagement and public participation occur along a continuum, which includes listening and publicly deliberating to engage in problem solving to develop agreements.
3. Integration: The public is integrated in every step of the decision-making process, which includes identifying an issue (naming) and defining and synthesizing an issue (framing) in a context with languages that even non-expert publics and communities can understand its scope and impact.
4. Inclusive: The public engagement process is fluid, and invites an expanded, more inclusive, and representative public at every phase of the process.
5. Discourse: The engagement process is deliberative and dialogic.
6. Cooperation: A co-facilitative public participation process is enabled where information is being shared, rather than the institution/trustees merely informing the public.
7. Personal Stake: The participants must have the opportunity to share their personal stakes (i.e., self-interest and what is of value to

them) about an issue and their preferences for a specific policy direction; weigh the benefits, consequences and costs of various public policy approaches with other community members, and identify the common interests or common directions of their self interests among the self interests of other dialogue participants.

8. Common Ground: The engagement practice enables the institution/trustees and public to facilitate and pursue individual knowledge and understanding to create common ground for collective public knowledge and understanding.
9. Collaboration: The institution/trustees and the public collaboratively pursue outcomes to reach common ground or agreement about how to address an issue through engaging in collaborative problem-solving.
10. Assessment: The institution/trustees with the public evaluate the public engagement process and civic learning to enhance the effectiveness of future public engagement processes.

The Democratic Public Engagement Trustee Governance Model espouses the notion of deliberation that “the more we get together and talk, the more we discover that we have a shared future and a shared destiny” (Mathews & McAfee, 2001, p. 8). A short- and long-term intention of the model is to motivate trustees to favor relationship with the public over the rituals of governance. The model is founded on the principle that an inclusive practice recognizes that no

one individual, institution or organization has all the information or facts about an issue or concern. It is also a practice that recognizes that there can be no prevailing self-interest that determines the best public policy strategy.

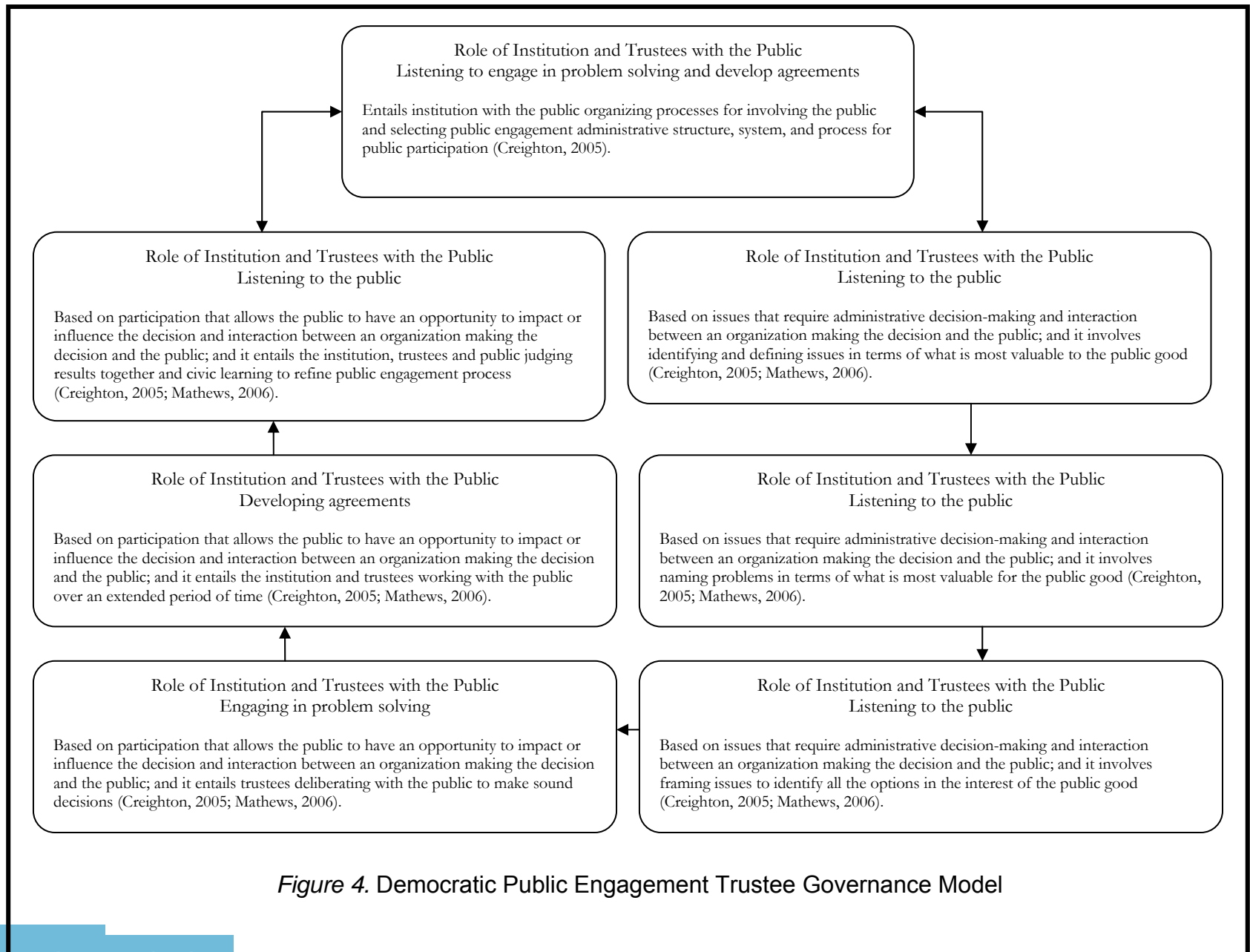


Figure 4. Democratic Public Engagement Trustee Governance Model

Democratic Public Engagement Trustee Governance Practices and Learning Centered Governance

There is a movement within community colleges that is advocating for a shift from teaching to learning, which is often referred to as the Learning College. In this study, three of the five community college representatives espoused a learning centered mission, which has very specific implications for trustees and governance, particularly democratic public engagement for trustee governance practices. Just as McPhail (2005) argued that trustees cannot effectively govern with a business-as-usual philosophy and practice, this study arrived at the same conclusion. As in the case of learning-centered governance and the findings of this study, “Governing boards must have both the vision and capacity to forgo their individual interests to advocate for the needs of the institution on behalf of students” (p. 143).

McPhail (2005) proposed nine learning-centered governance strategies with trustee leadership imperatives that are relevant to the Democratic Public Engagement Trustee Governance Model proposed in this study. Within the context of this model and for colleges that espouse a learning centered mission, the notion of *placing learning first* could include trustees embracing a listening posture to learn about the interests, needs and concerns of all stakeholders. *Linking learning to governance* should include trustees creating occasions, such as the board meetings, to deliberate with the public (not just deliberate publicly) about a learning-centered agenda. *Linking learning to governance* in this manner would provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to individually and collectively

identify their stake in a learning-centered institutional agenda. The model is designed to enable developing of *learning centered policies* in collaborative ways. As an example, members of the college and community can share their personal stakes (i.e., self-interest and what is of value to them) regarding their preferences for a specific policy direction; weigh the benefits, consequences and costs of various policy approaches with other community members; and identify the common interests or directions of their self-interests among the self-interests of others.

As an approach to developing *learning-centered policy*, the model advocates that trustees demonstrate in practice that there can be no prevailing self-interest that determines the best policy strategy. Reinforcing *learning-centered governance, anyplace, anytime, and anyway* could be enabled by public engagement processes facilitated through the use of technology that allows stakeholders to continuously provide their voice to the vision, strategic direction, and implementation of learning-centered policies. The Democratic Governance Model is perfectly suited for *integrating learning-centered governance into local and national learning college initiatives*. Trustees could be conveners, moderators, and participants in deliberative dialogues and conversations that rely on private understanding and knowledge to create public knowledge. Within this context, trustee dialogues and conversation with the community could help to promote the notion that no one individual, institution or organization has all of the information or facts about an issue or concern.

Also inherent in the Democratic Public Engagement Trustee Governance Model is the institution, trustees, and public judging results together and civic learning to refine the public engagement process. This collaborative approach to governance could be a critical driver for assessing whether board decisions support accomplishing a *learning-centered vision and mission*, as well as assisting in *developing learning-centered governance outcome assessments* and *communicating results widely and whenever possible*. Additionally, the model implies that by the institution and trustees working with the public over an extended period of time and judging their results together, invaluable learning and reflection could result. A potential result could include insight on effectively structuring trustee development opportunities, which is critical for assuring that trustees understand how to support and promote learning-centered governance.

Summary

This chapter provided a brief background of the research problem for this study. There was a discussion and summary of the trustee informants' self-reported and Public Policy Institute informants' perceptions of the work and role of community college trustees. The informants' perceptions were examined for evidence of public engagement in representing the public's interests, advocacy, and establishing policy, which were determined as the trustees' primary role. The key informants' definitions of public engagement, perceptions of trustee public engagement practices, barriers to public engagement and making public engagement more effective were examined. The examination of the informants'

responses in these areas provided the data from which five key themes were identified. Finally, the researcher's Democratic Public Engagement Trustee Governance Model is proposed as an approach to make public engagement more effective. Chapter VI will provide a discussion of implications for trustee public engagement practices and make recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The trustee informants expressed the consciousness for the discrepancy between governance practice-as-usual and the normative corrective characteristics of the Creighton (2005) and Mathews (2006) generative thematic paradigms called for among critically conscious scholars. The research method and analysis for this study are consistent with liberation education practices and can legitimately contribute a critical consciousness understanding of the liberation role expected at least from educational institutions in a democratic society of sovereign individuals (Freire, 2000). This researcher would be inerrant not to express these broader implications as part of the rationale for the recommendations that follow. Furthermore, this researcher believes it necessary to impress on the reader or other researchers the responsibility of vigilance for interpreting study in the freedom versus the oppression generative theme of our epoch, including our freedom to share study and freely share our knowledge. The implications to the public engagement and public participation practices observed within community colleges and its system of governance can be understood through the interpretation of two themes of Frierean generative and oppressive tension.

Theme of Silence

In trustee governance public engagement practices, the Frierean “theme of silence” has been objectified through the cultural transmission of discourses sometimes attributed to Eurocentric cultural hegemony, wherein alternant views are effectively none existent or suppressed (Friere, 2000, p. 106). Community colleges have a cultural context that is fundamentally articulated in its mission, and this context is often ignored and lost in a non-democratic, non-egalitarian system of governance (Ayers, 2005; McPhail & McPhail, 1999; Shaw, Valadez, & Rhoads, 1999). This theme is characteristic of oppressed people who often do not have a voice in their society, and it is relevant to the criticisms about representative governance and public participation (Friere, 2000; King, Felty, & Susel, 1998; Walters et al., 2000; Weeks, 2000). One could argue that the *theme of silence* is manifested and perpetuated in the current logic of representative governance through the power and dialogic relationships with the public, which usually results in muting the public's voice. There is an absence of critical inquiry and a public voice in the development of policy and planning. Therefore the very idea of pursuing a public agenda, based on a philosophy of what is universally possible together, becomes a construct that further supports that the current system of governance is wedded to the status quo.

Furthermore, there was no convincing evidence that governance is seeking or indeed, able to effectively balance the interests of all stakeholders. There seemed to be a prevailing governance mind-set that those varied interests and stakeholders either partially exist or do not exist at all. The current

governance dynamic should anticipate predictable failure if there is no commitment to engage the public in decision-making through an open and deliberative process.

The Banking System of Education

Contextually public engagement in the current system of community college trustee governance can be likened to what Freire (2000) called the "Banking System of Education" (p. 72). Within this system, the ten concepts of the teacher/student relationship can be directly applied to the trustee/public relationship. For example, concept one the "teacher teaches and the students are taught" can be observed in the teacher posture that trustee governance has assumed, which is essentially informing the public and talking to rather than with the public. The attitudinal interactions with the public suggest there is a presupposition on the part of trustee governance that the knowledge about issues and solutions are inherent in the power and privilege of their position. As a result the public has been relegated to a passive spectator in the dialogic process and dialogue has become a futile exercise, which is touted and then masked as engagement, when it is not.

Concept two the "teacher knows everything and the students know nothing" promotes practices of control that are enabled by the power dynamics of governance and the distribution of resources to assure implementation of a predetermined agenda.

Concept three the "teacher thinks and the students are thought about" is indicative of the very nature of governance at public institutions in the interest of a people and seeks to solutions in the common interest without the common thinking of its people.

Concept four the "teacher talks and the students listen-meekly" is exemplified in conventional engagement practices (i.e., board meetings, town hall meetings, public hearings). This concept is particularly evident in the time allocated for public comment during public board meetings, which is usually three to five minutes. In these engagement practices the role of governance is that of the expert and the role established for the public is to listen, agree, and if appropriate exercise their civic duty by voting. Even if there has been an attempt to engage, the public's role has been pre-defined as spectator and listener participant.

Concept five the "teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined" is evidenced in the coercive component of governance and a misguided power relationship with the public.

Concept six the "teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply" is evidenced by the public engagement process, structures and practices of governance. Furthermore, this concept can be observed in governance processes, whereby the issues are identified, named, and framed by the institution and in the interest of the institution, and then presented to the public through as a quasi collaborative and deliberative process. As such, the

underlying motivation of governance is to convince the public that the institution's solution is for the common good.

Concept seven the "teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher" is manifested in public engagement that has the public at the periphery of the issue, solution, and engagement process. This conceptual approach diminishes trustee public engagement to nothing more than public relations, a ceremonial and perfunctory practice.

Concept eight the "teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who are not consulted) adapt to it" is most visibly manifested at the core of the trustee governance public engagement agenda process, structures, practices, issues, and solutions; all of which are routinely predetermined without consulting with the public.

Concept nine the "teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students" is also manifested in trustee governance. There is evidence of an emerging knowledge and power as governance paradigm, which in affect results in the notion that governance is synonymous with knowledge and power. A net affect is governance that is symbolic, which promotes professional interests, self-interests, and the interests of the institution rather than governance in the interests of the public.

Concept ten the "teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects" has resulted in a trustee/public relationship that has removed the public's agency and collectively consigned the public to

inanimateness (Friere, 2000, p. 73). There is a governance-public contradiction that can be likened to the teacher-student contradiction "Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (p.53).

Due to the political nature of their civic assignment, trustees have been invested in political and power relationships. Making public engagement more effective will require commitment to transformational administrative and trustee leadership that is willing to proactively champion organizational change, implement institutional strategies that connect people to political power, and establish relationships with a more inclusive public to facilitate participation in public life (Cortes, 1996). Furthermore, evidence of tactical strategies that ensure collaboration, assure reciprocity, and restore and reclaim the public trust will need to be critical benchmarks for legitimizing such commitment.

The literature consistently indicated that trustees hold the nation's community colleges in public trust they are the guardians of that public trust (Association of Community College Trustees, 2005a; Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004; Douglas, 2005; Kezar et al., 2005; Mathews, 2005; Novak & Johnston, 2005; Sample, 2003; Smith, 2000; Vaughan & Weisman, 1997). As McPhail (2005) put it, "The public trust responsibility is more than the "property or fiscal resources of the college. . . . [Trustees] are responsible for building an institution that can serve both today and tomorrow's students with increasing accountability" (p. 139). Community colleges have a connection with the community that should

embody trustees acting with and not just on behalf of the communities that the institution serves.

Furthermore, community colleges can be exemplars of civic engagement with their communities because they are uniquely positioned within their communities. These perspectives notwithstanding, there are still obstacles that must be overcome to sustain and maintain institutional commitment to convene and engage with the public to deliberate on sensitive issues and education policy. These obstacles must also be examined at institutions where the leadership has philosophically embraced the notion of engagement with the public for deliberation. However, there has been limited research about the perceptions and practices of public community college trustees based on their understanding of the relationship between boards and the public (Fisher & Farrow-Garland, 2001; Harwood, 1998), as well as convening the public for deliberation.

Although engaging in public discussion of issues and policies is among the responsibilities of public community college trustees, trustees have revealed that public engagement is not necessarily a practice or process that comes naturally (Association of Community College Trustees, 2005b; Smith, 2000). Some of the higher education governance literature indicated that community college trustees are in a visible public leadership role and position to model for their respective institutions, students, and community inclusive, broad based and collaborative civic engagement or democratic participation practices for problem solving. However, trustees determined that deliberative public engagement is

neither a first practice priority nor a default practice priority, because it seems to require knowledge and skills that trustees may not bring to governance. Also, it is apparent that college staff, in an advisory role to the CEO and board, need to be articulate and knowledgeable about practical strategies that trustee leadership can consider to sustain a deliberative public engagement practice (Newman, Scott, Starr, & Walker, 2005; Scott, 2005). As it was, one trustee questioned whether public deliberation is a political act and expressed concern regarding how the process includes political actors.

The findings of this study suggest that a Public Policy Institute alone and Institute practices are not enough to sustain leadership, an institutional culture, and public spaces for public deliberation. Leadership for public deliberation might be better enabled with a continuous flow of information about institutional successes in implementing public deliberation, as well as education and opportunities for leaders to implement the practice to achieve its organizational mission (Scott, Starr, & Walker, 2001; Scott, 2005). The “role of governance in leadership too often is overlooked” (McPhail, 2005, p. 139). Both conceptually and practically, there are implications for trustees, as leaders, to play a critical role in reframing governance in the communities’ interests, by establishing a mission of engagement that facilitates deliberation with the public.

In summary, change is necessary and imminent for community colleges and their governance. As change agents, it is critical for boards of trustees to lead as an informed, educated, and communicative unit. The boards’ success will be defined by proactively involving multiple stakeholders often and early in the

decision-making process, ensuring transparency, and frequently communicating with the public. It will also be important for the CEO and board to (a) work with individuals and units strategically positioned within the college's administrative organizational structure and (b) involve these individuals in the endless opportunities to advise, plan, and coordinate the board's public engagement activities and to help shape trustee public policy agenda. As an example, Public Policy Institute leaders are change agents, and it is important for these leaders to be in the room where strategy planning and decision making is occurring and to be an ever-present voice for pursuing democratic public engagement practices.

Recommendations

In order to make trustee public engagement more effective, reframe community college governance, and move trusteeship toward a more transformative leadership and democratic governance paradigm. There are several conclusions that have implications. The recommendations are framed within the context of the six key themes that emerged from the findings in this study—trustee role, relationship with the public, administrative and organizational structures, leadership, and policy.

Trustee Role

Trustees are primarily focused on the bureaucratic, entrepreneurial, political, and technical expert dimensions of governance. This will require trustees to rethink the role of governance and reframe and redefine their role and mission for inclusion of public engagement to concede that public engagement is,

in fact, a trustee's role. Trustees have been engaged in seemingly titular, moral, and symbolic leadership rather than substantive leadership roles. There is a need for organizational structures that are less bureaucratic for trustees to more effectively represent the interests, needs, and concerns of the broader community. To facilitate a change, it is recommended that scholars (a) more closely examine and determine whether the trustee role is more titular, moral, and symbolic than substantive; (b) that trustees identify or define their role or mission to include public engagement; and (c) trustees identify, implement and assess effectiveness of strategies to more effectively represent the interests, needs, and concerns of the broader community.

Relationship with the Public

As a practice, traditionally, public community college trustees have not identified public engagement a first practice priority or a default practice priority, which has comprised the board of trustees' relationship with the public. To garner support for change, trustees need to purposively define their public, develop a common vernacular for public engagement, and specifically define benchmarks for the definition of public engagement. Furthermore, trustees need to focus on governance representing the broadest and most inclusive cross-sections of the population. Based upon the analysis of findings from this research, seven strategies are identified to execute change. Executing change can be instituted by:

- establishing a reciprocal relationship with their communities;

- occasionally conducting a survey of community needs, concerns, and interests;
- routinely establishing occasions for listening to the community;
- identifying, naming, and framing issues with the community and, in the interest of the community, develop possible solution options;
- deliberating with the public;
- evaluating the effectiveness of their collaborative decision making efforts; and
- encouraging the public to actively and vociferously participate in the civic life of the community and college.

Administrative and Organizational Structures

A public engagement conceptual framework for public community college trusteeship has not been linked to establishing policy and decision making. Community college trustee governance and public engagement paradigms in the community's interest have not been framed to successfully achieve this goal. The analysis of findings from this study revealed that trustees have not been facilitating authentic engagement or public participation in decision making and academic policy development processes. Furthermore, the analysis of the findings from this study suggested that change is necessary in administrative and organizations structures to support and sustain a public engagement agenda. Such change should include the examination of the administrative and organizational structures by:

- identifying and implementing timely, appropriate and systemic institutional interventions to transform the public engagement practices of trustees and enhance their legitimacy with the public they serve;
- allocating adequate institutional resources (i.e., staff and budget) for engaging with the public;
- reframing administrative structures, systems and processes to identify the evidence of and assess opportunities for enabling democratic institutional practices, democratic governance, deliberative public engagement, and authentic public participation;
- actively pursuing civic education opportunities to educate and re-educate the public and community about their role in restoring and sustaining the civic life, which includes education partnerships with K-12;
- empowering the Public Policy Institute, as a centralized unit and operation of the college and major advisory resource to the board of trustees, and utilizing the Institute's programs and practices to successfully achieve an effective public engagement agenda.

Leadership

In order for their respective institutions to be in the “vanguard of change,” trustees need to lead organizational change and focus more on the attitudes of citizens and “people in the community” (Gleazer, 1994, p. 22). Based on the analysis of the findings from this research, trustees will need to assure that

appropriate structures are in place and support such structures. Together, the CEO and trustees should be purposeful about pursuing opportunities for public participation and public deliberation, especially at the monthly board meetings. Enhancing and maintaining public legitimacy will require trustees to (a) move beyond their governance practices and (b) cultivate a governance culture with processes and practices that include democratic public engagement and authentic public participation in decision making. Specific recommendations for change in trustee leadership practices include:

- Cultivate a relationship with and become knowledgeable about their Institute.
- Attend Public Policy Institute-sponsored seminars on convening and moderating deliberative forums.
- Integrate a public engagement pedagogy in trustee professional development initiatives and trustee orientation.
- Create opportunities for the CEO and trustees to experience and practice more democratic public engagement in conducting public board meetings and board business.
- Require new trustees to participate in a deliberative forum to better understand its structure, purpose, and possibilities in democratic governance.
- Require public engagement to be included in trustee development as an expression of institutional commitment to democratic public engagement in trustee governance practices.

Policy

Ideally, the board of trustees' policies on decision-making should follow a course of action, which results in public policy and administrative decisions that facilitate a choice in policy direction strategy. Inherent in a choice in policy direction strategy is facilitating engagement and public participation, whereby the benefits, consequences, and tradeoffs are considered and weighed among possible policy options. The analysis of findings from this research suggested that this approach to decision making will require trustees to purposefully allocate sufficient time and resources for systemic policy analysis. To implement change in the policy area, the CEO and board of trustees should consider the following nine strategies:

- Affirm the need for board orientation and development initiatives to include the history and role of community in the community college mission.
- Provide comprehensive and topic-specific board education and development on governing contemporary community colleges, especially in the area of engaging the community.
- Deliberate about connecting, interacting, and engaging with a broader and a more inclusive cross-section of the community in order to legitimately pursue the public's agenda.

- Annually and periodically conduct board self-assessments to determine how effectively they are pursuing the public's agenda, engaging with and meeting the community's needs.
- Establish a policy assessment criterion to review board policy, and determine and affirm its relevance to the college and the board's external environments.
- Establish a policy for self-assessment that includes evidence of public participation processes based upon institutional collaboration with the public to identify, define, and solve public problems.
- The president and the board must work collaboratively to define public engagement as a key success factor in their role and responsibilities, and must demonstrate visible leadership to create systemic organizational buy-in within their respective institution.
- Require professional affinity groups and organizations that represent the interests of community colleges and trustee to promote an agenda that recognizes the need to establish public engagement as an organizational and membership professional development priority.

Implications for Future Research

The researcher made six recommendations for further research based on the scope of and findings from this study. First, trustees cannot continue to operate on *a priori* assumptions about the absence of the public and the lack of public participation. These untested assumptions only serve to exacerbate the barriers to public engagement and public participation. Therefore, the researcher

recommends that future research be conducted to examine the perceptions of the public regarding their role in trustee governance, as well as conduct research to more closely examine the barriers to public engagement. The insight of the public has been a marginalized and muted voice; yet, the public's voice is critical in helping to determine how to make public engagement and public participation more effective.

Second, because this study focused on the trustees at community colleges within the National Issues Forums Network, generalizability was limited. Future research is recommended to replicate and enlarge this study to include trustees at the other higher education institutions within the larger National Issues Forum Network.

Third, this study focused singularly on the public engagement perceptions of trustees as leaders. Trustees are not a monolithic community; however, their practices, processes, and governance paradigms might suggest quite the contrary. A significant finding of this study was that trustees have their own vernacular for public engagement; however, trustees have no common nomenclature for the public, constituents, stakeholders, community or the term "public engagement." In order to advance a transformative leadership and democratic governance paradigm, trustees must work in tandem with the CEO. Therefore, it is recommended that future research be conducted to include an examination and comparison of the board of trustees' and CEOs' perceptions of public engagement.

Fourth, the CEO and trustees rely on institutional expertise to help shape their public engagement agenda. It is recommended that research be conducted to investigate and examine the public engagement perceptions of public relations professionals and legislative affairs professionals, as well as their impact on the public engagement culture of the college. This might add value in addressing administrative and organizational structures to achieve an institutional democratic, deliberative public engagement agenda.

Fifth, a quantitative study examining trustee public engagement practices should be conducted to gain a more universal perspective. The findings of such a study would be more generalizable to the larger governance community and provide insight for advancing opportunities to make public engagement more effective.

Finally, the researcher would like to see this study's Democratic Governance Model tested and expanded. This might provide a practical and experiential perspective on democratic governance in the real rather than an ideal.

This study examined and described the public engagement practices of public community college trustees (i.e., what it is, what it is not, and what it should be). As a form of representative governance, the democratic and civic roles and responsibilities of trustees in representing the community's interests was emphasized. I believe the findings of this study suggest that the civic assignment of trusteeship can only be successfully performed by engaging with, empowering and including the voices of citizens in trustee deliberations and

decision-making. Likewise, citizens can only share their voices when they embrace and reclaim their civic duty of responsible citizenship within a democracy. Therefore reciprocal and meaningful civic acting is required by both trustees and citizens. I have learned philosophically “The only constant is change, continuing change, inevitable change that is the dominant factor in society today. No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be” (Isaac Asimov, nd). In collaboration with the citizens whose interests and needs they represent, an enduring challenge of the American community college is maintaining its democratic mission by ensuring democratic trustee governance to make decisions about the world as it will be, not as it is.

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APPENDIX A

PROJECT SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to examine the public engagement practices of community college trustees and the factors that contribute to trustee engagement practices. For the purposes of this study, engagement is referred to as long-term, two-way discourse interactions between the board of trustees and community to identify, define, and solve public problems.

A case study research design will be employed. There are five community colleges sites in the study; one college is located in the state of Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Oregon, and Maryland. These community colleges are members of the National Issues Forum Institute Network. This Network includes an array of civic, educational and professional groups, organizations, and individuals that promote nonpartisan public deliberation in communities across the country. The Network consists of 38 organizations and many are associated with four year universities and colleges. There are only five community college participants in the Network. Collectively these five community colleges have established a Public Policy Institute and implemented engagement practices that could provide insight on the role institutional trustee leadership plays in supporting, facilitating, and sustaining engagement for public deliberation with the community.

A two step data collection procedure will be used—interviews and institutional document review. Forty-five (45) participants (i.e., board of trustee members and the director of the Public Policy Institute at the Network community college) will be asked to respond to a survey. An interview will be conducted with fifteen (15) participants (i.e., ten trustees and five directors from the Public Policy Institute at the Network community colleges) who will be asked to participate in one standardized, semi-structured, open-ended interview. The interviewees will be asked 14 questions. Institutional documents will be reviewed and analyzed for content and themes associated with the some of the functional areas for determining commitment to public engagement. An analytic cross-case analysis of patterns across the cases will be conducted.

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Community College Trustees and Public Engagement: A Case Study of National Issues
Forums Institute Network Community Colleges
2006-2007

Michelle T. Scott
Doctoral Student
Community College Leadership
Doctoral Program
Morgan State University
Baltimore, Maryland 21251
(301) 977-2981

Dr. Christine Johnson McPhail
Committee Chair
Community College Leadership
Doctoral Program
Morgan State University
Baltimore, Maryland 21251
(443) 885-1983

(Purpose) I am a doctoral student conducting research for my dissertation. My dissertation research design requires that I conduct interviews with community college trustees. I have designed a research study to examine the public engagement practices of community college trustees and the factors that contribute to trustee engagement practices.

(Description) During the study, you will be asked to respond to 16 questions designed for the Trustee Public Engagement Interview Protocol. These questions are to allow the researcher to gather information from you about your perceptions of trustee public engagement and public participation practices and processes.

(Potential Harm) There are no known threats associated with your participation in this research.

(Confidentiality) All records of participation will be kept strictly confidential, only my supervisor and I will have access to the information. The results from this study will be reported in my dissertation. Information about the project will not be made public in any way that identifies individual participants.

(Participation) Participation is completely voluntary. As such your participation may be discontinued at any time for any reason without explanation and without penalty.

(Consent) I have read the above form, understand the information read, understand that I can ask questions or withdraw at any time. I consent to participate in today's study.

Participant's signature

Date

Investigator's signature

Date

APPENDIX C

LETTER FOR NIFI NETWORK COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

Date

>Title<, >First Name<, >Last Name<

>College<

>Address<

>City<,> State<, >Zip code<

>Dear>Trustee/Title>Last Name<

Your community college is one of the five U.S. community colleges in the National Issues Forum Institute Network. The Network includes an array of civic, educational and professional groups, organizations, and individuals that promote nonpartisan public deliberation in communities across the country. This national network consists of 38 organizations, of which many are associated with four year universities and colleges.

As stewards of the public trust, community college trustees have a critical responsibility for connecting their college to the community and the community to their college. This responsibility can be especially critical in the trustees' decision making and policy development processes and practices. However to be more effective stewards of the public trust, there is limited information that trustees can rely on which examines trustees' processes and practices for engaging with the community. As a trustee at <College>, your public engagement perceptions and practices are important to research on community college trustees.

As a doctoral student in the School of Education and Urban Studies Community College Leadership Doctoral Program at Morgan State University, I am conducting research on the public engagement practices of public community college trustees. This research will be guided by and conducted under the supervision of Dr. Christine Johnson McPhail, professor and director of the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program at Morgan State University. The purpose of this study is to provide community college trustees and other community college leaders with information about the public engagement processes and practices of trustees.

I am requesting your assistance with my research by participating in a one hour interview. There are no anticipated risks, compensation, or other direct personal benefits to you as a participant in this study. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, all questionnaires will be destroyed. The questionnaires will be kept locked in my desk. Your name will not be used in any report.

I encourage and appreciate your willingness to participate in this important community college trustee study. As a participant in the study, I am requesting that you sign and return the attached Research Consent Form, which describes the purpose of the study and your role and rights as a participant. If you have any questions about my research or the interview questionnaire, please contact me at (301) 977-2981, or you may contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Christine Johnson McPhail at (443) 885-1983. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant may be directed to the Graduate School of Education, Morgan State University, 1700 East Cold Spring Lane, Baltimore MD 21251, (443) 885-3185 or the Office of Sponsored Programs (443 885-3447).

Sincerely,

Michelle T. Scott
Doctoral Student
Morgan State University
Community College Leadership Doctoral Program

APPENDIX D

LETTER FOR NIFI NETWORK COMMUNITY COLLEGE PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE DIRECTOR

Date

>Title<, >First Name<, >Last Name<.

>College<

>Address<

>City<,> State<,>Zip code<

>Dear>PPI Director/Title>Last Name<

As a doctoral student in the School of Education and Urban Studies Community College Leadership Doctoral Program at Morgan State University, I am conducting research on the public engagement practices of public community college trustees. This research will be guided by and conducted under the supervision of Dr. Christine Johnson McPhail, professor and director of the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program at Morgan State University. The purpose of this study is to provide community college trustees and other community college leaders with information about the processes and practices trustees are using to engage with the community.

The focus of my research is the public engagement practices of community college trustees within the National Issues Forum Institute Network institutions. Because of your affiliation with and leadership at a Public Policy Institute located at one of the five U.S. community colleges in the National Issues Forum Institute Network, I am requesting your assistance with and participation in my dissertation research. Facilitating contact with your board of trustee members and encouraging their participation in the study is the specific assistance that I am requesting from you. The specific participation that I am requesting of you is to share with me your perceptions about public engagement during a one hour interview. There are no anticipated risks, compensation, or other direct personal benefits to you as a participant in this study. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. And when the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, all questionnaires will be appropriately disposed. The interview questionnaire will be kept locked in my desk. Your name and the name of your community college will not be used in any report.

Your participation is invaluable to my study. It is my belief that your experience and perspectives, as an expert in the public engagement arena, is unique to the Network's array of civic, educational and professional groups, organizations, and individuals that promote nonpartisan public deliberation in communities across the country. This belief is especially true since the national network consists of 38 organizations, of which many are associated with four-year universities and colleges, however there are only five

community college participants. Collectively these five community colleges have implemented engagement practices that could provide insight on the role institutional trustee leadership plays in supporting, facilitating, and sustaining engagement for public deliberation with its community.

As stewards of the public trust, community college trustees have a critical responsibility for connecting their college to the community and the community to their college. This responsibility can be especially critical in the trustees' decision making and policy development processes and practices. However to be more effective stewards of the public trust, there is limited information that trustees can rely on which examines trustees' processes and practices for engaging with the community. You and your trustees' public engagement perceptions and practices are important to research on community college trustees.

I am hopeful that I count on your assistance and participation in the study, and I hope that you will encourage trustees to participate in this important community college trustee study. As a participant in the study, I am requesting that you sign and return the attached Research Consent Form, which describes the purpose of the study and your role and rights as a participant. If you have any questions about my research or the interview questionnaire, please contact me at (301) 977-2981, or you may contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Christine Johnson McPhail at (443) 885-1983. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant may be directed to the Graduate School of Education, Morgan State University, 1700 East Cold Spring Lane, Baltimore MD 21251, (443) 885-3185 or the Office of Sponsored Programs (443 885-3447).

Sincerely,

Michelle T. Scott
Doctoral Student
Morgan State University
Community College Leadership Doctoral Program

APPENDIX E
DEBRIEFING LETTER

>Date<

>Title>First Name<>Last Name<Board Chair, Board Member, NIFI Center Director
College

>Address<

>City<, >State<>Zip Code<

>Dear>Title<>Last Name<:

As an individual participating in higher education research, it is a common practice to send the interview transcript to you (the interviewee) for review. A critical purpose of the transcript review is to provide you with an opportunity to clarify or add comments. As such, I have enclosed a transcribed copy of your interview with me that was conducted on XXXX, 2006. I have also forwarded an electronic version of the transcript to you via email. Reviewing the transcript is entirely optional. If you would like to make changes or comments to the transcript, you may write directly on the enclosed document or you may make comments on the electronic version of the document in the section titled “Comments”.

For your convenience, I have enclosed a self- addressed postage paid envelope to return the document. Also, I am requesting that you sign and date the comment section on the transcript.

Again, I thank you for agreeing to assist me with my research by participating in this study. Should you need to contact me regarding the transcript or the research, I can be reached at (301) 977-2981 or you can email me via email at michellet.scott@montgomerycollege.edu. I look forward to your comments.

Sincerely,

Michelle T. Scott
Doctoral Student
Morgan State University
Community College Leadership Doctoral Program

APPENDIX F

CASE STUDY STANDARDIZED OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What it is like to be a trustee, and describe the work of a trustee?
2. How do you define public engagement?
3. As a trustee, please describe your public engagement experiences, successes, and challenges.
4. Please identify and describe a significant occasion that exemplifies the board of trustees' commitment to engagement with the public.
5. Please identify and describe a significant occasion that exemplifies the board's/institution's lack of commitment to engagement with the public.
6. How do you (i.e., trustee/Center director) learn about the interests, concerns, and needs of the community?
7. In what ways do you think the community interacts with the board of trustees to discuss issues and concerns?
8. What do you believe is the role of trustees in public engagement?
9. What do you believe is the role of the public in public engagement?
10. How do you (i.e., trustee/Center director) determine when it is necessary to engage with the public?
11. How do you (i.e., trustee/Center director) determine the public engagement process that is used to learn about the interests, concerns, and needs of the community? Who is involved in determining the public engagement process that trustees use to learn about the interests, concerns and needs of the community?
12. What process do you use to ensure public participation in public engagement?
13. What process does the Board of Trustees use to ensure public participation in public engagement?
14. What do you (i.e., trustee/Center director) feel are barriers to public engagement at your college?
15. What do you think are barriers to public participation? What do you think would make public participation effective?
16. What do you (i.e., trustee/Center director) think would make public engagement more effective?
17. What relationship does the board of trustees have with the public policy institute?

APPENDIX G

CASE DATA COLLECTION DISPLAY

Unit of Analysis Who is being study and where?	Central Research Question What do I want to know?	Researcher's Line of Inquiry What kind of questions will informants be asked?	Key Indicators How will I know?	Data Collection Methods and Data Sources What methods will I use to collect culture of evidence?
<p>Where are the case study participants sites? The National Issue Forums Institute Community College Sites referred to as: CC₁ CC₂ CC₃ CC₄ CC₅</p> <p>Who are the Principle Informants? Trustees at National Issue Forums Institute Community College Sites referred to as: T₁ T₂ T₃ T₄ T₅ T₆ T₇ T₈ T₉ T₁₀</p> <p>National Issue Forums Institute Community College Sites Public Policy Institute Representative referred to as: R₁ R₂ R₃ R₄ R₅</p>	<p>What is the process by which community college trustees engage with the public?</p> <p>What factors contribute to trustee public engagement practices?</p>	<p>How trustees and PPI representatives perceive and describe the work of a trustee</p> <p>How trustees and PPI representatives define public engagement?</p> <p>Trustees perceptions of their public engagement experiences, successes, and challenges.</p> <p>A significant occasion that exemplified and did not exemplify the board of trustees' commitment to engaging with the public.</p> <p>The process trustees and PPI representative use to learn about the interests, concerns, and needs of the community</p> <p>The ways that the community interacts with the board of trustees to discuss issues and concerns</p> <p>The role of trustees in public engagement</p> <p>The role of the public in public engagement</p> <p>How do trustees and PPI representative determine when it is necessary to engage with the public?</p> <p>How the public engagement process is determined to learn about the interests,</p>	<p>Mission of Engagement Historical Engagement Practices Current Engagement Practices Definition of Public Engagement Description of engagement practices Public Engagement Process Purpose for Public Engagement Place/Site of Public Engagement Frequency of Public Engagement Administrative Processes Internal and External Resources Characterization of community and community connections Description of community Role of the PPI Role of Trustees Role of Administrators Role of Community/Public Characterization of benefits of public engagement Characterization of challenges of public engagement Characterization of barriers to public engagement</p>	<p>Individual Interviews with Trustees and PPI Representative</p> <p>Site visits</p> <p>Conference calls with PPI Representatives</p> <p>Document Review and Analysis (i.e., mission and vision statements, trustee bios, board of trustee agendas, board meeting minutes, strategic plan, board orientation packets, and governance policies; annual reports and Publications</p> <p>Web-based screening</p>

Unit of Analysis Who is being study and where?	Central Research Question What do I want to know?	Researcher's Line of Inquiry What kind of questions will informants be asked?	Key Indicators How will I know?	Data Collection Methods and Data Sources What methods will I use to collect culture of evidence?
		<p>concerns, and needs of the community? and Who is involved in determining that public engagement process?</p> <p>What process is used to ensure public participation in public engagement?</p> <p>What are barriers to public engagement?</p> <p>What are barriers to public participation?</p> <p>What would make public participation effective?</p> <p>What would make public engagement more effective?</p> <p>What relationship does the board of trustees have with the public policy institute?</p>		

APPENDIX H

CASE STUDY INSTITUTIONAL PROFILES

CC₁ Institutional Profile

An urban community college, CC₁ is geographically located in one of the largest higher education systems in the world. Established over 40 years ago, the college is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association. With two comprehensive campuses, the college's student enrollment is approximately 28,000, and there is a substantial student enrollment for distance learning (CC₁, 2006). As documented on the college Web page, CC₁ espoused a learning-centered environment.

The mission and vision statement was reviewed, and some excerpts follow:

- Vision:** A leader among community colleges, providing an innovative and intellectual learning-centered environment that is responsive, adaptable, and inclusive.
- Mission:** The mission is to promote excellence in teaching and learning, preparing individuals for active citizenship in a diverse global society. The college is a community resource for transfer education, career preparation, developmental education, economic development, and continuous learning. Our ultimate purpose is to improve the quality of life in the community we serve.

There were five core values identified that support the mission and vision statement—learning, excellence, inclusiveness, and community, which included a statement of philosophy. Excerpts from the core values and core values philosophy statement follow:

Our values are the principles, standards, and ideals that form the foundation for our actions. They are the things to which we, as a community of educators, ascribe worth – the things we treasure. Our values reveal what we strive for and give us our identity as a college.

Core values philosophy:

1. Learning: . . . values learning and scholarship for our students, our employees, and the community. We value personal growth and provide access to diverse learning experiences in a supportive environment. We seek to continuously learn as an organization and to be responsive to our changing environment.
2. Excellence: . . . strives for excellence in all we do. We are committed to upholding high academic standards, to providing a quality educational environment, and to maintaining quality in all aspects of our work. We continuously seek avenues for improvement.
3. Inclusiveness: . . . values inclusiveness of people and ideas. We respect the dignity of each individual, expressed through fairness and just treatment for all. We value individual diversity and recognize the unique contributions of all individuals. We promote open communication and the free exchange of thoughts and ideas.
4. Community: . . . values a sense of community – both the community we serve and the community we create within. As students, faculty and staff, we have a civic responsibility to our community that is expressed through community involvement and volunteerism. We actively pursue collaborative partnerships with the community. We value our college community and encourage the engagement of all through participation, collaboration, and communication.

CC₁ Governance Body

The board at CC₁ is referred to as a “governing board.” Pursuant to the state’s revised statutes, this body is comprised of five elected members who are elected from the geographical districts that make up all of the counties in the state. The governing board members serve a staggered six-year term. The board mission and vision statement was posted, and excerpts follow:

Vision: A Community of Colleges . . . Colleges for the Community. . . working collectively and responsibly to meet the life-long learning needs of our diverse students and communities.

Mission: The Community Colleges provide access to higher education for diverse students and communities. We focus on learning through:

- University Transfer Education
- General Education
- Developmental Education
- Workforce Development
- Student Development Services
- Continuing Education
- Community Education
- Civic Responsibility
- Global Engagement

Values: The Community Colleges are committed to:

Community: We value all people—our students, our employees, their families, and the communities in which they live and work. We value our global community of which we are an integral part.

Excellence: We value excellence and encourage our internal and external communities to strive for their academic, professional and personal best.

Honesty and Integrity: We value academic and personal honesty and integrity and believe these elements are essential in our learning environment. We strive to treat each other with respect, civility and fairness.

Inclusiveness: We value inclusiveness and respect for one another. We believe that teamwork is critical, that each team member is important and we depend on each other to accomplish our mission.

Innovation: We value and embrace an innovative and risk-taking approach so that we remain at the forefront of global educational excellence.

Learning: We value lifelong learning opportunities that respond to the needs of our communities and are accessible, affordable, and of the highest quality. We encourage dialogue and the freedom to have an open exchange of ideas for the common good.

Responsibility: We value responsibility and believe that we are each accountable for our personal and professional actions. We are responsible for making our learning experiences significant and meaningful.

Stewardship: We value stewardship and honor the trust placed in us by the community. We are accountable to our communities for the efficient and effective use of resources as we prepare our students for their role as productive world citizens.

“To represent the residents of the County in determining and demanding appropriate organizational performance,” was posted as the board’s job.

Furthermore, the board operations and bylaws document indicated that the board would “concentrate its efforts,” and the document further enumerated the board job, as follows:

1. The link between CC₁ County Community College District and the citizens of the County.

A. Board Members will be responsive to the concerns of the ownership, the citizens of the County.

B. Board Members will keep in touch with relevant current and future issues.

2. Written governing policies that, at the broadest levels, address:

A. Outcomes: Organizational products, impacts, benefits, outcomes, recipients, and their relative worth (what good for which needs at what cost or priority).

B. Governance Process: Specification of how the Board conceives, carries out and monitors its own task.

C. Executive Duties and Responsibilities: Constraints on executive authority that establish the prudent and ethical boundaries within which all executive activity and decisions must take place.

D. Board-Staff Relationship: How power is delegated and its proper use monitored; the Chancellor role, authority and accountability.

E. General: Areas of administrative operation where the Board has elected to continue to maintain ultimate authority.

F. Board Auxiliary: Supplementary language that is related to the Board's governing of discretionary rights.

3. The assurance of Chancellor's performance (against policies in 2A and 2B).

4. Legislative impact.

The board had a Web page which provided information about and access to the board's action items, strategic conversations, motions, legal notices, policies, goals and measures, values and ethics initiative, operating strategy, strategic vision, and guiding principles. The governing board's Web page articulated its commitment to a Policy Governance model, and it explained the board functions within yearly goals and measures established for their respective colleges. A host of other information was posted on that site, which included:

- College Vision Statement
- Board Vision Statement
- Board Mission Statement
- Board Biography w/Photo
- Board Roles and Responsibilities
- Board Bylaws
- Board Meeting Date, Time, and Location
- Current Board Meeting Agenda
- Archived Board Agendas and Public Meeting Minutes
- Process for Public to Address Board

- Process for the Public to Obtain Meeting Agenda
- Board Office Contact and Telephone Number Identified
- Contact Information for Individual Board Members

The “regular” public board meetings are held twice per month—during the week in the evenings. Posted on the board Web page are notices of the date, time, and location of the “regular” meetings for the academic year. There was no specific message from the board to the public encouraging attendance at the “regular” public meetings.

There was a section of the board agenda that identified the public comment period, at the “regular” business meeting, that was termed “Citizen’s Interim” and “Action Item.” The instruction to the public about the public participation process indicated, prior to the start of a “regular” meeting, a “Citizen’s Interim” or “Action Item” speaking request form must be completed and handed to the governing board assistant. The speaking request form instructed that the general subject to be discussed and the name of the group being represented must be identified. The “Citizen’s Interim” section of the regular board meeting limits individuals speaking to the board to five minutes or a time that is determined by the board President. There is also a limitation on the number of individuals who may speak to the board on any one topic; and the alternative option offered to the public was to submit and express individual or group concerns in writing. Within the past 30 months, there was one occasion documented in the board minutes of public comment during this designated section of the “regular” board meetings.

District board policies for the colleges are established within two distinct areas—*governance policies* and *administrative regulations*. The board establishes and adopts governance policies in several areas—outcomes, executive duties and responsibilities, governance process, board-staff relationship, and the vision, mission, and values of the College district. The board also established administrative regulations, in areas such areas as fiscal management, students, academic matters, auxiliary services, equal employment opportunity and affirmative action, as well as various guidelines and procedures. The Chancellor then adopts administrative regulations for managing the district colleges.

Additionally, review of other institutional documents revealed that the CC₁ governance board alternatively held “strategic conversations,” which were designed to “work with the public” and “to complete the circle between the internal and external communities; that is, the staff and its constituencies” for “planned give-and-take discussions” about problems or grievances (CC₁, 2007). The objective the strategic conversations are to help “connect in a positive way with the public it serves, leading to a better understanding of issues, a higher degree of support for decisions, and a stronger commitment to the organization by both the staff and constituencies” (CC₁ board Web page, 2007). The CC₁ board of governance strategic conversation philosophy is, “The time spent preparing Strategic Conversations is one of the best investments an organization can make to develop a new understanding of complex issues among its staff and public.”

CC₁ Public Policy Institute

In 1992, CC₁ established a Center for Public Policy (CPP) and Service to coordinate service-learning opportunities for students, which has as its fundamental role seeking to enrich public life and public discourse on the CC₁ campuses and in their communities. In 2000, the Office of Service Learning was established as an Instructional Department. As a result, the focus and work of CPP was restructured to include community and governmental relations for the college and to assist the college in building new community partnerships.

CC₂ Institutional Profile

A suburban community college, CC₂ was established in 1967. With a current enrollment of more than 30,000 students, CC₂ is one of the largest single-campus community colleges within the Midwestern states. The CC₂ catalog indicated its accreditation model is the “Academic Quality Improvement Program,” which is a “quality-based, continuous improvement model of accreditation” (CC₂ College Catalog, 2007, p. 9). The Higher Learning Commission, a Commission affiliated with the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, accredited the college.

The institutional philosophy is “to facilitate and support student success in learning” (CC₂ College Catalog, 2007, p. 11). An excerpt from the CC₂ mission follows:

Mission: To be at the forefront of higher education, serving the needs of the community. The college will be the first place residents turn to for the highest quality educational and cultural

opportunities. The college will serve as a model of distinction for community college education.

CC₂ identified five institutional core values—excellence, diversity, removing barriers to educational opportunity, promoting participation in planning, and service to students and community. Excerpts of these core values follow:

1. Excellence: We seek quality in all that we do and believe that the people we serve also must perceive value in our programs and services. To ensure quality, we are committed to continual assessment and self-evaluation.
2. Diversity: We seek to reflect and meet the educational needs of the residents of our large, multicultural district. We recognize the importance of embracing individual differences and cultures and value the contributions made to the college by people of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We affirm our role as a catalyst for promoting dialogue and tolerance on issues supporting the common good.
3. Remove barriers to educational opportunity: We place a high priority on providing accessible, affordable courses and services.
4. Promote full participation in planning and decision making: We support participatory governance and the involvement of the college community in the development of a shared vision. We believe that all students, staff and residents can make meaningful contributions within a respectful, equitable and responsive environment. We strive to build an organizational climate in which freedom of expression is defended and civility is affirmed.
5. Service to students and community: The needs of our students and community are central to all we do.

CC₂ Governance Body

The governance body of CC₂ is referred to as a “board of trustees.” The board is comprised of six elected members from the counties within the district of the State. The board members serve a staggered six-year term.

The board had a Web page, which provided a variety of information, including:

- College Mission Statement
- College Values Statement
- Board Photo Only
- Board Roles and Responsibilities
- Board Bylaws
- Board Meeting Date, Time, And Location
- Current Board Meeting Agenda
- Archived Board Agendas & Public Meeting Minutes
- Process for the Public to Obtain Meeting Agenda
- Board Office Contact and Telephone Number Identified
- Board Message Encouraging Public to Attend Meetings

The board’s role and responsibilities were posted on the Web page. While there was no specific mention of the community or engagement with the public as a board role and responsibility, the Web page indicated that the board of trustees will:

- A. Appoint the President who will be the chief administrative officer of the College and the executive officer in dealing with the Board.

- B. Delegate to the President all administrative duties and responsibilities for the development, implementation and modification of procedures to carry out the Board's policies, rules and actions.
- C. Annually evaluate the President's overall and specific performance.
- D. Exercise, as an exclusive right, approval authority over all duties and powers authorized by the Illinois Public Community College Act.
- E. Judiciously review matters as recommended by the President and cause appropriate action to be taken.
- F. Ensure ongoing long-range planning.
- G. Review periodically the organizational structure and the operation of major components of the College.
- H. Exercise, as an exclusive right, requisite and proper authority for the efficient and effective development, operation and maintenance of the College.
- I. Annually review and evaluate Board progress toward accomplishment of the College mission and goals.
- J. Formulate and revise policy as necessary.
- K. Annually review the financial management of the College and cause an audit to be made.
- L. Ensure the quality of education provided by the College.

The CC₂ public board meetings are held twice per month, in the evenings; and notice of the date, time, and location of only the current month's meeting was posted. There was a message encouraging the public's attendance at the public board meetings that stated, "The public is invited to attend these meetings. Two complete board packets are available for review at. . ." (CC₂, 2007, <http://www.cod.edu/adminstr/board.htm>).

The section of the board agenda that identified the public comment period was termed “Ownership Linkage–General Items,” which was categorized in two ways—“Comments from College Constituency Groups” and “Comments from the Public.” The public participation process and procedure for addressing the board at the public meetings was not accessible or posted on the college or board Web pages. The researcher had to obtain this information by contacting the board office. During a telephone conversation with the board office secretary, the process was explained. This information is articulated in the board bylaws, which indicated, “To encourage participation from [my] District’s citizens and College constituent groups, the Board will provide an opportunity for citizen and constituent input at all regular and special Board meetings and committee meetings of the Board, consistent with the current law.” Any resident of the District or member of a College constituent group interested in addressing the board or place a specific topic on the regular board meeting agenda is required to make a request in writing to the Board Secretary at least ten days prior to the meeting date. The Board Chairperson and College President determine the approval of the request. The time allocated for the public to comment on a particular topic may be limited to allow “a reasonable number of speakers” to comment. The total time designated for citizen participation is based upon the Board’s agenda at that meeting. During the past 30 months there were no occasion documented in the minutes of comments during the “Ownership Linkage,” “Comments from College Constituency Groups,” or “Comments from the Public” sections of the regular meeting agenda.

CC₂ Public Policy Institute

The CC₂ Public Policy Institute (PPI) brochure indicated that the Institute is one of about 40 in the United States. It engages students and other community members in deliberative democracy workshops, forums and other activities based on a National Issues Forums (NIF) approach to discussing critical community and national issues.

The PPI is in agreement with the core National Issues Forums' belief that for democracy to fulfill its promise, citizens must take responsibility and work together toward the implementation of democratic ideals. In order for this to happen, individuals must be willing to share ideas openly and freely with each other. NIF provides opportunities for citizens to deliberate rather than debate on specific issues. Led by trained moderators, the forums take a nonpartisan approach toward the discussion of core concerns, drawbacks, trade-offs and the societal effects of public issues. During these deliberative forums, individuals also look for a shared sense of direction or "common ground" for taking action on important issues they care about deeply.

Over the past 14 years, the college has developed and maintained partnerships with a wide range of organizations that serve primarily as "co-conveners." Past partnership opportunities have included the local University's Extension Services, Rotary groups, sororities, K-12 school districts, churches, other Institutes at the college, area libraries, African-American Roundtable discussions and various community youth groups.

CC₃ Institutional Profile

A suburban community college, CC₃ was established in 1957. The current student enrollment is approximately 31,000. The CC₃ Web page stated that it is “committed to providing a first-class education” (CC₃ College Catalog, 2007, p.

8). Excerpts from the mission and vision statements follow:

Vision: Building a better future . . . one life at a time.

Mission: Providing high quality, affordable educational, training, and enrichment programs. The college serves primarily the residents of [surrounding] counties.

The staff takes a positive leadership and partnership role to meet the changing needs of a diverse population of learners, working with local, state, and national entities to identify, prioritize, and address needs. Programs and services support the intellectual, educational, economic, environmental, and cultural development of our region. High standards foster a climate of excellence, and an open-door admissions policy provides access and opportunity to all. The staff also works to create a supportive, personalized environment for maximum student achievement.

The institutional values are achieved through “five critical pursuits: (1) facilitating the learning of competencies that lead to associate degrees, (2) facilitating skill development for job entry and retraining, (3) facilitating development of basic skills, (4) nurturing democratic principles and practices, and (5) promoting personal, social, academic, cultural, and economic development” (CC₃ College Catalog, 2007, p. 8).

CC₃ Governance Body

The governance body of CC₃ is referred to as a “board of trustees.” Comprised of ten appointed members, the board members serve a four-year

term. There was a board Web page. There was no information provided on this Web page about board policy and procedures, board roles and responsibilities, board mission and vision, or information about or notice of the regular meetings, nor the date, time, and location of the upcoming meeting. The process and procedure for the public to address the governing board at the regular business meeting was not posted. There was also no information that identified a contact person for the board office. Furthermore, there was no information on the current agenda or information concerning the manner in which the public could obtain an agenda of a meeting or address the board. The board Web page provided the following information:

- Board Biography w/Photo
- *Current Board Meeting Date, Time, And Location*
- *Current Board Meeting Agenda*
- Archived Public Meeting Minutes Only.

The CC₃ board meetings are held once a month, in the morning. The section of the board agenda that identified the public comment period was termed "Hearing of Citizens." There was no specific message encouraging the public's attendance. A review of board minutes covering a period of at least the past 30 months revealed, "No citizen answered the call to appear before the board."

CC₃ Public Policy Institute

The CC₃ Public Policy Institute Web page indicated that over the past 14 years, the Institute has developed and maintained partnerships with a wide range of organizations that serve primarily as “co-conveners.” Past partnership opportunities have included local universities, business and civic associations, sororities, school districts, churches, area libraries, cultural roundtable discussions, and various community youth groups.

CC₄ Institutional Profile

An urban community college, CC₄ was established in 1961. A multi-campus comprehensive college, the college has a student enrollment of over 83,000. The Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Colleges accredited this institution. Excerpts from the CC₄ mission statement follow:

- Vision: Building futures for our Students and Communities.
- Mission: CC₄ provides education in an atmosphere that encourages the full realization of each individual's potential. The College offers students of all ages, races, cultures, economic levels, and previous educational experience opportunities for personal growth and attainment of their goals. Provide quality educational programs and services that are affordable and accessible.

The college mission and vision are supported by six core values—(a) the dignity and worth of each individual, (b) effective teaching, (c) open and honest communication, (d) teamwork and cooperation, (d) an environment that encourages the expression of original ideas and creative solutions, and

(e) effective and ethical use of public funds. CC₄ established six institutional goals—access, student success, diversity, continuous improvement, cultivating partnerships and community.

CC₄ Governance Body

The CC₄ governance body is referred to as the “board of directors.” The board is comprised of seven elected members from zones within their district that represent the residents of that zone. Board members serve a four-year term. There was a board Web page, which provided information; the board protocol for providing public notice about the time and location public board meetings; the manner in which the public could obtain an agenda for the current board meeting; notices of the public board meeting date, time and location the academic year; and the board role and responsibilities. A variety of other information was posted, which included:

- College Mission Statement
- College Values Statement
- Board Mission Statement
- Board Biography Only
- Board Roles and Responsibilities
- Board Operations and Bylaws
- Board Meeting Date, Time, And Location
- Current Board Meeting Agenda
- Archived Board Agendas & Public Meeting Minutes

- Process for the Public to Obtain Meeting Agenda
- Board Office Contact and Telephone Number Identified.

The stated role and responsibilities are “selecting the president, approving the hiring of other staff and faculty, approving the college budget and establishing policies that govern the operation of the college.” A board mission is posted, which indicated, “The mission of the Board is to lead in the constant definition, interpretation, articulation, implementation and evaluation of the college mission.”

The CC₄ board meets once per month, in the evening. Board documents indicated that public board meeting notices are distributed to the major newspapers published within the district and the radio and television stations located within the district. The section of the board agenda identified for the public comment period was termed “Public Comment.” There was no specific message encouraging the public’s attendance at board meetings. During at least the past 30-month period, the minutes indicated four occasions on which the public addressed the board.

CC₄ Public Policy Institute

The Public Policy Institute representative indicated that the CC₄ Institute offers training sessions to the college and surrounding community on moderating, convening and issue framing, and provides the opportunity to practice those skills. The Institute has been involved with the libraries and public school systems as well as the Cooperative Extension Systems in the State and

region, which has played a major role in supporting, planning, and conducting Public Policy Institutes.

CC₅ Institutional Profile

A suburban community college, CC₅ was established in 1946. A multi-campus comprehensive college, CC₅ is the largest community college in its state and has a student enrollment of approximately 53,000. The Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Colleges accredited the institution. The CC₅ mission statement identified three primary institutional priorities—changing lives, enriching our communities, and holding ourselves accountable.

CC₅ Governance Body

The CC₅ governance body is referred to as the “board of trustees.” The board is comprised of ten members, all of whom are appointed to staggered six-year terms. There is also a student member who is appointed to a one-year term. The board had a Web page that provided a variety of information, including public board meeting notices and the annual board meeting calendar for regular and executive session meeting dates, times and locations. The board Web page provided other information such as:

- College Mission Statement
- Board Vision Statement
- Board Mission Statement
- Board Biography w/Photo

- Board Roles and Responsibilities
- Board Bylaws
- Board Meeting Date, Time, And Location
- Current Board Meeting Agenda
- Archived Board Agendas & Public Meeting Minutes
- Process for Public to Address Board
- Board Materials Preparation Process
- Guidelines for Submitting Documents to the Board
- College Operating Budget
- Resources Links to the State Statutes on Public Governing Boards
- Links from Board Web Page to Information about Nonprofit or Public Sector Boards
- Process for the Public to Obtain Meeting Agenda
- Board Office Contact and Telephone Number Identified

The board role and responsibilities are posted on the board Web page, which indicated that the board established its role and responsibilities to be:

- a. define the role and mission of the College and establish institutional objectives;
- b. be responsible for selecting, evaluating, and, if necessary, terminating the President;
- c. monitor the instructional programs including academic policy and the evaluation of current curricular offerings and consider recommendations for the addition of new programs and termination or major modification of existing programs;

- d. ensure that comprehensive and continuous short and long-range institutional planning occurs;
- e. ensure that the College is managed in a professional and business like manner;
- f. engage in positive public relations for the College;
- g. preserve institutional independence from encroachment of that independence from whatever source it might come;
- h. evaluate periodically how well the institution is performing in relationship to the established role and mission of the College;
- i. maintain an atmosphere that encourages innovation and change;
- j. insist on being completely informed about all aspects of the College;
- k. regularly engage in Board self-evaluation;
- l. establish policies for the conduct of the activities of the College; and
- m. establish a communication policy that ensures appropriate channels of communication between the Board and the faculty, students, staff and the surrounding community.

The CC₅ board meets once per month, in the evening. There was no specific message encouraging the public's attendance at board meetings. The section of the board agenda identified as the public comment period was termed "Public Comment." Each regular business meeting of the board includes a public comments period. "Citizens, group representatives, faculty, staff, or students" are provided an opportunity to make a statement or comment "regarding an item on a past or present Board agenda, or any matter relating to the board's discharge of its educational and financial responsibilities for the college" (CC₅ Board Web page, 2007). During the "public comment" period, an individual representing an

organization is allowed five minutes, and an individual is allowed three minutes to address the board. The board permitted a total of 16 minutes for "Public Comments," and the time may be extended by "request of the Chair and agreement by two-thirds of board members" (CC₅ Board Web page, 2007). There was no specific message encouraging the public's attendance at board meetings. During the past 30-month period, the board minutes indicated one occasion on which the public addressed the board.

CC₅ Public Policy Institute

The CC₅ Public Policy Institute was founded in 2000 to enable the college to expand and enhance its community outreach mission. The formation of the Institute was a direct outgrowth of community dialogues initiated by a broad-based college and community advisory council, which was established by its President. The Institute provides training and workshops for members of the college and surrounding community on moderating and convening deliberative dialogues, local and national issues forums, and issue framing. The Institute has been one of the college's primary conveners of issues forums for the community and college.