

The Association of Community College Trustees  
1233 20th Street NW, Suite 605  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-775-4667

# 20

essential questions  
every board member must answer

specialized expertise  
building the correct  
foundation  
are you prepared

## Strong boards strengthen communities

best practices  
lead your college  
recognition  
grow your local  
economy  
making a difference  
innovative ideas  
the future of your  
college  
students  
new trustees  
responsibility

## Are you prepared to lead your college into the future?

**“The face of our population is changing. Working adults, recent immigrants and second-career seekers make up our emerging demographic landscape. To keep pace with the expanding community college-going population, we must look at the hard demographic truths about the future; a maturing labor force, increasing ethnic diversity, more newcomers seeking a better future and a stubbornly persistent digital divide.”**

SENIOR RESEARCH CONSULTANT,  
RAND CORPORATION

**“Trustees must provide stability in the midst of change. Some Trustees are not prepared to serve as policy makers, but instead want to opt for the quick fix. They need stronger grounding in how to make policy and see it get moved into action.”**

CEO, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN OHIO

As the demands on our institutions become more complex, your Board’s ability to navigate these uncertain waters will likely be tested — as never before.

Community expectations are rising. Funding models are evolving. And many colleges simply can’t keep up with the dizzying array of requests for more targeted programs to support their community’s goals and objectives. Tough, strategic decisions are placed on the board table daily. Strong leadership and effective governance in these dynamic times are crucial ingredients for success. The risk associated with making policy decisions “in isolation” has never been greater for you or your fellow Board members.



# #2

## Do you realize the responsibility you carry as a trustee?

**“Trustees must find a healthy balance of being able to support the CEO and at the same time, ask the right questions.”**

BOARD CHAIR, COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
IN ILLINOIS

**“Too many Trustees have no real understanding of what their visit to a campus can do to the staff of a college. They can do immeasurable harm without meaning to — out of ignorance.”**

EXPERIENCED ACCT MEMBER

Your Board is accountable for the college you govern. Behind every successful college stands a committed Board of trustees who collectively represent the interests of the large group who own the institution — the community. This creates the “owner-representative” nature of your Board’s work.

These responsibilities are demanding in times of relative calm. In today’s climate of diverse interests, escalating growth, and frivolous lawsuits — no Board should assume they inherently have all the answers. Instead, every responsible Board member should constantly strive to enhance their competence and limit their exposure to the unknown.



# #3

## Are your Board’s practices... best practices?

**“Being engaged in ACCT gives our Board a chance to see how we’re performing. It answers the question, are we state-of-the-art in our approach to governance?”**

TRUSTEE, COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
IN IOWA

**“ACCT addresses three issues of primary concern to Board Members. 1) Deciding how to deal with the capacity crunch colleges are facing across the nation. 2) Helping Trustees become better local advocates. 3) Equipping trustees to consider new sources of revenue and dealing with tough financial management issues during tough times.”**

PRESIDENT, LARGE COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE IN THE NORTHEAST

Trustees across the nation have refined a wide variety of strategies and techniques for dealing with delicate topics. Timely and relevant discussions take place formally and informally at ACCT’s Annual Leadership Congress around topics like:

- Presidential/Board Evaluations
- Board Meeting Agenda Development
- Mission Review Sessions
- Budget Development
- Programming Decisions

The next time a difficult issue arises, wouldn’t it be nice to have several proven solutions to consider? Why experiment at the potential expense of your community? Learn from other colleges of your size across the nation, and put their best ideas to work in your boardroom. Your Board will likely have several best practices to share, as well.





# #4

## How do you avoid making common mistakes?

**“When I go to ACCT meetings I can quickly gain insight from Trustees across the nation that helps me better serve students, our community, and the leadership at our college.”**

TRUSTEE, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN MISSISSIPPI

**“ACCT allows Board Members to develop relationships with other Board Members outside the college and state. This is most helpful as Trustees are often isolated in their colleges.”**

CEO, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN OKLAHOMA

There’s never enough time to explore all the options as a trustee (volunteering precious time). The fastest and best way to solve difficult problems is to scan the landscape for proven solutions — already in action. ACCT conferences provide a forum for trustee interaction and a time-effective opportunity to build a network of experienced trustee advisors. Are you plugged in? If not, why not?

# #5

## Where do you go for innovative ideas?

**“During a recent ACCT conference, our Board toured a San Diego community college that has a strong focus on business incubation and entrepreneurship. The visit allowed the college Trustees to visualize what seemed to be an abstract concept. Since that visit, we have developed plans to create an enterprise campus and have pursued legislation to make this development a possibility.”**

BOARD CHAIR AND ACCT MEMBER

**“In exploring ways to address the critical shortage in nurses and health care professionals, we learned at ACCT meetings about innovative approaches (like online offerings) that have helped us become far more responsive to the community.”**

TRUSTEE, SOUTH CAROLINA

**“ACCT has been instrumental in some of the changes and policies we have put in place on our campus. For instance, their focus on energy issues helped us rethink how we controlled energy costs on our campus.”**

LONG-TIME TRUSTEE FROM IOWA

ACCT scans the landscape (across 1,100+ colleges) looking for board strategies that work. Trustees discuss these emerging trends at conferences and workshops.



# #6

## Does your Leadership team attend Leadership conferences as a single decision-making unit?

**“I really like attending ACCT meetings as a Board. As we travel together and spend time together, we get to know each other on a much deeper level. Afterwards, we attend each other’s weddings, funerals, etc. and learn that while we may not always agree with one another, we can work together effectively for the college.”**

LONG-TIME TRUSTEE FROM THE MIDWEST

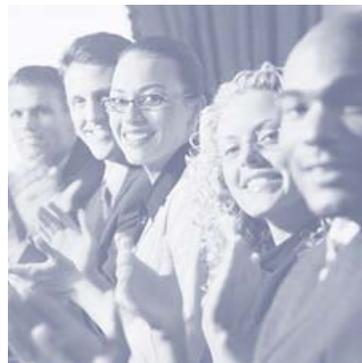
**“Many times this is an ideal environment for me to get together with my own Board — in a different setting to get to know them on a deeper level and learn how we can work more effectively together.”**

CEO, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THE NORTHEAST

**“I learn a great deal from listening to other Trustees discuss the challenges they’re facing because they are very much like the challenges our Board faces.”**

LONG-TIME TRUSTEE FROM THE SOUTH

Every year more boards (and their CEOs) adopt the practice of attending the National Legislative Summit and the Annual Leadership Congress collectively as a team. The benefits of learning together and getting to know one another on a different level are realized by leading Boards across the nation. Have you begun this process?



# #7

## Are you building the correct foundation for new trustees?

**“ACCT really helped me in the first couple of years as a Trustee. I had very little idea what I should do as a Trustee. After attending the meetings over the years and participating in the conferences, I am far more confident and competent as a Board Member.”**

TRUSTEE, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN WASHINGTON STATE

**“New Trustees need to hear their responsibilities outlined early in their careers as Trustees, and frequent reinforcement is healthy for everyone. ACCT does a good job preparing new Board members to serve effectively.”**

FORMER TRUSTEE, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THE MIDWEST

Accelerating the learning curve for new trustees is crucial in these fast-paced times. Learning “on-your-own” takes too long. The challenges come too quickly — no need to gamble. You have a finite amount of time and energy to give. Shave months off the orientation process by joining hundreds of new trustees at an upcoming ACCT conference.

# #8

## Do you enrich the knowledge base of experienced trustees?

“ACCT is crucial in helping Trustees develop the expertise to engage in “blue sky” discussions about what the future should be for the college. In addition, helping Trustees know how to effectively develop 5-year rolling vision plans tied to realistic budgeting tools is most beneficial. In general, understanding the planning process for new programs, etc. is an important skill for them to acquire.”

CEO, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN NEW ENGLAND

“Trustees need to continue to understand how to deal with the variety of special interest groups out there pushing their particular agendas. We should help Trustees learn to balance the needs of the college with the special interest groups. Over time, about 50% learn to balance the requests of these various groups. We can help more reach that point.”

LONG-TIME CEO FROM NORTHEAST COMMUNITY COLLEGE

“We must continually be reminded of our roles and responsibilities as Trustees”

ELECTED TRUSTEE

Where does an experienced trustee turn for continued growth? The “brightest and best” often capitalize on fresh ideas presented in the Trustee Quarterly. They take leading edge concepts shared in advanced ACCT workshops and integrate them into their board’s strategic planning activities. Don’t allow yourself to get stale — invigorate your boardroom!



# #9

## Are you effectively serving your community’s interest?

“Our greatest challenge is to not only serve those who come to us for help, but to also seek out those individuals who really need our help. As an institution, we can develop unique techniques to get our students ready for training.”

LONG-TIME ACCT MEMBER

“ACCT helps Trustees become more effective communicators with the community — keeping our focus looking outwards vs. inwards.”

CEO, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN ILLINOIS

“As a result of our involvement in ACCT programs, we are now more effective at helping to create jobs in the community that capitalize on the research done by our local universities. We’re able to avoid patents being implemented elsewhere and capitalize on the investments currently being made by universities in our community.”

SOUTH CAROLINA BOARD MEMBER

Maximizing your local influence for the college should be a key professional objective. Your membership in the association is designed to optimize your impact. Whether you choose to leverage our web-based tools or our “Guide to Advocacy”, you’ll be poised with the right knowledge, perspective, and skills to make a real difference for your constituency. Don’t leave your next election or appointment to chance. Serve the people.

# #10



## Are you making a difference at the state level?

**“Trustees should be prepared to take a more aggressive role in advocacy at the state legislature level. There are so many things they can accomplish (that a president is unable to get done). They can provide legislators with honest feedback about what their college needs to be successful.”**

LONG-TIME CEO

**“Every year at the National Legislative Summit, the valuable research ACCT has done is shared with our membership. This organized approach allows us to go directly to our local congressman with issues that impact our colleges and communities and seek support.”**

BOARD MEMBER AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADVOCATE

**“ACCT helps us with our challenge, as Trustees, to become advocates at the state and local level for the college. Proper funding is essential to maintain access.”**

TRUSTEE, TECHNICAL COLLEGE IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Over 27 state associations collaborate with the Association of Community College Trustees to garner state-by-state support for issues that matter. Extend your leverage and optimize your effectiveness by bringing the size and scope of a national organization to bear on important state matters.

# #11

## Are you making a difference at the national level?

**“The National Legislative Summit provides the primary opportunity to discuss federal issues — but it does more. While the focus is on national issues, we take home new strategies to help with state legislative agendas. We are in the trenches making the case for community colleges to the state and local government leaders.”**

ACCT MEMBER AT COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THE SOUTHEAST

**“Where there are numbers — there is strength!”**

TRUSTEE FROM LARGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD

You can focus on specific public policy initiatives and raise the national sense-of-urgency for your community’s priorities. You’ll find you have powerful tools, resources, venues and partners at your disposal. Attend the National Legislative Summit and address members of Congress. Amplify your board’s voice via the ACCT Legislative Action Center. Communicate with nationally elected officials readily and remove barriers to access across the nation. Join us once a year — and your message will be heard on Capitol Hill.





# #12

# #13

## Is your Board prepared to select your next long-term CEO?

**“As a Trustee, our responsibility is to make policy and hire a good president to lead the college within set policy guidelines. With the impending retirements of senior faculty members and administrators, Trustees must prepare for the inevitability of a difficult search process.”**

BOARD CHAIR AND MEMBER OF ACCT

**“The various services rendered by ACCT are extremely helpful to our Board. We have leveraged their executive search techniques for finding our CEO and they have provided timely advice on how to perform even more effectively as a Board.”**

TRUSTEE FROM LARGEST COLLEGE IN THE STATE

**“ACCT was helpful in doing an objective assessment of potential CEO candidates. This is a very important role they play.”**

PRESIDENT, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THE SOUTHWEST

ACCT has a unique interest in your board’s success in finding the right long-term leader for your institution. After all, governance is our business. Your participation in the association will continue long past the search — so we have every incentive to help you get it right.

ACCT tailors college-specific options into affordable packages that provide access for every institution — regardless of size. We’re partners in this important endeavor, so we help.

## Do you leverage specialized expertise in unusual situations?

**“With all the corporate scandals, etc. it is important that our Trustees know how to step out in front of the college and address some of the concerns regarding governance. The conflicts of interest faced by corporate America are different from the governance challenges of a college — but we need the entire team (especially our Trustees) to be able to effectively address this topic. Otherwise, it drains the administration of valuable energy.”**

PRESIDENT, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN OHIO

**“Consulting services delivered at Board retreats are helpful. Workshops on financial topics and advocacy are important.”**

CEO, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THE NORTHEAST

**“One of the best things to happen for us with ACCT was the consulting work they did on policy governance. They gave our board an excellent process by which they could write or modify procedures that changed the way we work together. That really helped the administration. It also helped shape everyone’s understanding of the different roles of the board and the CEO.”**

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT IN THE MIDWEST

Board retreats are an effective way to get everyone on the same page. This is especially true during volatile times or as your board is making important decisions. Capitalize on your relationship with ACCT to arrange on-site support on topics related to governance, leadership and finance. Visit [www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org) for a complete list of available board services.



# #14

## How is your board planning for the future of your college?

**“Trustees should be asking about alternative funding mechanisms, how the school is integrating the right technologies and how we are creatively finding new (qualified) staff to replace those leaving the institution.”**

PRESIDENT, RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**“On another level, the ongoing ACCT focus on our “Open Door Policy” has ensured that our college has continued to serve those who might otherwise have not had access to education.”**

LONG-TIME TRUSTEE

**“ACCT brings in experts from the business community to help Trustees develop the right perspective on their roles in serving the community at large.”**

PRESIDENT, RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN ILLINOIS

Your lasting legacy (as a trustee) is to position your institution for a brighter future. Many forward-thinking boards engage ACCT professionals to guide strategic discussions that enhance the long-term viability of the college and the community.



# #15

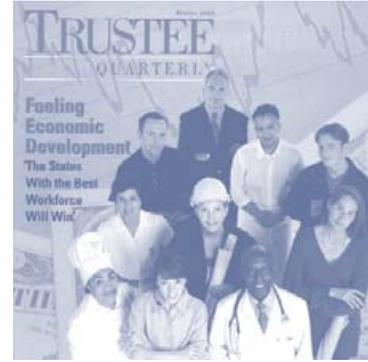
## What can your board do to help grow your local economy?

**“Our colleges have a tremendous opportunity to educate students in the fields most needed to support the economy. Trustees have the obligation to make sure the college is serving this key need of each community.”**

ACCT BOARD MEMBER IN THE SOUTHERN U.S.

**“The challenge at the state level is working with the political forces that see names, course descriptions, etc. They have no idea how it all ties back to economic development. Community colleges are all about economic development and you can’t have one without the other. Without courses, you can’t grow the local economy. Without economic growth, there is no need for course development.”**

TRUSTEE, COMMUNITY COLLEGE ON THE EAST COAST



In February 2000, ACCT founded CCbenefits to develop tools that enable college leaders to accurately assess their economic impact and develop programs that accelerate economic growth. Today, CCbenefits is the leading provider of economic impact analysis and high-performance planning tools for college leaders. These tools link course development to real jobs; and help colleges reallocate resources effectively.

# #17

## Are you getting the recognition you deserve?

**“On a national level, ACCT recognizes Trustees for exemplary service. This is not only important to our Board, but it’s also important recognition for faculty and staff.”**

TRUSTEE, RURAL COLLEGE IN THE SOUTHEAST

**“My observation is that when you find a really wound-up State Chair, great things can happen.”**

FORMER STATE CHAIR

Your contribution to governance should be realized on a local and national level. Step up onto a platform that promotes your passion and unique talents. Consider these options:

- ACCT Board of Directors
- ACCT Select Committees (Executive, Diversity, Governance, Finance, etc.)
- Regional Nominating Committees
- International Committees
- Other targeted advisory groups

Boards often pay special tribute to long-term trustees by awarding ACCT Lifetime Membership status to particularly valuable board members. Make your contribution count.



# #16

## Can your students count on you?

**“State politicians need to understand that working people’s lives are at stake. These people go to school part-time and work at the same time. They are trying to improve their lives and the political community often doesn’t see this as economic development. That’s a problem.”**

FORMER CHAIR OF ACCT BOARD

**“Young people also need to be able to share the issues they face including financial aid, so we can better understand how to help.”**

FORMER CHAIR OF ACCT DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

**“Trustees need to see students who have succeeded in community colleges across the nation and hear their stories. These students should be recognized for the obstacles they have overcome (to become a productive Member of society). That’s why many of us serve in this capacity. It’s all about the students.”**

TRUSTEE FROM LARGE RURAL COLLEGE

ACCT capitalizes on its core expertise in public policy to help community colleges secure resources to better serve students. Students benefit — as they acquire the multidimensional skills required to participate in the social and economic growth of their community.



# #18

## Why is ACCT right for you?

**“ACCT is the only organization with the correct venue to provide leadership and trustee training.”**

CEO, TECHNICAL COLLEGE IN MIDWEST

**“Serving as a college Trustee is the most rewarding community service you could ever do. The people are delightful, and you know you’re helping those who need it most. ACCT makes that possibility a probability.”**

FORMER BOARD MEMBER

The Association of Community College Trustees is a nonprofit educational organization of governing boards, representing more than 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who govern over 1,200 community, technical, and junior colleges in the United States, Canada, and England.

Our mission is to promote effective board governance through advocacy and education.

- We enhance the knowledge and skills to master our role as board members.
- We develop and affect public policy to help achieve the mission of our institutions.
- We exemplify a standard of leadership that is ethical and embraces diversity.
- We ensure all persons have the opportunity to succeed through access to quality education and services.
- We provide policy leadership in support of community economic development.



# #19

## Are you actively engaged as a member of ACCT?

**“ACCT provides an outstanding balance between trustee education and the preservation of local governance. ACCT provides the tools to help us become advocates for civilization and prosperity.”**

LONG-TIME BOARD MEMBER

**“We implement many of the ideas trustees bring back after attending conferences.”**

PRESIDENT, TECHNICAL COLLEGE IN WISCONSIN

**“As long as a multitude of impatient Trustees are on hand, we will continuously blend the culture inside the college walls with the needs of the community and great things will happen!”**

FORMER LONG-TIME BOARD MEMBER

**“ACCT activities and publications provide a constant stream of information to help educate Trustees about their roles.”**

TRUSTEE, CAROLINAS

If you’re a member of ACCT, you’ve taken the FIRST step. Don’t squander the opportunity to benefit from your relationship with your association. Reap the rewards! Your trustee network, conferences, and advisory services will turbo-charge your board’s success.

# #20

## What are the risks in procrastinating?

**“Trustees can undermine the presidency without realizing it.”**

TRUSTEE, COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN IOWA

**“In areas where board members are not aware of ACCT, trustees wind up sitting in on sessions that have nothing to do with policy and everything to do with administration. As a result, we see Trustees who mistakenly move further away from policy and into the administrative work that should not be their focus. That breeds a group of leaders who are in governance, but want to manage. This is unfortunate.”**

FORMER ACCT CHAIR

**“Too often, when it comes to important information, it doesn’t get shared with the Board.”**

STATE ASSOCIATION LEADER

Get engaged. Your community is counting on you!



are you actively engaged

decision-making  
planning

avoiding mistakes  
navigate uncertain waters

scan the landscape

relevant discussions  
specialized expertise  
proven solutions

visit [www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org) today

lead your college