

March 27, 2023

Sonny Ramaswamy, President
NWCCU
8060 165th Av NE, Ste 200
Redman, WA 98052

Dear Dr. Ramaswamy:

A community college differs from other higher education institutions in its governance structure. In the case of North Idaho College, the trustees are elected to represent their community and to provide leadership and stewardship. The board employs and supports the college president, determines and monitors the mission of the college, and reaches consensus on complex issues of policy and advocacy, all the while endeavoring to speak as a unified body. In carrying out this responsibility trustees are charged with certain duties:

- Duty of Care
- Duty of Loyalty
- Duty of Obedience

The above, largely taken from the “Trusteeship in Community Colleges” book published by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), provides a framework of board governance.

North Idaho College has not lived up to the standard needed of proper board governance. As a result of the findings of NWCCU, the board has engaged ACCT to conduct an aggressive schedule of board training.

The purpose of this letter is to communicate the program of work upon which we have embarked with the NIC Board and President.

The Board has demonstrated a strong commitment to a training schedule as follows:

- April 15—approximately 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (7 hour retreat)
- April 25—5:30 to 8:30 p.m.
- April 26—6:00 to 7:00 p.m. (training during the first hour of the Board meeting)
- May 10—5:30 to 8:30 p.m.
- May 23—5:30 to 8:30 p.m.
- May 24—6:00 to 7:00 p.m. (training during the first hour of the Board meeting)

It is anticipated that these will be in person to the greatest extent possible, but if hybrid is necessary, the plan is for one of the two ACCT consultants to be present.

On Thursday (March 2) and Friday (March 3), we visited North Idaho College where we had a chance to conduct 14 interviews. These interviews included all five trustees, college administration, student leader, and staff & faculty representatives. Each session lasted approximately an hour and was quite productive. The passion each

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person has for the college is obvious. On Friday, March 10, we had a chance to conduct a similar interview with President Swayne.

All parties understand the situation at the college is very serious. The Board has acknowledged accreditation of the college is of utmost concern, and further acknowledged the reason the college has accreditation issues is due to governance. Each Board Member made a personal commitment to work with us and place the better interest of the college ahead of any personal agenda.

Proper governance is the focus of the board retreat scheduled for April 15. The retreat is an all-day event and the first opportunity to meet with the board as a whole. We have set an ambitious agenda that includes proper board roles, board-president relations, effective board meetings, communications, board policies, board monitoring, and board and president goals.

As consultants from ACCT, it is our mission to provide training so that each trustee individually, and the board as a whole, accepts the following precepts:

- That a board member's authority exists only when acting collectively with fellow board members, and that the authority is derived from, and obliged to serve, the interests of the entire community;
- That each board member will exemplify ethical behavior and conduct that is above reproach;
- That each board member will engage in an ongoing process of in-service education and continuous improvement;
- That each board member will be prepared to participate in open, honest, and civil deliberation with colleagues, vote his/her conscience rather than to advance any special interests, and support the decisions and policy made as a whole; and
- That each board member will honor the division of responsibility between the board and the president and staff, and contribute to creating a spirit of true cooperation and a mutually supportive relationship in support of the community.

Very truly yours,

Ken Burke

Debbie DiThomas