



Texas Governance Case Scenario

"When Good Intentions Blur the Line"

Context:

The Texas Legislature has recently passed new workforce-focused funding and performance expectations for community colleges. In response, **Rio Plains Community College** (a fictional Texas institution) faces pressure to demonstrate rapid alignment with regional workforce needs, growth in dual credit, and improved transfer outcomes.

Dr. Elena Martinez has served as president of Rio Plains Community College for **nine months**. She is well-respected and data-driven, and she has begun outlining a **multi-year strategic framework** aligned with state priorities and local employer demand.

The board consists of **nine trustees**, three of whom were elected within the past year.

The Situation:

During the legislative session, three trustees attend a regional workforce meeting with local employers and a representative of a state agency. Local employers express frustration with the pace of program expansion and ask why the college hasn't yet launched a new accelerated credential.

Following the regional workforce meeting:

- One trustee emails the Vice President of Workforce Programs directly, requesting a timeline and suggesting immediate changes.
- Another trustee calls the President to express concern that the college is "moving too slowly" and suggests the board should be "more hands-on."
- While not on the agenda and blindsiding the board chair, the third trustee raises the issue publicly at the next board meeting, questioning the CEO's judgment and demanding immediate budget reallocations to demonstrate the college's loyalty to the local business community.

Dr. Martinez feels caught off guard and concerned about:

- Lines of authority are blurring
- Staff are receiving conflicting signals
- Trust is beginning to erode



Governance Tension:

All parties believe they are acting in the best interest of:

- Students
- Workforce partners
- The community & its tax-paying citizens

However, the **Board-CEO partnership is strained** because:

- Individual trustees are acting outside the collective board authority
- Operational decisions are being discussed publicly
- Communication channels are unclear

