Community College Association of Texas Trustees

Strengthening Skills for Data-Informed Governance

Discussion Guide for Module 3: Guiding Data Collection

Purpose & Overview

This discussion guide is designed to help you apply the concepts from Module 3 to your own governance practice. As you learned in the module, effective data-informed governance depends on understanding how data are collected, where they come from, and how those factors influence what the board sees and uses in decision-making.

Key Points to Remember

For effective data collection, trustees should:

- **Respect role boundaries:** Trustees should communicate data needs through the CEO rather than directing IR or other college staff. The board identifies the question; the CEO and team determine how best to answer it.
- **Understand IR capacity:** IR teams balance board data needs with other institutional responsibilities, including required reporting, accreditation, and institutional analysis. Board requests should be strategic and connected to governance priorities.
- **Know about data sources:** Institutional, state, and national sources serve different purposes and may use different definitions, populations, and reporting periods. Understanding these distinctions helps trustees interpret data appropriately.

Before You Begin

Take a few minutes to reflect on:

- A recent request your board made for additional data or analysis
- A recent board report that includes a data point also reported by a state or national source

Discussion Questions

1. How does your board decide when additional data or analysis is needed?

   Consider:

   - When can the board rely on information already available through existing reports or dashboards?
   - How can the board and CEO weigh the value of a new request against IR's other reporting, accreditation, and institutional responsibilities?

2. How does your board determine whether a data source is appropriate for the governance question or decision at hand?

   Consider:

   - When might institutional data be most useful, and when might state or national data provide important context or comparison?
   - What should trustees understand about the purpose and limitations of a data source before drawing conclusions from it?

3. How prepared are you to explain why a college data point may differ from a state or national figure when speaking with legislators, staff, or community members?

   Consider:

   - What would you need to know about the definition, population, timeframe, and source before comparing two data points?
   - How would you explain those differences clearly while accurately communicating your college's outcomes and impact?