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Fall 2005

# Improving Community College Board Governance Using a Technology Based Board Management System

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Running head: IMPROVING COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD GOVERNANCE

Improving Community College Board Governance  
Using a Technology Based Board Management System

Teresa Walsh

Regis University

### Abstract

Higher education boards are turning to accountable board leadership and macroengagement discussions in lieu of traditional micromanagement of operations. The Policy Governance® model integrates unique principles designed to enable accountable board leadership. This paper describes an Action Research project that was conducted with the Board of Yavapai College. The Board adopted Policy Governance® but failed to practice its tenets. This research seeks to demonstrate whether a technology based board management system, OurBoardroom™, that fully implements Policy Governance®, can assist the Board in the practice of the model. Findings indicate that the technology application that provides a template for all aspects of governance success exposes the complexity of the job while, at the same, time provides the tools to master it.

## Improving Community College Board Governance

### Using a Technology Based Board Management System

The author is the Associate to the President of Yavapai College and a member of the Executive Leadership Team, the senior administrators of the institution, as well as a graduate of the Carver Policy Governance<sup>®1</sup> Academy.

Governing an institution such as Yavapai College requires a process and skill set substantially different than what is required to “operate” the College. The Yavapai College District Governing Board (DGB) is made up of unpaid, publicly elected individuals who serve the board on a part time basis (a few hours per month). Their backgrounds are diverse (engineering, business, accounting, legal, education, etc.) and they individually do not have the obligation, experience, or desire to act as the President of the institution.

In spite of these time and experience constraints, the Board is fully accountable to the taxpayers of Yavapai County and has statutory obligations for everything that happens at the College and, most importantly, for what the institution does (or does not) achieve.

To enhance governance of the institution the Board has chosen a sophisticated model of governance, John Carver’s Policy Governance<sup>®</sup> (PG), generally considered the most complete theoretical and practical model for governance available today. Although the Board adopted the model in 1997, they failed to practice its tenets. In recent years, a series of Board actions that resulted in a loss of public and employee trust made clear that the current governance system was ineffective. Governance of the institution had become a problematic and very costly endeavor, affecting all levels of the institution.

The purpose of this research is to identify the root causes of the failures in the governance system using the action research model. The Board experienced problems in two major areas:

governance theory and practice and governance workflow management. I introduced a state-of-the-art technology system, OurBoardroom™ (OB), as a tool for the action research. OB is a board based management application that is accessed via the Internet with an internet browser that fully implements the PG model.

Data collection was performed using survey, interview and observation methods. Multiple data sources were used to validate data and determine issues related to the Board's governance.

The Board's governance failures became an opportunity to create a major paradigm shift in how the institution is governed. With the root causes exposed it remained to be seen if the use of OB would improve Board governance. A focus of the action research was on (a) training the Board in the basic use of OB, and (b) how to use the PG model through the application to govern the College.

After OB was tested with the Board, four interventions were created to further address problems that exist in the Board's current governance system. The four interventions are discussed later in this paper. To determine whether OB eliminated multiple issues in the Board's governance processes, metrics were generated to compare the Board's improvement using OB with their former practices. Mr. Ray Tooley, Chief Executive Officer of OurBoardroom Technologies, and I worked collaboratively during this project.

### *Background of the Organization*

Yavapai College is a multi-campus community college that is headquartered in the historical town of Prescott, Arizona. Prescott sits amid the pines and mountains of north central Arizona. The College serves Yavapai County, an area that encompasses 8,123 square miles and includes several diverse communities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). The College is part of the

Arizona Community College System and is authorized to provide postsecondary educational services throughout Yavapai County (North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Institution of Higher Learning [NIMH], 1997). In 2003, the NIMH granted Yavapai a ten-year accreditation status, albeit with a few recommendations to improve its strategic planning and its student outcomes assessment. The College has complied with the recommendations. Yavapai College was established in 1965 by means of a countywide election (Saad, 1995). In the four years that followed, a board was appointed, a bond was passed, College personnel were hired, and curricula were established. The first classes were held in the fall of 1969. During the last 40 years, the institution has expanded to better serve the growing communities in the county. The College is nearing completion of construction and renovation of facilities financed by the \$69.5 million bond passed by the citizens of the County (Yavapai College, 2001). The successful bond passage in November 2000 is evidence of strong community support (Yavapai College, 2004c). The College is financially sound and enrollment, currently around 15,000 credit and non-credit students (Office of Institutional Research, 2004), is growing. Yavapai College offers excellent programs and services that are meeting the diverse needs of the dispersed communities, and it has a qualified and dedicated faculty and staff.

The Yavapai Community College District has a governing board that possesses and exercises necessary legal power to establish and review basic policies that govern the institution. The Yavapai College Board derives its authority from Title 15, Chapter 12 of the Arizona Revised Statutes. The specific powers and duties of the governing board are spelled out in ARS 15-1444. Included among these is power to enforce the courses of study prescribed by the state and to examine the management, conditions and needs of the College (Yavapai College, 2003a).

The DGB consists of five members, elected for terms of 6 years, each from a designated district within Yavapai County. Each member must reside in the district that he or she is elected to represent. The DGB determines, by vote of members, the Chair of the Board and Secretary. Members serve without remuneration. Board members' focus is to be on broad policy issues, not administrative operations. Public board meetings occur on the second Tuesday of every month. Minutes of these meetings are recorded and kept on file. The *Yavapai College District Governing Board Handbook* includes Board policy (Yavapai College, 2004b). The College has an executive officer, the President, designated by the DGB to provide administrative leadership for the institution.

### *The Competitive Environment*

According to the Chronicle of Higher Education (2004), the biggest challenges facing higher education over the next four years are meeting the needs of a changing society, staying focused on suitable missions, serving more students with less school funding, hiring and motivating employees, fragmentation in programs, and isolation and divisiveness among faculty and administrators. Giving students a good education requires overcoming those obstacles.

Omundson (as cited in the Chronicle of Higher Education, 2004) is critical of administrators who run public institutions like private businesses and claims that readiness for the job market is the "acid test" for a student's education. However, competing in a global marketplace, community colleges, as well as universities, are by necessity becoming more entrepreneurial in seeking new sources of revenues. Altbach (2004) describes the intricacies of globalization, the internet, and the scientific community that may level the playing field in a new age of knowledge interdependence. Additional pressures on higher education can be attributed to competition from a range of providers that include traditional universities and institutes of higher



learning, virtual organizations specialized in e-learning, private companies, and international corporations. Partnerships between private and public groups, not-for-profit organizations and media groups are described by Williams (2003). Because of competition, it is now more commonplace for higher education institutions to have an entrepreneurial perspective and motivation to earn a profit. Incentives are provided to faculty members to create courses and other intellectual property the institutions can profit from, thus contributing to the divisiveness and fragmentation of faculty.

Altbach (2004) describes the inevitability of economic, technological, and scientific trends affecting higher education, as well as politics and culture. Academic systems can no longer exist in isolation and there are many challenges to equalizing academic relationships.

From the perspective of a local community college governing board, there are a number of issues to be addressed: (a) how does a board weigh public purposes versus responsibilities in the broad context of action, (b) how does the board determine which missions are most suitable for the community served, (c) how does a board respond to competition with a focus on big issues, and (d) how do global influences provide an opportunity for the college to be creative and assertive? This is a sampling of questions that a board might consider as they seek to create policies that provide directives to an institution.

Everyday, we see concerns expressed in the media and policy circles regarding accountability of corporations and nonprofits. We have witnessed the downfall of Enron stemming from corporate malfeasance. A comparison can be made between a public sector agency when a board doesn't govern for public purpose and corporate malfeasance. Taxpayers may be concerned when a public sector board, as in the case of the College Board, incurs hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees to defend themselves on principle rather than

admitting to a violation of State statutes which results in a minimal personal fine (\$500). This negative energy could be much more appropriately focused.

### *The Problem*

The Yavapai College Board has suffered a series of crises directly related to their governance functions. The governance system had become an ineffective and very costly endeavor, affecting all levels of the institution. It was the failure of the current governance system that became the focus of my master's thesis action research project.

To understand the problem and why it must be resolved, several concepts are reviewed in greater detail: the history of the problem, the statement of the problem and basis for this action research, and a literature review that describes in greater detail what constitutes good governance and what does not.

### *History of the Problem*

Between 2000 and 2003, as the College strived to live within the \$69.5 million bond passed, construction costs for new buildings escalated above anyone's expectations. In 2003, it became clear to the College administration that modifications to the Master Plan for new and renovated facilities would be needed in order to stay within the financial limits of the bond. In looking to adjust financial priorities, the President and Board members, in August, 2003, considered not renovating or expanding the College swimming pool, one of the promised construction projects in the bond. This consideration was picked up and relayed by the media who heard it discussed during a Board meeting. As a result, some community members vehemently opposed this option to cut costs and accused the Board and President of making decisions without informing the public and of backing down on a project that was very popular with some taxpayers (Yavapai College, 2004c).

During the winter of 2004, College administrators became aware that the price of steel had more than doubled and that the construction costs for projects financed by the \$69.5 million bond would be an additional \$5 million to \$10 million. College's officials issued a report to the Board on the steel industry crisis in April, 2004. Master Plan expenditures became a focus of intense scrutiny by members of the public and some College employees.

The College experienced a series of internal conflicts that exposed anger and low morale among faculty and staff. Confidence in the Office of the President had eroded significantly. Senior administrators became entangled in internal conflicts as communication between them and the President worsened. Between August and October 2004, one member of the Governing Board and four members of the College's Executive Leadership Team resigned. In September, 2004, citing long standing unresolved conflicts with the President, and blaming the Governing Board for ignoring their concerns, the Faculty Senate and Faculty Association, as well as the three College Staff Associations, passed votes of no-confidence in the President of the College and the DGB and called for immediate resignations (Yavapai College, 2004c). In the absence of a strong and cohesive management team, a climate of mistrust, retaliation, and confusion developed.

One of the administrators who resigned accused the President and two Board members of violating Arizona's OML and misusing college funds which led to a request for an investigation by the State Attorney General's Office (sanctions were imposed by the Attorney General in spring, 2005). It became apparent that the President could no longer provide effective leadership, and after a series of closed meetings, the Board publicly announced the President's resignation in October of 2004.

The effects of board failures that played out in the media and resulted in a loss of public trust placed enormous pressure on the Board and they made attempts to fix the problems.

One of the attempted fixes was for the Board to look at PG anew in hopes that applying its principles might help them address the serious difficulties they were experiencing. The Board had adopted the PG model in 1997 but failed to practice its tenets. They did not have a true understanding and integration of the model and were a PG board “in name” only. In April and July 2004, The Board brought in a PG consultant to train them in using the model. The work with the consultant was a band-aid solution and did not result in a true integration of PG principles. Although the Board updated their policies, they were challenged to remain consistent with the model and experienced problems in two major areas: governance theory and practice and governance workflow management.

Here is a summary of many specific problems they faced: (a) limited or difficult access to governance reference materials to help the board decide what issues are governance versus operations based, and then limited support for PG model consistent governance decisions, (b) limited or difficult access to historical board decisions and information to support ongoing board work, (c) no board workflow management support to ensure individual member and staff commitments are completed in a timely manner; this includes management of board obligations determined by law and past board decisions, (d) cumbersome difficult board work planning system for scheduling board work throughout the year, (e) ineffective document management resources for board members including availability of current policy set, current monitoring reports, and other board materials, (f) excessive staff support requirements for board operations, (g) no effective or timely process or information access to bring new board members up to speed on board issues, (h) limited information support for board assessment of its own performance, (i)

excessive time and cost to create and distribute board materials to members and appropriate parties, and (j) no way to capture board governance process decisions for continued operation of the board.

A next step to fix the problem occurred in November 2004. With the agreement of the Board of the College, a team of three experienced community college leaders from the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) conducted an Institutional Leadership Analysis of the College (Yavapai College, 2004c). The purpose was to assess the current situation at the College and submit recommendations and guidance to the Board to strengthen governance and leadership.

The ACCT team confirmed the difficulties I have described. They found that serious problems among the college's key constituents were having a negative impact on the health of the institution. The ACCT report stated that these problems could lead to irreparable damage to the College's reputation in the community and to the relationship and effectiveness of staff and faculty, all of which would ultimately impact the delivery of quality education (Yavapai College, 2004c). The team reported that the faculty and staff were still distrustful of the Governing Board and still called for the remaining four trustees to resign (Yavapai College). Many employees were clearly unhappy, disillusioned and angry (Yavapai College).

Local media provided continuous coverage of the situation, and editorials addressed the failures of the Board. As a result, a higher-than-usual number of community members attended board meetings during this period to express concern over the Board actions addressed in the media (Yavapai College, 2004c).

Board meetings and Board actions have not been perceived as being in the best interest of the College. Board members were accused, among other things, of engaging in inappropriate

behavior such as micromanaging, interfering with the administration of the college, focusing on perceived self-interest and pet projects and giving directives to College staff. The conduct of some Board members was viewed as being disrespectful or abusive to others (Yavapai College, 2004c).

The ACCT found that the Board did not provide appropriate oversight of the performance of the previous president, nor had it implemented an appropriate process for assessing its own performance. The Board did not heed numerous warning signs of problems and allowed problems to escalate (Yavapai College, 2004c).

By the spring of 2005, the State Attorney General's investigation revealed that four Board members had violated the OML. The State Attorney General ordered Board members to cease the use of all email communication and fined four Board members \$500 each (personal finances), to be paid to the College's General Fund.

The consensus among both internal and external College audiences was that communication has broken down and the College's stakeholders turned to the local newspaper to vent their concerns (Yavapai College, 2004c). The Board believed that they had acted in the best interest of the College and their efforts were being misrepresented (Yavapai College). The negative feelings expressed by internal constituencies, the criticism by members of the community, and the ongoing negative press clearly affected the Board's efforts to conduct business as usual. The behaviors of the board (such as indecision, conflict with stakeholders, conflict with the President and each other) indicated the board needed help to move forward with proactive effective governance of the college.

The ACCT visit proved to be the impetus the Board needed to finally acknowledge the problems. The Board pursued additional actions that would significantly improve the

governance of the institution ((Yavapai College, 2004c). In the first half of 2005, the Board hired an interim President and a new member was appointed to the Board. The Board retained legal counsel to attend every Board meeting to provide advice on OML. An audit was conducted to determine if bond funds were being used properly. The search for a new President was undertaken. I began working with the Board to implement the PG model and to provide a better understanding of the respective roles of the Board and the President.

About five months before the ACCT intervention, I participated in the first annual International Policy Governance<sup>®</sup> Association Conference held in Chicago, Illinois. I attended a presentation on an unreleased computer-technology board management system, OurBoardroom<sup>™</sup><sup>2</sup> (OB), which had been developed to achieve world class management of a board's information and workflow requirements under John Carver's PG model (for a general description of OB see Appendix A). It struck me that the simplicity and use of the OB system could reinforce the principles required for effective governance. I wondered if OB might prove a useful system to enable the College's Board to achieve the full benefits of the PG model.

With the support of the President, Board, and Leadership Team of the College, I arranged with the Chief Executive of OurBoardroom Technologies, Inc., Ray Tooley, to beta test the application.

### *Problem Statement*

The Yavapai College Board experienced a failure to govern effectively. The Board adopted PG as an ideal standard by which to govern the institution but they ignored and avoided governance functions that were part of the model. Instead of practicing the principles of PG, they delved into operational matters at Board meetings, failed to monitor the President's performance, violated their own policies, and incurred significant legal fees that were the results

of their failures to govern. The Board's actions resulted in a loss of public trust and seriously impacted the health of the College.

OB was introduced to help focus the Board on the PG model and to determine if it would contribute to overcoming the challenges of complying with the model. The action research involved identifying problems with the governance process and implementing OB, viewing the behavioral changes of the Board, and setting the next steps to improve Board governance.

### *Literature Review*

Several concepts have been introduced that the reader may not be familiar with. These concepts are important to understand the problem and why it must be resolved. Three main concepts are reviewed in greater detail to aid in understanding. The first topic is governance, what it is and why it is important, the focus of traditional governance, and some of the components affecting effective governance. Since PG may be foreign to some, a review of the model is provided. PG is the model that the governance process at Yavapai College was compared against. The last topic explored in this section is the state of board based technology tools.

*History of governance.* Although Stone (2005) reports that an interest in board governance and research on organizational governance has grown steadily over the last 15+ years, there is not extensive literature addressing higher education board governance specifically.

While typically the workers in an organization are clear about what their job is (goals and objectives, conduct, reporting relationships, necessary competencies and discipline necessary to perform their job), boards on the other hand are typically deficient in these areas (Carver, 2002, p. xxxii). Other experts who have studied the roles of boards such as Chait (2005) and Pointer and Orlikoff (2002) confirm this assessment of boards. Chait finds that the governing role is one



of the least studied in a spectrum of activities. “Trustees are little more than high-powered well intentioned people engaged in low level activities” (Chait, Holland, & Taylor, 1996). After 20 years of work with boards, Pointer and Orlikoff point to the fact that performance and contributions of most boards is not optimal. They report, however, that effective governance impacts the performance of an organization and that there is a positive, systematic, and ongoing association between governance quality and organizational success. Pointer and Orlikoff acknowledge that their work has been influenced by the work of John Carver and PG.

Carver underscores the cost of traditional board processes that graphically mirror the Yavapai College Board’s activities over the past few years. Carver (2002) describes the experiences he has witnessed:

...CEOS destroyed when boards judge on criteria they’ve never stated, hard earned contributions wasted by boards defending law suits resulting from dynamics with the CEO, boards who allow a few board members’ to be illegitimately intrusive as they treat the organization as their personal toy, boards manipulated and managed by the CEO, sometimes misled, while the boards default on their obligation to lead, boards who are not compelled to produce results for an organization because they reward activity; not results, boards whose stewardship of the “taxpayers” money is next to nonexistent, even when their accounting is in order, boards whose personal self-interest makes servant-leadership seem like a naïve ideal; intelligent board members who engage in mediocre activities that are accepted as the proper substance of governance.(pp. xxxii-xxxiii).

Carver (2002, p. xxxiii) argues that there is so little research on board effectiveness because there is a lack of agreement on what boards are for. Some think a board exists to satisfy statutory obligations, while others define a board’s work as responsive to a group, such as

shareholders, customers, students, or other types of clients. Carver points out that depending on which of the interests is being satisfied requires very different tests for effectiveness.

Ostrower and Stone (2005) conducted an empirical review focused on four areas: board composition, board-staff relationships, board roles and responsibilities, and board effectiveness and its relationship to organizational effectiveness. Ostrower and Stone maintain that attention should be turned towards a gap between the literature on “Big G” governance issues, which means how we design and conduct public activities, and “little g” governance, which deals with board governance issues. Ostrower’s and Stone’s focus is on nonprofit governance but the issues they address are applicable to school boards and even the corporate sector. Research is needed to ask questions of how nonprofit governance does or does not address the issues of the public interest. Stone posits some questions and ideas: (a) whether and how public purposes are expressed, (b) under what conditions do boards engage in public problem-solving; (c) what are the trade-offs in terms of traditional responsibilities if a board spends time on larger concerns; and (d) how does a board balance prudent financial decisions with major public issues? Interestingly, Stone’s questions lie at the very heart of John Carver’s PG model, for the principles of the model effectively address the issues of board governance and large scale issues of governance.

Governance provides the opportunity to study larger social or community patterns and to study power relationships between board and staff over decision-making functions (Stone, 2005). Stone suggests that there are larger concerns facing institutions of higher education that directly relate issues of board governance to large scale issues that are significant to scholars and those with managerial and public policy interests. Research has implications for the varying perspectives on the role of the board (i.e., staff vs. board perspectives). The board must

understand that its role is at the policy level and their input is from the outside (Furr & Furr, 2005).

There are specific concepts that the reader might find helpful in understanding effective board management: the Board/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) relationship, team building, skills needed for effective governance, and role of the board chair. This is not a comprehensive discussion of critical topics but is meant to provide a better understanding of governance issues.

*Board/Chief executive officer relationship.* Considerable attention has been devoted to the relationship between the board and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (Thomas, 2001). Other common titles for the top position are administrator, director, executive director; in education common titles are president, chancellor, and superintendent.

Goodman, Fulbright, and Zimmerman (1997) identified an element of quality governance to be a trusting and collaborative relationship between the board and superintendent. Holland (1996) describes one of the competencies of an effective board as helping the CEO determine what matters. Holland explains that effective boards that spend time on determining what the big picture items are add value to the organization. How else can the CEO know what priorities to set given that there are many competing issues?

Reasons cited for poor relationships are the problems of role confusion and micromanagement by the board (Goodman, et al., 1997). When accountability becomes blurred and the board interferes in operations, it can be damaging to staff morale, stakeholders, and the institution's public image, and an obstacle to the healthy functioning of the organization (Plumpre, 2004). Conventional wisdom suggests that such difficulties can be resolved by a clear separation of Board and CEO roles (Institute on Governance, 2005).

Chait (2005) refers to one universal complaint of college presidents that trustees chronically fail to distinguish between policy and administration. Board members delve into managerial and operational matters and decisions, or micromanage. According to Chait, the antidote for micromanagement is for trustees to become immersed:

...in discussions where complex problems worthy of elegant solutions are first framed; where wisdom, insight, and empathy matter more than technical expertise; where organizational culture, values, and traditions are at issue; where the intention is to make sense of circumstances rather than make policies and pass resolutions; and where robust discourse displaces *Robert's Rules of Order*. If trustees join conversations that concern governance, trustees will govern; when exposed to matters of management, board members will manage. (¶ 10).

Pointer & Orlikoff (2002) describe the board's role in ensuring high levels of CEO performance and accountability. The Board selects the CEO to run the organization, specifies expectations of the CEO, assesses his/her performance, and adjusts CEO compensation. Pointer & Orlikoff describe the implications of a clear chain of command with the board having only one direct report, the CEO.

Chait (1995) argues that the best models for managing higher education can be found in the corporate sector. The historical corporate board director's rubber-stamping the actions recommended by management was the model that influenced boards of universities and colleges. As corporate boards have become increasingly responsive to the stakeholders, they have also become more active and accountable. Chait believed that college and university boards needed to follow suit. This called for a change in the relationship between the board and the president and focused the board on ensuring that key constituents are served. Chait demonstrated how a

reform in corporate governance ‘cross-pollinated’ over to education and gave outside directors access to operations, resulting in a shift in the balance of power and a reconfigured relationship between the board and college president. Any reader can take a quick look at a school board or town/city council meeting on virtually any local cable network in America and witness the board listening to miserable staff reports and engaging in agonizing discussions over minutiae. Perhaps the best-known model framed from a corporate perspective is the PG model wherein Carver (1997) suggests that his model is applicable to all types of governing boards, including corporate and boards of education. The PG model does not prescribe a structure but a set of principles that can be applied to any board. Carver calls for a paradigm shift and new advances in the practice of corporate governance rather than historical and existing practices (Carver, 2002, pp. 602-613).

Both Carver (1994) and Chait (1995) and other governance experts advocate for a relationship between the board and the president. For example, to have a successful relationship, "neither can stray far from each other's gaze nor proceed independently" (Chait, Holland, & Taylor, 1993). While there is no doubt that cooperation and collegiality are keys to a successful partnership between the board and the president, Carver's PG model clearly defines and separates the responsibilities of the board, the chair, and the president, and provides for the president to proceed independently within Board prescribed limitations (Carver & Carver, 1997).

*Political effects.* Some school districts in the US pursue a model of effective governance while for others such a solution to board and management conflict is not likely (Price, 2001). Price suggests that corporate models of governance simply don't fit the reality of school district governance for two reasons: (a) because the role of the superintendent/CEO has shifted from manager to leader, and (b) school board members are politically elected officials who define their role differently than a corporate board member.

Price (2001) finds that the PG model doesn't fit with a desire in education to hire a CEO who is a visionary, strategic planner, fund raiser, or coalition builder because he believes that under PG these tasks are filled by the board role. What's missing from Price's reasoning is his failure to reflect on the cumulative responsibility of the board role and to understand how the PG model characterizes the job outputs of the Board and CEO. PG does not at all detract from CEO as leader. In fact, a strong CEO will have the attributes that Price describes and use those qualities to achieve the results directed by the Board. Carver (2002, pp. 371-375) describes the combination of governance between the board and CEO.

When it comes to the role of a board member as elected official, Price (2001) recognizes that school board members derive no monetary benefit for service. Gann (1998) describes the fundamental difference between a corporate board and school board as being economic incentive, where a corporate member receives economic gain within the governance structure. In an environment where financial gain is paramount, Price notes that decision-making sense means what makes financial sense.

What then would motivate an elected board member? Price believes that it is promotion of their own ideologies that they define as public good (Price, 2001). Individuals are interested in controlling the organization and establishing a position of influence (Price). Highly politicized and single issue-oriented elections can create a governance culture in the organization where it is difficult to define expectations while making the most of the CEO role and that to operate within a governance model that focuses on the interests of the organization rather than self-interests is a real challenge (Price). Carver (2002, pp. 89-93) describes one of the special challenges of elected boards as the recognition that the general public must be more sophisticated about their expectations of officials. Later in this paper, I describe the significance of a comment

made by the Interim President of the College about a looming danger that should be addressed in this action research project. He warned that it is critical to ensure that the stakeholders of the College are not disconnected as the Board moves forward in the use of the principles of PG. Carver recognized the need to bring constituents along with the Board and addresses it as a cost of governance. Costs of governance are clearly addressed in PG (Carver, 2002, pp. 255-259, 391-392, 95-97).

Carver (2001) states:

The Policy Governance® model conceives of the governing board as being the on-site voice of that ownership. Just as the corporate board exists to speak for the shareholders, the nonprofit board exists to represent and speak for the interests of the owners. . . .

Policy Governance® boards must learn to distinguish between owners and customers, for the interests of each are different. It is on behalf of owners that the board chooses what groups will be the customers of the future. The responsible board does not make that choice on behalf of staff, today's customers, or even its own special interests. (§13-14)

*Team building.* Team building refers to the process of establishing a group, in this case a Board, to accomplish specific tasks for the College. Many factors influence the competence of how a board member carries out board responsibilities (Axelrod, 1994). Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1996) suggest that boards rarely practice as a team, compounding obstacles to board effectiveness. Participants must know how to work as a team, plan, conduct good meetings, manage logistics and details, gather useful data, analyze data, communicate results and implement changes (Streibel, Joiner, & Scholtes, 2003). There are ingredients that are deemed important to team efforts, such as establishing visions, missions, and objectives (Dyer, 1977); in a PG Board, the development of Ends is an important team effort. Building a successful team

includes balancing skill sets, defining metrics, working with diverse personality types, providing training on how to work together, and building morale (Dyer). Chait et al. discovered that board members are more comfortable with cognitive skills, skills that involve a board's capacity to learn, analyze, decide, and act. Interpersonal (or affective) skills that have to do with internal dynamics are less comfortable to the board but equally important to effective trusteeship (Chait et al.). The authors found that an emphasis on inclusiveness within the board, as opposed to friendship outside the board, strengthens boards' effectiveness. The board becomes a working group, with a sense of inclusiveness, and a focus on collective welfare.

*Skills necessary for effective governance.* Barnes and Kriger (1986) propose that theories of leadership that focus on a single leader and multi-follower concept are outmoded. They suggest that leadership is a characteristic of the entire organization and implies an inclusive concept of leadership. In classifying the characteristics of boards that excel, Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1996) offer six skill sets as a framework for effective trusteeship: (a) contextual, educational, analytical, and strategic dimensions (essentially cognitive skills), and (b) interpersonal and political sets (essentially affective skills).

Leadership studies in higher education tend to focus on the role of the president or other administrators, and the leadership role of the governing board has been largely ignored (Saidel, 2002). In presenting findings from a survey of community college trustees and presidents, Vaughn and Weisman (1997) reported that respondents felt it was important that board trustee composition should be reflective of the community makeup. While it's not surprising that trustees want to respond to the community needs, there was no mention of what traits or skills might be required in a trustee to best meet those needs. The authors did, however, report that leadership traits are important in a potential president.



Ciulla (1998) states: “leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good. Ethics, then, lies at the very heart of leadership.” (p.xv) Ciulla, an ethicist who has written extensively on leadership, advises that the actions or inactions of a leader can determine the well-being of others, as well as the broader good. It is not a stretch to connect the ethics of leadership as described by Ciulla with organizational issues as defined by Ends in the PG model.

Ends policies are the board’s greatest and most difficult responsibility and “clarify and reclarify why the system exists” (Carver, 2002, p. 534). Ends describe the expectations of the board about what difference, for which people, at what cost (Carver & Carver, 1997). An alternative way to define Ends is to answer three questions: what good, for which people, at what cost? It is only the combination of the three components that achieve desired results. In PG, the Board is standing in for the moral owners of the organization, representing their values. Carver (2001) states:

Boards must persevere with the arduous, complex task of describing purpose and ethics/prudence boundaries. Forming those values into clear policies is far harder than telling the staff how to do its job. Speaking proactively for the ownership requires strong commitment not to take reactive refuge in rituals, reports, and approvals. (§ 69)

*Role of board chair.* Recently, a growing body of literature has recognized the leadership exhibited by the board chair in terms of setting the tone for board governance, contributing to the effectiveness of the president and, ultimately, ensuring the success of the institution (Donahue, 2003). Donahue examined leadership perspectives of three board chairs in a multiple case study. This study illustrates the important functions that the chair plays in the success of a community

college, providing support to internal stakeholders, being a link to the external community, and working with the board and administration to secure the future of the institution. Donahue describes the chair as having the best success as a leader by being a facilitator, a communicator who listens and seeks out diverse opinions, especially of those that don't usually speak. The chair finds the appropriate balance between meeting informational needs of the board and not unnecessarily burdening the organization for information. Working with diverse personalities and ideas, the chair guides the board into a collaborative decision-making body that serves the interests of the institution (Donahue).

Stratton (2004) defines the role of the chair as a manager of the board and its operations, managing the decision-making process when he/she chairs board meetings. The chair is charged with tasks that help the board make better decisions (Stratton).

*Policy Governance.* John Carver determined some years ago that the primary missing link in governance quandary was not research but a credible theory (Carver, 2002, p. xxxiv). Over a quarter century ago, he developed the PG model. Carver offers a paradigm for governing boards that covers all instances of board governance.

Explaining the depth of the PG model is beyond the scope of this review. Carver has written extensively in books and monographs on the model. Carver (2002) states: "Governance exists in order to translate the wishes of an organization's owners into organizational performance" (p. 31). In PG, emphasis is placed on what the board is for, and less on what it does.

Policies provide the framework for governing and are developed in four broad categories: (a) organizational Ends, (b) Executive Limitations, (c) Governance Process, and (d) Board/CEO Linkage. Ends were defined earlier in this paper. Executive Limitations are policies that place

limits on the CEO's executive authority (Carver & Carver, 1997), and are limits of ethics and prudence. The Governance Process is the board's definition of its own job (Carver & Carver), and the Board/CEO Linkage policies describe how governance connects with management. The linkage policy set describes the delegation of authority and how the CEO's performance will be evaluated (or monitored). The policy architecture, monitoring and evaluation processes are a carefully crafted framework designed to enable effective board governance. PG links the board to their owners/important constituencies (the College Board has defined their owners as the taxpayers of Yavapai County), focuses the board on large long-term issues, and makes possible the optimal empowerment and fair judgment of management (Carver, 2002, pp. 3-17).

To put this more succinctly, the board's rightful loyalty is to the taxpayers; not to management. Traditional boards (including the College's board prior to this action research) engage in practices in which the members receive packets of managerial materials, listen to staff reports, review the same reports and trudge through the same details (Carver, 2002, p. 10). Governance behaves as management rather than as a distinct entity focused on public purpose.

PG requires substantial discipline of process and clarity in written values/policies. These characteristics are more often desired than achieved and a board's declaring that it is using the model has little to do with whether it is actually using it (Carver, 2002, p. 493). The College claimed to be a PG Board since 1997, but as the data discussed later shows, they were not using the principles.

*Board based technology tools.* Board based technology tools, especially those that implement a governance methodology, are in their infancy. Extensive research has failed to turn up any other governance support tools that incorporate a governance model such as PG. To date

there is no software or service available that compares with the feature set and functionality of OB (Walsh & Tooley, 2005).

*Summary.* Micromanagement is detrimental to board governance. The scholarly research recognizes the competitive and moral necessity for boards to engage at the macro level. The principles of PG deeply address issues of board governance and large scale issues of governance and provide an effective antidote to micromanagement. The question of whether OB will be an effective management tool for a board and staff is important. If the technology facilitates a board's understanding and practice of large scale governance issues, then the potential benefit is for an organization to reach a level of governance excellence. From the position of servant-leader, the actions of the College's board affect the future of thousands of students and citizens; it seems that their competence and performance matters.

#### Method

Once I determined that the College's governance system could be bettered, the method to improve the system was chosen. This method section of my project provides a background of action research and the specific model I chose for this project. I review the foundational steps of entering and contracting that I undertook to assure success of the project. Lastly, I describe the data-gathering methods I used to understand the current system in preparation for changes.

#### *Action Research Methodology.*

Action Research is a process through which the researcher collaborates with others in evaluating their practices and trying out new strategies. The research is concerned with changing situations; not just interpreting them. Rapoport (1970) provides a definition of action research as "Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate

problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework.” (p. 499)

Generally, action research includes the elements of diagnosing, action planning, action taking, evaluating and specifying learning (Israel et al., 1992). Lewin, considered the father of action research, characterized the action research process as spiral steps each comprised of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action (O’Brien, 1998). Action research calls for the collection of information to bring about change and it is a form of interpretative practice in contrast to traditional empirical-analytic research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The practitioner gathers evidence and makes recommendations for change based on the evidence (Bogdan & Bilken).

The action research method was appropriate for my project because it lends itself to the development of new skills or new approaches and to solve problems with direct application to an organization. Action research is a flexible and adaptive model, therefore, it is perfectly suited to a beta-test situation where there is a requirement to provide feedback that informs continual improvement. The method also lends itself to the element of risk inherent in our being an early adopter of OurBoardroom. We were not only the first to use the system, but used it with a Board that had undergone significant upheaval and still had a number of challenges to overcome.

#### *Action Research Model*

There are notable models in organizational development. I followed the cyclic action research method of planning, observing, and reflecting as they relate to the key attributes of action research adapted by Burke (1994) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

<i>Burke's Adaptation of W.L. French's Action Research Model</i>	
Step #	Activity
Step 1	Perception of the problem
Step 2	Enter consultant (action researcher)
Step 3	Collect data
Step 4	Feedback given to client
Step 5	Joint action planning
Step 6	Action
Step 7	Assessment with data collection, return to Step 4 for feedback

Burke's process begins with awareness of the problem. In subsequent steps the researcher engages collaboratively in fact-finding, confirms the problem, provides feedback to the appropriate participants, and uses all of the information and feedback to solve the problem. In Step 5 a plan and timeline for intervention and implementation of the activities is made, followed by action. Step 7 provides for the evaluation of the change and a need for next steps. These get looped back into the cycle at Step 4.

OB was introduced as a tool for the action research. It is now technologically possible to utilize the Internet to develop a method of board governance that fully implements the PG model, and is secure, legal, practical, and fiscally feasible, and can essentially replace the current "paper process" for board business and documents. OB proposes the use of an Internet-based system for institutional governance that has been developed for boards that require state-of-the-art technology. The product facilitates the efficient tracking and retrieval of information about Board activities, provides cost and time savings for staff and the Board, provides support for

effectiveness of governance, and provides support for Board meetings in the form of improved information flow. The system is designed to be run and administered from a server located at the developer's headquarters. There have been no benchmarking studies that have analyzed all aspects of a board's operation pre-OB compared to how it operates after OB. The implementation at Yavapai College, therefore, is the benchmarking study.

### *Entering and Contracting*

Cummings and Worley (2001) discuss defining the organization's problems or opportunities as the initial phase of Entering and Contracting. Coghlan & Brannick (2001) provide evidence for framing problems and opportunities as issues, noting that language and labels are important at the outset. The preceding sections of this paper demonstrate that organizational problems are opportunities for change. Action research includes assessment of a number of factors that are important to the planning and success of the project. This section describes the entry and contract negotiations, identifies the relevant clients, the role of the action researcher, the establishment of mutual expectations, the resources needed for the project, and the establishment of ground rules.

*Entry and contract negotiations.* Over a 10-month period prior to the actual training of the Board, I worked on identifying OurBoardroom system requirements, conducted a feasibility study, introduced the system and objectives to the leadership team members and to the Board, trained the President's staff and an information technology technician to use the system, overall devoting 80% of my work week to setting up, testing and working in the system.

The feasibility report (Walsh & Tooley, 2005) that I issued in conjunction with the action research described the information needs of prospective users and the objectives, constraints, basic resource requirements, cost/benefits, and feasibility of the proposed project.

The Board wanted to fulfill the recommendations made to them in the ACCT report; the staff beta test of OB proved that there were enormous time and cost savings using OB, and the Board wanted to find a solution to cumbersome governance processes.

After considering the constraints and the requirements of the OB management system, the Interim President agreed that the project was feasible within the timeframe and within the budget. Because of my specialized knowledge of this subject matter, the Interim President charged me with the authority to implement this project and signed the contract that I submitted to conduct the action research. The project has a high priority in the institution.

*Determine the relevant client.* The following people/groups were identified as the key stakeholders or collaborators who are most directly impacted by the governance system and the adoption of OB, and/or whose expertise would be required to successfully implement OB. The various members were aware of issues and the success of the project was based on their endorsement of the project.

1. Inter-agency: (a) State of Arizona Attorney General – OML compliance, (b) Ray Tooley, Chief Executive Officer, OB, (c) legal counsel – routine use of system for agenda and minute reviews, at board meetings, and to assure compliance with OML
2. Intra-agency: (a) District Governing Board – primary users of system, (b) college president - primary user of system, (c) executive assistant to the president – primary user of system; manages and administers board materials, agendas and minutes, (d) two administrative assistants – backup to executive assistant (e) associate to the president – primary user and project administrator, and governance consultant to board and external and internal communities, (f) executive leadership team (includes associate to the president) – strategic leadership issues, will use OB extensions to



complete Monitoring Reports and implement strategic planning, (g) information technology services director and assistant director - collaboration for support and interface issues or conflicts and technology expertise, (h) information technology technicians -approximately two will provide limited support for the project, i.e., configuration of Board member computers and email client and technology setup and system checks at Board meetings (i) institution-wide – potential for organization-wide use as business intelligence for strategic planning and control, and performance management as a primary vehicle to demonstrate organization-wide achievement and accountability.

*My role as action researcher.* I identified the preliminary steps to the action research, carried out the main steps of planning, action, fact finding, and feedback. My role was to present evidence supporting inferences and interpretations. I was in the complete member role as described by Adler and Adler (as cited in Coghlan & Brannick, 2001) while engaging myself and the system in action research. This is a quadrant 4 role described by Coghlan and Brannick as the most difficult. Quadrant 4 studies explore issues where both the researcher and the system are engaged in self-study.

Elizur (as cited in Coghlan & Brannick) describes “self-differentiation” which was critical to my success in this project as I experienced both the researcher’s role and the functional role. I found myself in a number of positions which I had to integrate: mentor, strategist, champion, defender, interfacier, intrapreneur, trainer, leader, manger, and liaison.

*Establishment of mutual expectations.* The College entered into a contract with OurBoardroom Technologies to beta-test OB. Mutual expectations were delineated in the contract and included, a description of the service, the beta test setup, trial and use period,

training schedule, costs, duration, and legal and security issues. The College agreed to use the system as much as possible and provide feedback on any component that might be improved, any areas where the system did not work as it should, and on network access speeds and usability.

*Resources needed to complete the project.* The College agreed to facilitate the implementation of the PG model and administrative, training, and equipment costs were absorbed under the appropriate budgets of the President's Office and the Board. To mitigate the risks of being an early adopter of, and taking on and using, new governance support tool, Yavapai was engaged in a no cost beta trial of the application.

*Establishment of ground rules.* I applied confidentiality in data gathering by personally doing all of the tasks associated with the data-gathering and analysis. I also labeled all of the surveys with a numeric identification rather than a name and personally maintained all of the data in my office. Relevant findings were shared with the Interim President through written and verbal updates.

There were consultations with legal counsel in order to establish some parameters for usage of OB to ensure compliance with OML. For example, the State Attorney General reviewed OB and signed-off on its use as being OML compliant.

#### *Data-Gathering Methods*

One of the steps of action research is to establish evaluation criteria that can then be measured as a means of acquiring useful feedback. Therefore, in my research, Carver's PG model (Carver, 1997) constituted effective governance. PG integrates a number of unique principles designed to enable accountable board leadership. The Board's conformity with the principles of the PG model is the framework and objective that formulated strategies of approach in the action research.

I had a good understanding of which PG concepts I wanted to reinforce with the training, but there were other factors to take into consideration: (a) the time each board member could make available for training, (b) the interest level each member had, (c) the practical aspects of scheduling training sessions, (d) the amount of information that was practical to absorb in a session, (e) what concepts to reinforce, (f) basic skills, and (g) affective reasons/attitudes.

Information that would inform the action research process was to be gleaned through the various data-gathering instruments. Three data-gathering methods were used: (a) survey, (b) interview, and (c) observation.

*Governing board member survey* (See Appendix B). To help me understand Board member's training needs and attitudes about technology and PG, I designed a pre- and post-test survey to collect data related to (a) core computer skills, (b) obstacles to learning a new computer program, (c) core governance skills, (d) training requirements, and (e) benefits to using computer technology. When the Board members took the post-test survey they were underway using OB and so I asked them about their overall impressions of using the specific technology.

I conducted a pilot test of the pre- and post-test survey before it was administered to Board members. This was done to identify and resolve any potential problems with the content, format, style, presentation, and difficulty level of filling out the surveys.

The surveys were custom-constructed and designed to be self-administered. They were created in word processing software which allowed for them to be completed in a pencil & paper format or to be filled out on the computer. Surveys were sent to Board members as an email attachment, hand-delivered, or as a facsimile, based on Board member's preference. I personally submitted the surveys to the Board members and the Board members returned the completed

surveys directly to me. Board members are identified in this paper by DGB1, DGB2, DGB3, and DGB4.

I wanted to take what I learned from the pre- and post-test responses and determine the differences. The comparison would help me identify the confidence and skill areas that needed improvement, and enable me to assess how effective the training was in obtaining the desired behaviors and learning outcomes.

*Interview with interim president and staff* (see Appendix C). The President is the Board's employee. The President and Executive Assistant to the President have the most contact and interaction with the Board and they were able to provide qualitative feedback on the Board. Both individuals responded to open-ended interview questions. An open-ended interview was selected as a data-generating tool for action research as described by Coghlan and Brannick (2001). The form of the interview was based on Schein's (as cited in Coghlan & Brannick) exploratory-diagnostic inquiry. Qualitative feedback was validated through observation.

*Observation.* Included under the umbrella of observation are training sessions, task completion and use of OB, journaling, and observation of live Board meetings.

The next step was to provide hands-on training in the OB application to the Board members, followed by monitoring users as they began implementing the new system.

In July, Mr. Tooley and I conducted individual 2-3 hour, hands-on training sessions with three Board members. A fourth Board member was not available to take the training and instead asked me to train his/her executive assistant with the intent that the assistant would, in turn, train the Board member. The fifth Board position was vacant during the data-gathering.

As a follow-up to training, Board members were emailed a weekly prescribed set of tasks designed to reinforce the training and use of OB in the days following training. Tasks also

tested the skill levels that Board members indicated in the survey they had little to no knowledge of. A system tool logged each Board member's actual use to confirm Board member accomplishment of the assigned tasks and to monitor their usage of the system in general.

The benefits of journal keeping in the action research process are described by Coghlan and Brannick (2001). I kept a journal to develop my own reflective skills and as a tool for evaluating ways to improve the project. Some reflections from the journal are provided in the discussion section of this paper.

I observed four formal public board meetings using a nonparticipant observation technique. Board behaviors were documented using a matrix template (see Appendix D) that contained seven categories that are deemed by Carver (1997) to be indicators that a Board is not practicing PG: (a) agenda items not related to PG, (b) pulling items off the Consent Agenda for discussion, (c) discussions of trivia, self-interest, problem-solving, stating a point of view, talking about program ideas and hot topics, (d) failing to monitor the President's performance, (e) failing to monitor the Board's performance, (f) the Board Chair failing to direct members to policy or keep members focused on PG, and (g) board requests to staff for work or to provide guidance. I also noted instances where the Board engaged in two principles of PG: (a) policy development and discussion, (b) references to their policies. I also monitored the length of five meetings. At this time of this writing, I was able to provide the length of a fifth meeting to validate the pattern of decreased meeting time. The significance of the length of the meeting is described below in the results of observations (Figure 1).

### *Validity & Triangulation*

Data validation is critical to action research because it assures that correct assessments and decisions are made while planning the intervention. I looked at the Board's attitudes about governance and use of the technology in a number of different ways. Data sources were the ACCT findings, reports from the PG consultant's work with the Board, the feasibility study, the staff beta test of OB, and the survey, interview, and observation methods which documented multiple and collective views and actions of the participants. The data gathering described in the methodology section of this paper provided the validity and triangulation necessary to ensure the integrity of data that demonstrates Board members' improvements in the use of the PG model. The fact that there were multiple users of the OB system that provided feedback, tested a feature, or provided an impression contributed to validation. Combining data from multiple sources allowed me to triangulate and discard data that was biased.

The pre- and post-test surveys were compared to the validated constructs of a previous relevant study done by Cheung and Huang (2005) and this confirmed the survey methodology that I had used as being valid. These researchers originally adapted their survey from the validated constructs of previous relevant studies.

### Results

The data collection took place over a four month period, beginning with observations of a June Board meeting, followed on July 6, 2005, with the administering of a pilot test of the Board survey. Board members were issued the pre-test survey prior to their initial training session in the use of OB and prior to the July Board meeting. The Interim President and Executive Assistant both responded to an open-ended interview during August, 2005, and in September, 2005, Board members were issued a post-test survey after they used the system for

approximately 2 months. I engaged in journaling during July, August, and September, and documented observations of Board behaviors during this same period.

### *Pilot Test*

The survey was emailed to five College staff members: (a) one administrative assistant, (b) two managers, (c) one information technology technician, and (d) one administrator.

Respondents were asked to answer all the questions on the pre-test. Three of the five members responded to the survey. The three respondents had been exposed at an entry level to the tenets of the PG model through one training session on using OB technology, and two of the three respondents had actually completed tasks in OB. The three participants in the pilot test were similar in age and education to several of the Board members, and sufficiently mirrored the Board sample in terms of having minimal exposure to OB. Only minor formatting and grammar-related changes were made to the surveys as a result of respondent input. The pilot participants' average time to complete the survey was eleven minutes.

### *Survey Results*

Four Board members completed the pre-test survey. Three members filled out the post-test survey; one returned the post-test with the comment, "No change."

*Core computer skills question.* Fourteen rudimentary computer skills were listed that would be necessary for board members to know in order for them to use OB. They were asked to assess the extent of their level of knowledge of the skills on a five-point scale, with 1 indicating no knowledge of the skill and 5 indicating self-sufficiency in the skill. As shown in Table 2, two board members are fully self-sufficient in OB while two other members demonstrate average to above average knowledge of the rudimentary skills necessary to use OB. Skills with 1 and 2 ratings were a focus of specific follow-up with those board members.

Table 2

*Core Computer Skills*

	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Statement#	DGB1	DGB1	DGB2	DGB2	DGB3	DGB3	DGB4	DGB4
1	5.00	N	5.00	N	5.00	D	5.00	N
2	5.00	N	5.00	N	4.00	D	1.00	N
3	5.00	N	5.00	N	4.00	D	5.00	N
4	5.00	N	5.00	N	4.00	D	5.00	N
5	5.00	N	5.00	N	4.00	D	1.00	N
6	5.00	N	5.00	N	4.00	D	1.00	N
7	5.00	N	5.00	N	1.00	D	5.00	N
8	5.00	N	5.00	N	3.00	D	5.00	N
9	5.00	N	5.00	N	3.00	D	5.00	N
10	5.00	N	5.00	N	1.00	D	3.00	N
11	5.00	N	5.00	N	1.00	D	5.00	N
12	5.00	N	5.00	N	2.00	D	5.00	N
13	5.00	N	5.00	N	2.00	D	5.00	N
14	5.00	N	5.00	N	4.00	D	5.00	N
Total Score	70.00		70.00		42.00		56.00	
Average	5.00		5.00		3.00		4.00	

*Note:* Pre-test responses were made on a 5-point scale (1 = no knowledge; 2 = very little knowledge; 3 = somewhat knowledgeable; 4 = knowledgeable; 5 = self-sufficient). Post-test responses: N = no additional training required; Y = requires additional training; D = did not report any change from pretest.



*Obstacles to learning question.* Board members were asked in the pre-test what they perceived as obstacles to their learning a new computer program. Shading in Table 3 shows that two Board members report only lack of time as being an obstacle. DGB3's greatest obstacle, incentive, poses a challenge to the action research process because it is not so straightforward to solve as teaching a basic skill. DGB4's greatest obstacle, basic skills, presents a challenge because the same Board member delegated an executive assistant to learn the program in his/her stead. It's of interest to note that DGB4 ranked lack of suitable computer equipment as the second greatest obstacle. The organization provided all board members with a top-of-the-line laptop, fully configured for use from home or during travel, but DGB4 returned it complaining it was too small. When we provided the member with a top-of-the-line 17" screen laptop, fully configured, DGB4 returned it to us immediately saying it was "too big" but directing us to have it setup for his/her use at Board meetings.

Table 3

*Obstacles to Learning OurBoardroom*

Obstacle	DGB1	DGB2	DGB3	DGB4
Lack of time	1	1	2	3
Lack of suitable computer equipment			4	2
Lack of support			3	4
Basic skills				1
Incentive			1	5

*Note.* As ranked by Board members. 1 = greatest obstacle (shaded); 5 = least obstacle.

*Core governance skills question.* Board members were asked about their agreement with ten principles of PG.

Table 4

*Core Governance Skills*

Statement#	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
	DGB1	DGB1	DGB2	DGB2	DGB3	DGB3	DGB4	DGB4
1	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	-	3.00	3.00
2	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-	3.00	3.00
3	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-	3.00	3.00
4	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-	3.00	3.00
5	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	-	3.00	3.00
6	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-	3.00	3.00
7	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-	3.00	3.00
8	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	-	3.00	3.00
9	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	-	3.00	3.00
10	3.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	-	3.00	2.00
Total Score	30.00	26.00	29.00	28.00	26.00	0.00	30.00	26.00
Average	3.00	2.60	2.90	2.80	2.60	0.00	3.00	2.60

*Note:* 1 = disagree, 2 = neither agree nor disagree, 3 = agree. Dashes indicate no response was provided.

The statements were designed to identify board member's attitudes about the PG model, lack of fear of using technology, and whether their attitude is positive or negative. The results in Table 4 show that, in general, Board members were in agreement with the principles of the PG

model both before and after training (with an average “agreement” level of 2.6 to 3.0). It is interesting to note, however, that each Board member had a slight decrease in the average level of agreement after the training (from 3 to 13% with an average reduction of 7%). This finding can be explained by the fact that the training raised the level of awareness in users of the processes required for effective governance. It enhances and reinforces the PG training they have previously received. OB manages and directs users towards workflow activities that enable good governance and stimulate the healthy questioning that is part of the learning process. The training sessions support this view, as the governance components stimulated much discussion and many positive questions.

*Training requirements question.* This question consisted of eight statements that gauged board member attitudes about using technology to help them do the work of governing, their interest in ongoing technical support to facilitate their use of OB, and their attitudes after they were trained specifically in OB. Results are provided in Table 5.

Mr. Tooley and I have concluded that users do require basic computer literacy to use the system. Less experienced users, however, benefited from structured exercises that reinforced what was covered in the training. This was confirmed by the one Board member who failed to respond to the post-test survey because he/she “hadn’t used the system enough to answer the questions.” After completing the follow-up exercises he/she later reported as positive a response as in the pre-test survey. This member was able to complete the follow-up tasks as assigned, and we expect his/her confidence level to improve with more practice. This growth of confidence was indicated by how well the member accomplished assigned tasks after training despite concerns expressed that he/she may not be successful. It is interesting to note that, even in this small sample of participants, a common distribution of computer skills (from basic to highly

skilled) was found in the group. This mirrors the skill distribution in most groups that Mr.

Tooley has trained and includes entry, mid and executive level workers in organizations ranging in size from small businesses to large corporations.

Table 5

*Training Requirements*

	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Statement#	DGB1	DGB1	DGB2	DGB2	DGB3	DGB3	DGB4	DGB4
1	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	-	-	1.00	2.00
2	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	-	-	2.00	2.00
3	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-	-	3.00	2.00
4	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-	-	3.00	2.00
5	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-	-	3.00	2.00
6	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	-	-	3.00	2.00
7	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	-	-	2.00	2.00
8	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-	-	3.00	2.00
Total Score	24.00	21.00	22.00	24.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	16.00
Average	3.00	2.63	2.75	3.00	0.00	0.00	2.50	2.00

*Note.* 1 = disagree; 2 = neither agree nor disagree; 3 = agree. Dash indicates the answer was not obtained.

DGB3 provided one explanatory statement to the Table 5 items: “Not having any idea what the new program is, does, or can do, I have no opinion on the above questions. Though in general I have found the computer, except when used for research, wastes a great deal of my

time and causes me to perform many useless functions and many functions heretofore carried out by my assistant!”

The statement speaks volumes about the attitude of DGB3 toward computers as a tool that helps people do their work, demonstrates a great fear of computer technology and a lack of self confidence in using it. The statement is very defensive in nature and appears to be an “attack” on technology. Thinking of one’s self as a victim of a tool that has one of the highest adoption rates ever experienced in the history of human knowledge work (second only to pen and paper) indicates a great deal of insecurity in its use. Rather than a criticism, I consider this a very useful observation of the challenges that some board members will face as computer technology becomes more prevalent in the boardroom and that can inform the action research process.

DGB4 provided a supplementary explanation of his/her ratings for the pre- or post-test Table 5 items: “Don’t have enough information to evaluate at this point.”

On average, Board members were in agreement that using technology will support the governing process in both pre- and post-test surveys. As in the case of the previous section on core governance skills, there was a small decrease in the level of agreement after the training. These results indicate a heightened level of awareness about the responsibility and workload required for the job of governance. While managing and simplifying the process, OB does also highlight the scope of the responsibilities and tasks board members undertake.

*Concerns question.* Board members were asked an open-ended question about what concerns or comments they have regarding the use of technology. Table 6 lists responses

Table 6

*Responses to Open-ended Question in Pre- and Post- test*

Board Member	Responses
DGB1 Pre-test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not all Board members have high speed Internet access. This is an application server system that will not work on a slow connection</li> <li>▪ Get the connection technology installed at every Board meeting site</li> <li>▪ Manage public perception about what the Board is doing on the computers</li> </ul>
DGB 2 Post-test	No concerns or comments
DGB3 Pre-test	That it will take more time to carry out my functions as a Board member
DGB3 Post-test	No concerns or comments
DGB4 Pre-test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I travel a lot in and out of the country &amp; state</li> <li>▪ My life and work is not tech driven, therefore, I may not take my laptop to check emails</li> <li>▪ I am not a typist – generally do research and emails only – have staff that type or word process and format</li> </ul>

- 
- DGB4 Post-test
- The strong potential for directing attention toward technology, rather than process and discussion between fellow board members
  - No indication so far that looking at the electronic documents is as efficient as reviewing hard copies of the same, particularly if we need information from historical documents that are not present on the system
  - Lack of consideration in advance for the type of hardware technology (i.e., screen size) required for Board members to use the system effectively.
  - Given the varying degrees of experience with technology among board members, and considering other life commitments of board members, whether this is an effective use of our time and resources. More experience with the process is needed before this can be determined.
- 

The open-ended format allowed DGB members to freely express their top-of-mind concerns about using technology. As shown in Table 6, the responses covered the range from “no concerns” (interpreted as an expectation that the system will work) to those that had “technical concerns” (Internet access and the speed of the application response) to those with “personal concerns” (related to general low exposure of computer technology in their personal and professional lives).

In the majority of cases the pre- and post-test responses were directly related to the member’s additional experience in working with the OB application. For example, Table 6 shows one member was concerned about Internet accessibility by board members in the pre-test

and most concerned about response time in the post-test. In the end it was observed that almost all concerns were satisfactorily addressed as the experience level and confidence in using OB went up with the use of the system. I expect this trend to continue as Board members become more familiar with the system. This is analogous to a person purchasing their first car of unknown reliability. At first every trip is preceded with concerns about whether they will get to their destination without a breakdown. Over time, as confidence in the vehicle grows, the focus is placed on the purpose of the trip and where one wants to be at the end of it. The “personal concerns” (waste of time using technology) expressed by one member are addressed in a slower manner by continued system use since trust and confidence in the application generally take longer to build than the immediate resolutions of a technical concern. These findings emphasize the importance of communicating the level of planning that went into the technical and operational aspects of the implementation early in the Board training.

*Benefits of a computer application question.* Eight known benefits of OB were listed and Board members were asked to prioritize the list. The benefits are validated in a feasibility study (Walsh & Tooley, 2005), as well as through the beta test. Table 7 results correspond very closely with the level of computer experience each Board member reported. The two members with the highest level of computer literacy saw the same value in using a governance support application in their work both before and after training. DGB3, with less computer literacy, was unable to offer an opinion in either pre- or post-training surveys. DGB 4 who does not use computers on a regular basis was able to elaborate on the benefits after minimal exposure to the program.



Table 7

*Benefits of Computer Program*

Benefit	Pre DGB1	Post DGB1	Pre DGB2	Post DGB2	Pre DGB3	Post DGB3	Pre DGB4	Post DGB4
Higher levels of service to citizens	✓	1	----		----	----	----	----
Reduce administrative costs	✓	4	✓	✓	----	----	----	1
Support for Board members	✓	2	✓	✓	----	----	----	----
Facilitation of Board work	✓	3	✓	✓	----	----	----	----
Transparency	✓	6	✓	✓	----	----	✓	----
Open Meeting Law compliance	✓	7	✓	✓	----	----	----	----
Decrease in staff support hours	✓	5	✓	✓	----	----	----	2
Other	----	----	----	----	✓	----	----	3

*Note.* As ranked by Board members. 1 = most beneficial; 5 = least beneficial. . ✓ = Board members used a check mark rather than ranking in order. ---- = no response given for that item.

*Post-test questions.* Three Board members reported that they have the skills to log-on to OB. Although DGB3 failed to respond fully to the post-test, checking the system tool confirmed that the member was logging on and navigating through the system.

Finally, Table 8 lists Board member's overall impressions of OB.

Table 8

*Responses to Open-ended Question in Post- test*

Board Member	Responses
DGB 1	It seems to be coming together very well. I am comfortable with using it and like getting historical data loaded so we can look back at previous meetings and discussions. I am concerned about how we will function if it doesn't work at a meeting if we learn to rely on its benefits.
DGB 2	I think it works well--am looking forward to seeing some of the enhancements we asked for. Some areas are cumbersome because of the way the system is set up--i.e. opening a policy while in an agenda takes you away from the agenda, tasks are not posting or automating an e-mail, etc. Once some of these things are operational, it should help quite a bit.
DGB3	No response provided
DGB4	I have not gathered enough experience free of glitches to evaluate the program.

Since DGB4 did not make him/herself available for training at all, his/her comment in Table 8 reflects this lack of participation as the "glitches" could be directly a consequence of a

lack of the basic training. This reinforces the need for at least a minimal level of training for users.

*Summary.* I observed a very high association between board members perceived computer use skill level (as indicated by their survey responses) and their actual skill levels (as demonstrated during the one-on-one training and their use of the system after the training). The Board members who have basic computer literacy skills found no difficulty navigating through and using features of the application. For these users, the training sessions allowed more time to discuss how the application facilitates the principles of the governance model. Those with less familiarity using basic computer applications spent slightly more time on the mechanics of the system but in the end felt they could use the system and had a clearer understanding of the model structure. They felt they could benefit from more practice and a reminder list of steps to perform certain tasks. In the process of learning OB both groups were enthusiastically engaged in discussion of the principles and processes of governance. This demonstrated how the use of the tool focused the members on how the board could conduct business and how OB could capture decisions made by the board.

Board members with the most computer experience indicated that no additional computer training is required. The pre-test concerns about lack of time to learn a new application were replaced with concerns regarding governance process and how the board can accomplish their task of governing effectively. The response from DGB4, who reported post-test that he/she required no additional training in spite of limited familiarity with the governance model and the OB application contrasted highly with the response from all other DGB members that were very positive regarding use of the system and warrants a comment about how this should be viewed in relationship to other responses. Mr. Tooley and I have discussed this and believe that, on one end

of the spectrum, people enthusiastically embrace and learn new concepts and ideas that they feel will improve their lives, while on the other end, there are those that feel most comfortable with their established and familiar ways of looking at the world. This observation is supported with a range of sources from personal observation to complex studies on individual learning styles. We have all seen how some people are thought of as “lifelong learners” to those who avoid learning anything new. Many school boards use the concept of “students as lifelong learners” as part of their vision statements. In the Information Technology (IT) world some workers learn COBOL (an ancient mainframe language) and never learn any newer technology while others learn new languages and technologies on a continual basis. There is also evidence of this disparity in the adoption of computer applications in corporate America. People have many degrees of “reluctant to change” and a great number of multi-million dollar IT projects have failed because this factor was not considered enough. Every profession from teachers, to engineers, to physicians to lawyers requires that members maintain their skills through continuous education. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (1999) present evidence about the mind and brain that describes learning behavior, including research on how much brain activity is required to learn something new versus doing something that is familiar.

The differences in learning are particularly true with both the acceptance of PG and using, even established, computer technology. I am not surprised at DGB4’s reaction to both PG (reluctance) and computers (avoidance) in this context.

Mr. Tooley and I have concluded that a minimum of 2 hours of training in the use of OB is required to establish a comfort level for continued use. Ongoing reinforcement exercises and continued use of OB will greatly assist the Board in getting familiar with the features and the PG model.

My conclusions are that the training or system exposure either confirmed the pre-training expectations or allowed the Board member to formulate an opinion of the system benefits (positive). DGB3 who did not respond to the post-test survey in detail is still gaining confidence and experience in using the system, as evidenced in the usage reports. I believe that continued use will enable him/her to develop an appreciation for the benefits of the system.

### *Interviews*

The job of a District Governing Board member is involved, complex, and requires skills that may not be developed in the course of a Board member's work experience. The clear distinction of Board and organizational roles, the Board's ability to represent the taxpayers, the setting of the organization's Ends and Executive Limitations (Ends are the written instructions that the Board wants the President to achieve; the President can achieve them any way he/she wants subject to Executive Limitations expressed in Board policy), the delegation of authority, and the monitoring of executive performance through organizational performance, take skills that require as much training and development as any other professional endeavor. Interview questions were designed to capture qualitative feedback from the Interim President and Executive Assistant on how the Board is adopting the principles of PG.

The Interim President states "Board meetings have dropped from 6 to 2 hours. Discussions are focused and transacted more efficiently" (Interim President, personal communication, August 10, 2005). To further support the progress the Board has made he says "There are obvious signs of increased comfort with the model when Board discussions occur. For example, Board members are beginning to challenge one another when they stray into areas not appropriate under Policy Governance. Also, processes are being refined so that there is more time to focus on the subject at hand rather than asking, 'How are we supposed to do this?'"

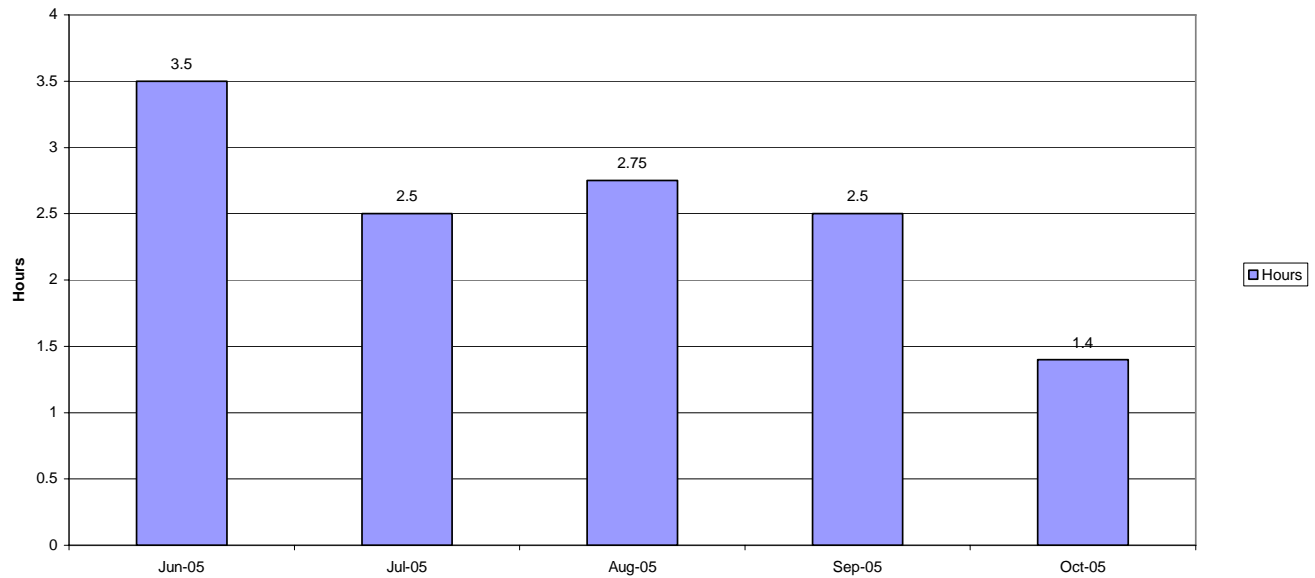
The Interim President felt the Board has made great strides toward governing excellence (Interim President, personal communication, August 10, 2005). These observations are validated with measurable data and observable behavior.

The Executive Assistant's survey responses can provide a great deal of insight into how OB has improved Board operation. The Executive Assistant is directly affected by various behaviors of the Board and states: "micromanagement [by the Board] requires additional time in preparation, longer Board meetings and longer Minutes preparation – and frustration." He/she reports that the use of PG and OB have resulted in "Less preparation time, shorter more focused meetings, more informed public and less need to 'justify' their jobs by proving they're 'watching' the administration (Executive Assistant, personal communication, August 30, 2005).

### *Observation*

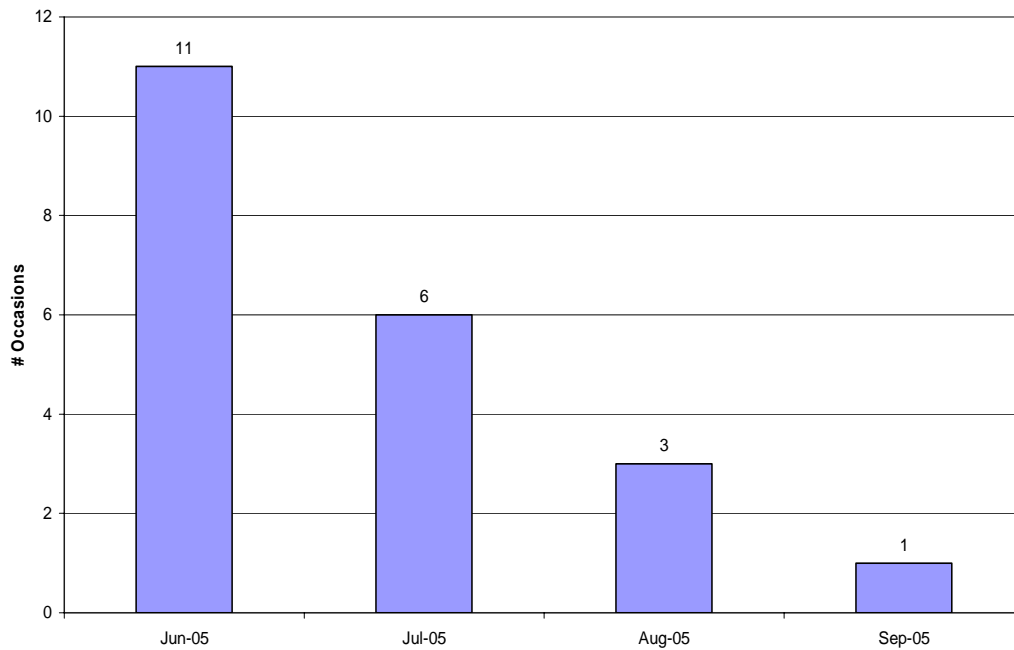
Three forms of observation were undertaken: (a) observation of public Board meetings, (b) completion of post-training tasks assigned to Board members, and (c) use of the OB system by Board members. Observations were used to validate data and determine areas where the Board needed further training in the use of OB or reinforcement of PG principles.

*PG in board meetings.* Reporting the effect that training and the use of OB has on Board meetings is a purpose of the research. Figures 1 through 6 report instances where the Board engaged in behaviors that are deemed by Carver (1997) to be indicators that a Board is not practicing PG. Conversely, Figures 7 and 8 report evidence of an increase in appropriate focus of a PG Board during a meeting.



*Figure 1.* Total length of five monthly Board meeting in hours.

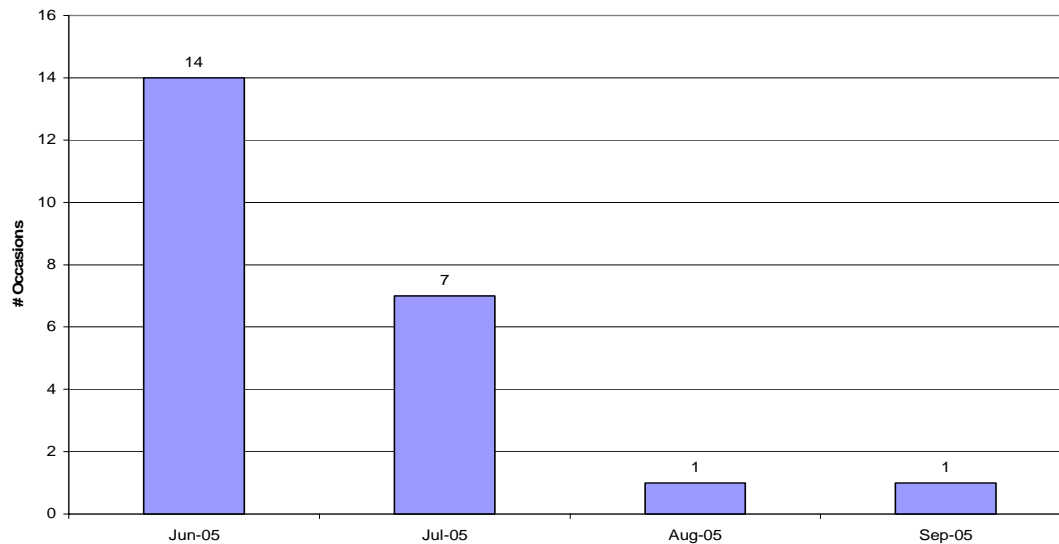
It's a real cost of governance for board members to devote time and energy to prepare for and attend board meetings. Time is a precious commodity and recognized by Board members and staff alike (as reflected earlier in Table 3, two Board members cited only one obstacle to learning technology, lack of time). Figure 1 shows a decrease in the meeting length of Board meetings since June. The length of the meeting offers insight into the efficiency that results when the board is focused on results rather than on looking into organizational details.



*Figure 2.* Number of items on the board agenda that were not related to Policy Governance.

Figure 2 provides the frequency of matters that a PG Board would not spend time on. The June 5, 2005, meeting focus went so far awry that lengthy discussions related to micromanaging the institution ensued. The Interim President was becoming adept at redirecting Board members to matters under their influence; and it is interesting to note that, at this particular meeting, the Interim President was out of town. Upon the Interim President's return, he submitted a transcript of the meeting to the Board to demonstrate issues (capturing the essence of the Board's comments, people talking over one another, moving papers, no clarity in deliberations, and no clear action to guide the President). Board members expressed surprise at what the minutes revealed about their discussions and behavior.



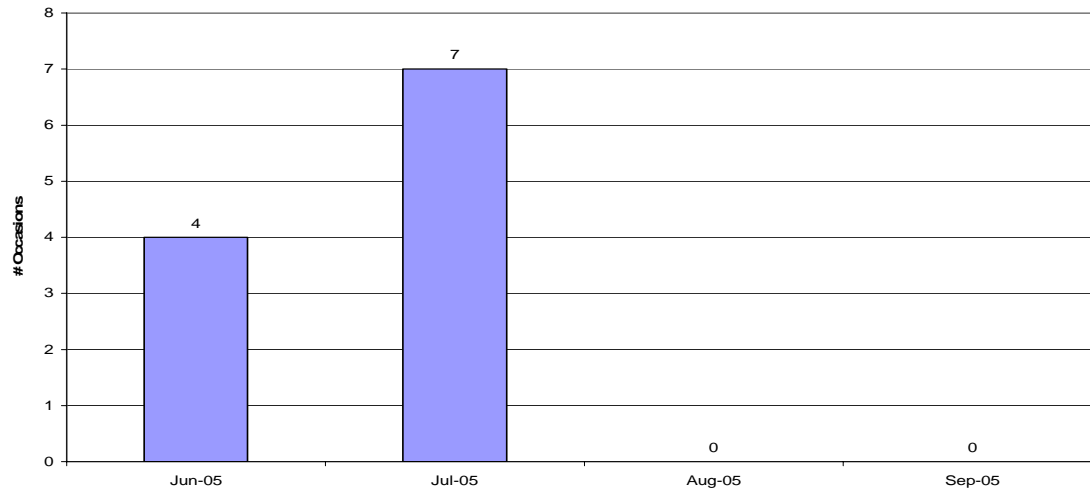


*Figure 3.* Number of instances where the Board engaged in non PG-related discussions.

As shown in Figure 3, Board discussions of trivia, self-interest, problem solving, stating a point of view, talking about program ideas, and hot topics decreased with the implementation of OB. Conversely, Figure 3 demonstrates an increase in the Board taking responsibility for its own job.

The Board was creating a backlog of performance evaluations because they could not agree upon a process for how to accomplish this. Figure 4 shows that the board did not address four concerns at the June meeting. These four concerns carried over to the July meeting, creating a backlog. A similar difficulty was experienced with the Board simultaneously failing to address concerns related to the evaluation of the President. The Board's historical failure to monitor the president's and their own performance was a major frailty of the Board that was discussed in the History section of this paper. For several months, I had provided ongoing recommendations to the Board on how they might respond to the concerns they expressed, but it was apparent that the Board was stuck and did not have the skills or ability to discuss the issues at a meeting. At the

July meeting, I recommended that the Board deal with the backlog of reports as best they could and agree to implement the recommendations I had provided for all future monitoring reports.

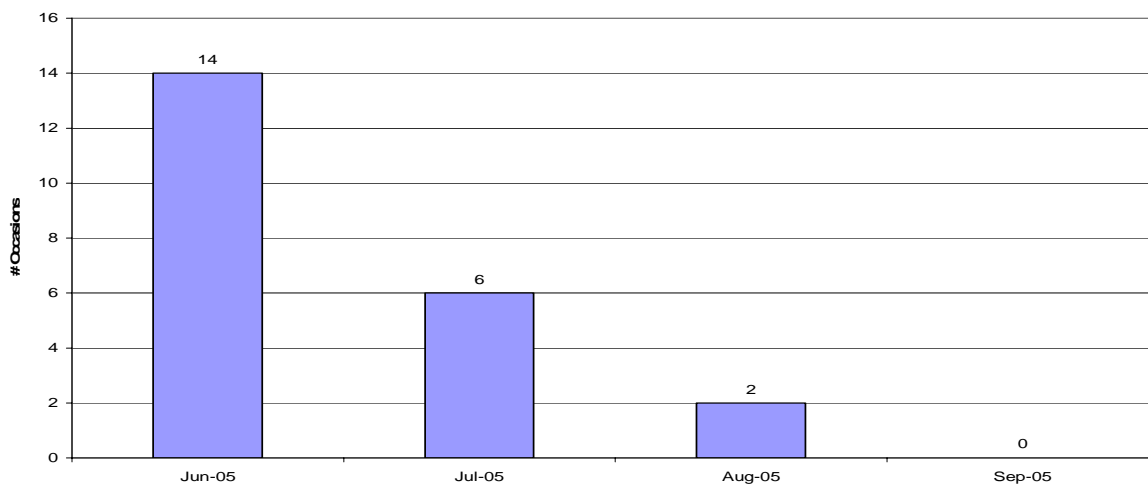


*Figure 4.* Board failures to address concerns related to performance evaluation

After the implementation of OB, I was able to demonstrate to the Board that by using the system, all of their governance process issues could be handled in an aligned and consistent manner. The Board agreed and the issues of how the Board would monitor performance were resolved. OB provided the tools and processes for the Board to respond to report content and to capture and communicate their concerns effectively. Using the system allowed Board members to understand and employ the process defined by PG.

At the June Board meeting, as shown in Figure 5, Board members initiated 14 discussions of non PG-related issues; and the Chair failed to redirect them. The decrease correlates with the decrease in non-PG behaviors described in Figures 2 and 3. The significance in Figure 5, then, is twofold: in June and July the Chair was learning the job and failed to direct the Board 14 and 6 times respectively. In August and September, the Chair was becoming better in his/her job because of recognition that he/she was authorized to redirect the Board. Two behaviors of the

Board have improved: (a) the Board has moved away from addressing non-PG issues and learned what they should talk about, and (b) the Chair is learning to redirect the Board if non-PG issues do come up. By September these two factors resulted in no instances where the chair either failed to direct the board to appropriate discussion or where the direction was not required because inappropriate issues were not raised.

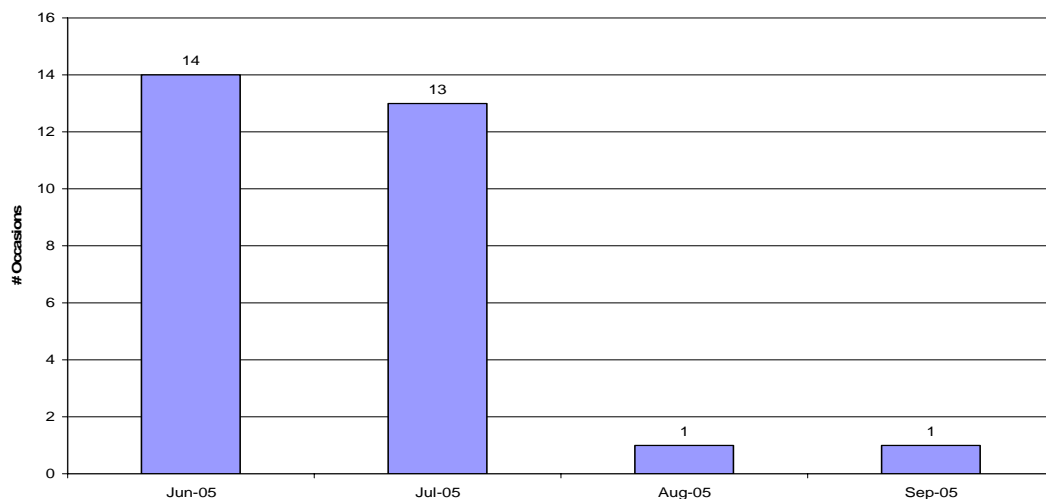


*Figure 5.* Number of instances where the Chair failed to redirect the board

There is additional evidence that validates the significance of data related to Figure 5. At the July meeting, the Chair stated that he/she “wanted everyone in the audience to understand that the Board is not in the business of micromanaging the institution.” The statement substantiates that the Chair was beginning to align the Board’s direction in the proper PG context. The Chair’s statement followed a comment that had just been made by the Interim President to the public advising them that a controversial decision was his and not the Board’s. The timing of the Chair’s statement indicates that the President and the Chair were developing the kind of relationship appropriate with the Chair’s authority to represent Board decisions and

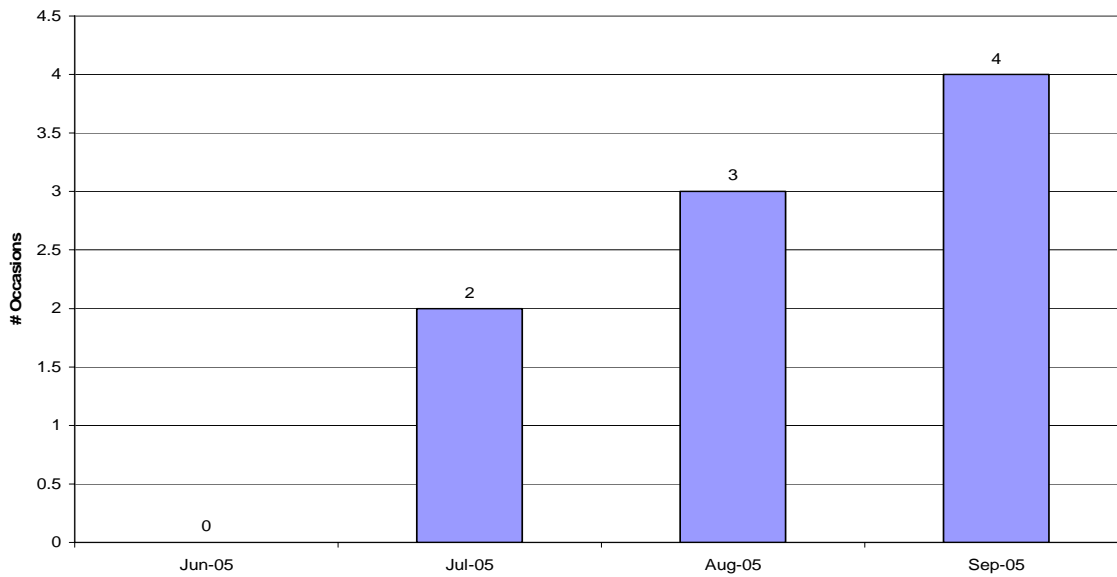
the responsibility of the President to achieve organizational Ends within limits set by the Board.

At the June meeting, Board members gave eight directives to the staff to do work or gather information for them. Under PG, the Board may only direct the President and not the staff. In stark contrast to the June directives, at the September meeting when there was a request that the Board authorize staff to engage in an activity, one Board member pointed out that the Board had no authority over staff. The Board changed the recommendation to direct the President instead of the staff. This reflects new Board understanding of the delegation of authority and the linkage to the organization as stated in their policies.



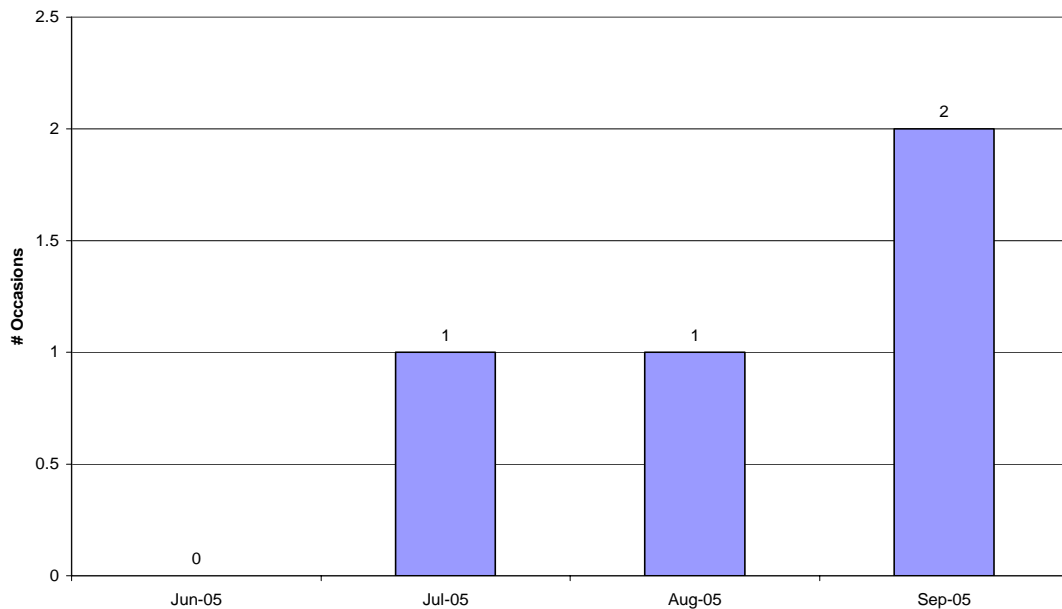
*Figure 6.* Number of instances the Board violated its own policies.

A PG board creates Governance Process and Board-President Linkage policies that document the principles under which they have chosen to govern. These policies also describe and prescribe how the board conducts its business. If a board violates these policies they are not meeting the standards they have set for themselves. After the introduction of OB the Board has managed to drastically reduce the number of times their actions or discussions are not consistent with their policies.



*Figure 7.* Number of occasions during the meeting when the Board referenced their policies

Figure 7 shows increased references by Board members to their policies, signifying a directional shift to the proper use of policies in framing discussions. The use of policy references by the Board members increased with the implementation of OB. Because every issue starts with the board examination of what they have said in policy, the more they refer to their policies the less they are reinventing the wheel. OB displays the relevant policy with each agenda item for immediate review. It's clear that the visual policy has aided in refocusing the board on their policy. The immediate visual display of the relevant policy may be one of the most significant factors influencing the behavior and effectiveness of the Board because a key factor in governance is understanding what they have said in policy.



*Figure 8.* Number of instances of Ends discussion.

Figure 8 highlights the number of occasions that the Board focused on discussion of or engaged in education related to Ends, which should be the dominant work of the Board. During July, August, and September, the Board specifically devoted meeting time to identifying with the taxpayers of the County and engaged in education related to Ends development.

*Tasks.* I provided follow-up with the Board. Board members were asked to complete tasks to reinforce initial training in the use of OB. Table 9 shows a sampling of tasks that they were asked to complete. All Board members completed their attempted tasks; DGB4 did not attempt the uncompleted tasks. Task completion validated that Board members were successful in using OB.

Table 9

*Post-training Tasks*

OB Task	DGB 1	DGB2	DGB3	DGB4
Locate Reference No. for Policies	✓	✓	✓	✓
View Consent Agenda and Attachments	✓	✓	✓	✓
Locate and view Minutes	✓	✓	✓	-
Use Reference No. & Open a PDF	✓	✓	✓	-
Propose Agenda Item	✓	✓	✓	-

*Note.* - Task not completed; ✓ Task completed correctly

## Discussion

With the data collection, compilation and analysis phase complete, attention can be transferred to an examination of the project and implementation phase. I will provide observations of the action research project: (a) attitudes encountered during the data-gathering process, (b) feedback to the organization, and (c) reflections on the action research. Four implementation plans will be presented based on recommendations from the participants.

*Attitudes Encountered During the Data-Gathering Process*

This study's sampling included a narrow range of Board members, which limits the study's ability to effectively generalize findings. It is possible that the sample consists of typical community college Board members, however, because the Interim President who had a great deal of experience with community college boards stated on several occasions that the College's Board was typical of other Community College Boards he had worked with. The Board

members are highly educated, with four Ph.D.s and one Masters. Ostrower and Stone (2005) reported that board composition does have consequences for trustees, boards as a whole, organizations, and the surrounding community, but much remains to be learned about the nature and consequences of board composition.

DGB4 chose not to participate in training with us. The Board member responded in the pre-test survey that he/she was not predisposed to technology and was not interested in learning the technology. In contrast, DGB2 was so responsive to OB that he/she immediately wanted to “go live” using only OB at the meeting, and stated that he/she would be an example and provide some incentive for DGB4. DGB1 was also very comfortable using the system early in the training and independently completed several governance tasks required of him/her before the session was over. DGB1 and DGB3 both expressed appreciation for everything being contained in the system. Both members explained that they have trouble keeping track of paper documents and can never find anything they need. During training, both commented that they liked the idea of OB because it eliminates the need to carry Board binders to meetings.

DGB1 provided significant input as to improvements he/she would like to see made in the system. DGB3 made concerted efforts to use all the features for all governance functions.

The attitudes of staff remained positive during the action research. Administrative assistants who began actively using the system for meeting preparation and to provide board information raved about it; they quickly used OB without difficulty and required minimal instruction to use it. Emails and phone calls were received by the President’s office from the internal community and even citizens who say they much prefer the new format and ease of getting the information. Even the new President, with the most minimal exposure, said: “I like it [OB]. We’re going to use it.” (New President, personal communication, September, 2005)



A key observation during the training of all Board members was that almost half of the interactive discussion centered on the principles and content of governance rather than on the basic use of the system. In this regard, the technology itself can be seen as a Trojan horse in that the real “gift” of OB lies beneath the surface. In learning to use the technology, Board members are really learning the tenets of PG. This confirmed the successful implementation of one of the primary design criteria of OB – the facility to support the processes of good governance.

I gained a much greater appreciation for and understanding of PG. From my perspective, Mr. Tooley and I developed an enhanced knowledge of how OB could revolutionize board governance. Through our discussions and communications, we reflected on how the introduction of PG is traditionally facilitated and how governance functions are carried out. We realize the significance of new approaches and efficiencies made possible through the use of OB which could be implemented by and benefit all boards. I learned techniques for individual instruction and about the challenges, resistance, and fears that some people have related to computer technology and resistance to change in general.

#### *Feedback to the Organization*

Providing feedback to the organization informs how to implement change. Although Board members are at the very early stages of OB use, they demonstrate a marked improvement in Board behavior in governing the College. By every measure they have demonstrated positive change in the areas of delegation of authority, explicit instructions to the President (via published policies), respect of roles and responsibilities, monitoring of presidential and organizational performance, and the execution of their duties as a Board. The Board is more properly directed in their Agenda content, has resolved multiple governance process issues through OB, and is rightfully talking about policy and their need to be more familiar with their policy. Importantly,

the Board Chair has begun directing the Board's focus and taking a leadership role in fostering PG with an increased focus on Ends.

After only 2 months of use the outgoing Interim President stated "This board is on the path to setting an example of excellence in governance for the entire country (Interim President, personal communication, August 18, 2005)."

Two extremely important groups stand to benefit most from this remarkable growth in organizational governance – the citizens of Yavapai County and the students that benefit from the Colleges' existence.

I discovered that the development of OB fully supports Board work requirements for both Board members and staff. The demands of governance on Board members and organizational staff are enormous, requiring significant time and costs related to meeting, including production and preparation of materials. It has become apparent through the beta test to-date that a well designed computer program in board management offers numerous advantages over traditional mechanisms for board information and workflow requirements and offers many features that contribute to efficiencies. However, the successful introduction and implementation of a computer-based technology system for governance would have to overcome a number of difficulties that are outlined in the sections that follow.

*Examples of how previous experience influences the action research.* I found that the implementation of OB was hindered by several factors, which included: (a) using the system was stressful to at least two Board members, (b) access to Board members was sometimes difficult, (c) two Board members who were not technology savvy had no ready assistance in their offsite locations to help them if they had problems using the system (d) the Board members did not advise me about the difficulties they were having, (e) resolving system issues sometimes

required meeting with Board members; this meant periods of downtime (f) two Board members were technologically marginalized, (g) Board members did not use the system, and (h) some Board members were highly challenging and over-focused on controlling process as a result of previous legal and political difficulties, which was counter-productive.

Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2005) as part of the World Bank Institute's Governance Indicators Research Project (and 'Governance Matters' series), study the "development dividend" of good governance and the salient implications for data and policy work. The development dividend is the achievement of results, in PG this is the Ends. The aim of the work is to enhance the capacity for effective governance and the researchers amply demonstrate what precision in governance looks like as well as its necessity (Kaufmann et al., 2005). OB provides the Board and College with the means to analyze in some detail changes over time in our system of governance and provides a framework for assessing the statistical significance of changes in governance. Thus, our results may be enhanced as new knowledge creates a higher performing organization, and analyses of data provides a basis for improved management strategies, and improves decision-support systems. Carver and Carver (1997) stress that knowledge of the theoretical framework of PG is important and acknowledges that the most difficult part of implementing the model is board resolve. The Board must change its habits and govern with purpose.

I made a number of assumptions about the Board's use of a computer-based board management system: (a) that the Board could learn to use the system, (b) that they would be provided with state-of-the art computers and high-speed internet connections, and (c) that they would take the time to learn about the system and respond to training tasks. I also assumed that

the use of the technology would improve the College's and Board's productivity, change our way of working, and facilitate the Board's use of PG.

I wondered if considerable resistance to embrace the use of new technologies to support Board processes had been observed and documented in governance literature. I was unable to locate any literature that discusses the use of technology by trustees or governing boards, or specifically the use of technology that implements a model of governance. However, Heermann (1998) can inform my research in that he encountered many problems while attempting to integrate computers into instructional curricula. An assessment of staff attitudes toward technology in teaching and learning has been detailed by Elliott (1989), who outlines instances of reluctance and resistance to new technology. Elliott argues that developing alternative perspectives on the role of computers begins with viewing the computer as a tool to support learning efforts, requiring generic software and specific content.

Fullan (2001) illustrated that effective change requires a combination of both pressure and support. The pressure described by Fullan translates to my expectations that the College's Board would participate in OB and support its use. Fullan described support as encompassing both the human and technological infrastructure that facilitates the implementation of a program. Pressure without support can lead to resistance and alienation, while support without pressure can lead to drift or waste (Fullan). He reported that resistance to pressure can be expected when moving to a large-scale change effort. The implications for these findings for the Board indicate that we should not be discouraged by instances of resistance or negative feedback, but should recognize that the implementation of OB represents a new level of technology-based initiatives that require Board participation. Further, it supports my intent to maintain a positive attitude when confronted with obstacles to change and to continually improve my approach to how I

respond to feedback and facilitate and support change. Board members need to be not only familiar with the technology for their Board work requirements, but they also need to be competent and totally comfortable with using the technology. Cheung and Huang (2005) proposed a framework to assess Internet usage in university education. The study supported the approach to improve Internet use through this action research in two ways -- effective support (including training) and social pressure from peers. Follow-up personal instruction is one way to meet any specific training needs of Board members and has proved successful in this action research. For example, when a new feature is implemented in OB, I ensure a notification is sent to Board members and provide a step-by-step guide to using the feature. Sometimes I walk the Board member through the feature over the telephone. In some cases, staff has made a "house call". I monitor the tasks Board members have to complete, such as; assessing the President's monitoring reports. If I notice that a Board member has not completed a report, follow-up is necessary to determine what the issue is. Several Board members are using PG terms routinely whereas previously they were not. When the Board Chair seeks advice on how to handle an issue, he/she wants to know what the PG context is. There is evidence that Board members who are applying the principles of PG are influencing the more resistant Board members. Evidence is beginning to show that the Board's progress in the use of the model is influencing the new President.

*Emerging issue with the new president.* The Board hired a new President nearing the end term of the action research. The President received an initial training session in the use of OB but has not used the system except for following the agenda during Board meetings. He expressed appreciation for the use of the technology and the agenda format, but he has a

traditional approach to working with the Board and promotes activities, actions, and behaviors that the Board successfully started to move away from.

There is an added sensitivity in this new Board/President relationship that hinges on the Board's painful recent history. On the one hand, the Board must ensure accountability and integrity in their own job, as well as the President's; on the other hand, the Board hopes that they have made a good decision in their choice of a new President. They will need to weigh the risks of challenging the traditional tendencies of their new President or not; but it is unclear whether they yet have enough skills and knowledge about the principles of PG to refocus the President. Although the concern arises about what will happen without a President supporting PG, recently in a meeting two Board members unmistakably redirected the President to conform to principles of PG. These are critical questions that will be answered as we continue through the action research cycle. I now recognize and appreciate how much the Interim President was a partner in the action research and what a major influence he had on facilitating change.

*Attitudes about the use of the technology.* The purpose of the Board survey was to uncover Board members' perceptions about their own technical skills so that their individual training needs could be met. The data revealed that half the Board members showed some resistance to computers. Two of the Board members provided qualitative responses that predicted a tendency towards uncertainty about the use of OB. As results indicated, two Board members expressed anxiety to questions about the use of OB. Survey evidence suggested that DGB4 is not interested in technology. DGB1 pointed out that it is critical to have the system working well at all times. DGB1's feedback provided a solution to technology resistance.

One risk of a beta-test is that it can further marginalize users who have low confidence and skill in technology because they are more easily frustrated and negative. One important fact

that I believe will advance the Board's skill in governing and the use of the technology is for the institution to establish "an office" that facilitates effective governance. Issues described in the literature review magnify the "second-class" status of organizations' highest authority. It may be that an office of board leadership or excellence in governance will be formed from continued evolution of the action research. Cheung and Huang (2005) illustrated that in order to have positive perceptions and attitudes toward Internet use, students needed to possess good Internet skills so that they did not become frustrated by software complexity. Perceived usefulness, positive perceptions and attitudes correlated with greater usage and better effectiveness (Cheng & Huang). Their findings suggest that providing support and training opportunities, and using the tools in tasks and projects, led to greater usage and more effective learning, correlating with positive attitude. Also, reduced complexity of the technology enhanced attitude. These findings support what I have experienced in my work with the Board and the input the Board has provided.

*Improving a Board's knowledge of principles.* The job of governing is complex and challenging especially for board members with no formal training for the role. The Board as a group struggles as they search for ways to reach new plateaus of effective governance. They do not yet have a depth of understanding of the fundamental principles of governance that are essential to success in the job and, consequently, in the organization being governed. There is no doubt that an application such as OB provides a template for all aspects of governance success (through the implementation of the PG model). It also exposes the complexity of the job while, at the same time, provides the tools to master it. The "learning curve" is as much about discovering the skills required to govern as it is about using a particular technology.

*My Reflections*

My emerging understanding of facilitating this action research went far beyond what I had envisioned in terms of an ‘action plan.’ The process of action research was intense from the perspective of putting all the pieces in place and gaining Board member and executive and administrative staff involvement. It was particularly challenging because of the tumultuous times that we were going through. I was very close to the difficulties because of my position and I worked directly for three presidents during the course of the year I was trying to implement the action research project. The project really began when I discovered that a board management system had been developed that fully implemented the PG model. Yavapai College was at a tipping point and I thought that perhaps the new technology could radically facilitate the Board’s understanding and use of PG. There was enormous pressure on the Board to change. I have witnessed how OB orchestrated change because it provided an answer to so many of the Board’s processes, activities, and concerns that caused them great difficulty. Based on present evidence, I imagine that, as we go forward, there will continue to be an evolution in the Board’s use of the system.

A few highlights have been emphasized to depict the progress that was achieved by the project. These highlights were extracted from various communications, after several of the improvements had been made and follow the order of the action research model of planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

1. “Let’s get everything looking like OB – if we’re going to use it; let’s use it.”  
(New President, personal communication, September, 2005)
2. “Policy Governance should diminish the likelihood of a repeat of some of the problems the board experienced in at least two ways. First, the emphasis will be



on Ends, thus avoiding micromanagement. Second, continuous review of the president's performance in the public's eye, should reduce the criticisms related to CEO oversight." (Interim President, personal communication, July 15, 2005).

3. "I think these two policies will accomplish what I have in mind. Having this proposed policy to consider is GREAT" – (Board Chair, personal communication, July 27, 2005).
4. "I want to change the motion to read, 'Direct the President; under our policies we cannot direct the staff.'" - Board action, August 9, 2005.
5. "How about we use me as the guinea pig for doing one of the Board policy evaluations? That way you can train me, we can work through the process and see how our idea of adopting the same process as the President's monitoring reports works." (Board member, personal communication, August 18, 2005)
6. "I didn't know much about Policy Governance when I came to the College, but I have to say, 'I got religion.'" (Interim President, personal communication, first meeting of the Leadership Team with the New President, August 2005)

In terms of the design of the data gathering methods that I used, there is one thing that I would do differently. I would redesign the survey instruments to be web-based using intelligent survey software that fully automated the process, collected responses, and analyzed results.

### *Mr. Tooley's Reflections*

Mr. Tooley provided his reflections on the process. Here is what he said:

[When Terry Walsh first approached me regarding the beta testing of OB at Yavapai College, I only had a glimpse of the challenges their Board faced in governing the college. The Board experienced many stresses and pressures that included: (a) OML

compliance, (b) challenges in managing a President, (c) learning and applying a model of governance even though they had years of exposure to the principles, and (d) challenges in how the Board operated its own processes.

As the project progressed, I became more aware of these conditions to the extent that Terry exclaimed that as a beta test of our application, this Board would have experienced more “history” than an average Board and could stand to reap large benefit from an application such as OB. This was not to be a “cut and dried” example of a “run of the mill” Board, so it would be an excellent test of our system.

Terry had the vision, energy, and position to bring OB to the organization. She had the difficult task of becoming a Policy Governance expert and convincing those she worked with how they could benefit from the model. This included both Board members and senior administrative staff.

The college operated OB for approximately four months before board training occurred. The processes and capabilities were thoroughly examined by Terry and her team, but OB acceptance by Board members was far from a sure thing. Board training took place in July, 2005.

The training went extremely well with a very positive response from participants. Two computer literate board members were using features of the system comfortably by the end of the training and actually completed monitoring report assessments independently. I found Board members to be very competent individuals who are highly motivated to deliver effective governance to the organization.

The first agenda set in OB had a number of governance process items for the Board to decide on. Since these procedures are Policy Governance compliant, the Board

adopted them readily after brief discussion. Using the system also pointed out the work needed by the board on setting Ends policies which make up the primary directive on what the organization, led by the President, is to achieve. Decisions made at the next Board meeting directly addressed these requirements.

The data Terry provides demonstrates the Board is focusing on activities important to achieve a new higher level of governance functionality. With continued use of the system and the ongoing tasks Terry is assigning, the Board is making great strides towards Policy Governance® model compliance and effective governance. Terry's work with the Yavapai College District Governing Board provides ground breaking data that measurably demonstrates how a board (and the organization it governs) can benefit from truly utilizing the principles and process detailed in the Policy Governance model. OurBoardroom provided the support system to migrate the board from simply using the model in principle to actually experiencing it in practice. Exercising Policy Governance through OurBoardroom provides a practical way for DGB members to capture and express their values as they govern the college on behalf of the taxpayers of Yavapai County.

The ramifications of this successful project extend far beyond the boundaries of Yavapai County. This board can serve as an example to other governing boards across the country, not only in the area of education, but also in other public, not-for-profit and corporate sectors. The reach, in fact, is world wide as the experiences and lessons learned here will provide a foundation for work in quietly revolutionizing governance in some of the world's largest organizations.]

### *Actions as a Result of Findings*

This section outlines the actions that I am putting in place as a result of what I've learned and that has been described in the data analysis, results, and discussion sections of this paper.

There is evidence that OB usage has a positive impact on Board member's learning the PG model and a positive impact on Board member's attitude about using the model. The results provide justification for the investment made by the Board and College in OB technology to govern the institution. There is further evidence that the use of OB would allow a college, non-profit, or for-profit company to better allocate financial and human resources to promote good governance. Based on the research findings and research model, the plan for specific measures that will be implemented at the College to effectively increase and enhance the performance of the Board and College include: (a) continued training using two motivators, (b) Ends development, (c) developing indices to measure Board performance, and (e) educating stakeholders in the Board's use of the PG model.

*Continued training using two motivators.* A focus of staff is to continue to provide good training, monitor member's progress in using OB, and through personalized support, reduce complexities in using the system. A new member has just been appointed to the Board and received an initial training in OB within a week of appointment.

The College staff and Board members, particularly proactive Board members, must be involved in all the Board members' use of OB, using social pressure to foster greater use of not only the technology but the model. Education and development work in governance process has been scheduled for the Board.

*Ends development.* The single most important action resulting from my research project is the understanding and setting of Ends for the organization. How this Board can come to grips

with determining how the organization affects or contributes to the community and at what cost, are the most essential elements of governance. The implementation of PG through OB has provided the framework for the beginning of a highly motivated Board with a realization that they hadn't done a significant part of their job -- their Ends policies are vacant. The Board members have voiced this as a limitation to their performance (Yavapai College, 2005). This significant recognition is a direct result of OB training.

The Board is now regularly meeting with taxpayer groups and gathering educational information from experts as part of a routine cycle to develop and refine Ends statements for the College. For the next action, a consultant will be brought in to work with the Board in their Ends development in the first part of 2006. The timing is excellent for the new Board member to engage in the Ends work. Key people in the organization will also participate in the workshops.

The relationship between the board and the president is one that will be a natural focus of the Ends work with the consultant. A consequential action is to enhance the President's understanding of the PG model in order to change his attitude about the way he wishes to interact with the Board. As the Board is being facilitated to develop Ends, a critical parallel process is facilitating the President's understanding that the Board's directives to him can change the entire direction of the institution. There is a powerful opportunity to have the new President see how, depending on which options of Ends the Board might create and in a very few sentences, his life is going to be very different.

Further, the President must understand how his interpretation of the board's policies is crucial to directing the entire organization towards achieving compliance with those policies. It is through the process of policy interpretation that the President can inspire and lead the organization to innovation and higher achievement.

*Measure board performance.* The third action is that the Board determines what metrics they would like to use to measure their own performance and the President's performance. For example, what does the Board want to know, what information can we track over time, that will demonstrate that they are making progress in governance? The Board may say they want members to be prepared for meetings, an obligation that they set for themselves. A measurement could be how much time a Board member spent online before a meeting within three to seven days prior to the meeting. If a Board member didn't spend time online before a meeting, he/she isn't fulfilling the obligations. It's likely that if a Board member doesn't read documents in OB, then they also aren't reading paper documents. It's far too common that Board members open documents for the first time at the meeting. This failure undermines the efforts of the rest of the Board members who do spend time preparing for meetings. Charting the time Board members spend in the system is linked to the setting of Ends because the Board wants to see what kind of success they have in assessing the monitoring reports, what kind of compliance, and what kind of interactions are occurring between the Board and the President. OB fully automates and implements monitoring of performance and can provide ready metrics for the Board's assessment of performance.

*Stakeholders and internal community.* It is important to follow the recommendation of the Interim President who observed that: "The next most important step is not with the board, but with the staff. The board is getting out ahead of them in the understanding and application of PG. This is dangerous as it can lead to a disconnect between staff expectations and board roles under PG" (personal communication, July, 2005). Carver and Carver (1997) bolster this view in pointing out that it is important to let the public and stakeholders know that the Board is

governing in a manner of meaningful accountability on behalf of taxpayers. Action is to continue introducing the principles of PG with constituents.

### *Conclusion*

The literature describes the lack of effectiveness of governing boards when they focus on insignificant issues; fail to distinguish between policy and administration, or lack leadership abilities and vision. The literature supports the PG model as it contains the principles key to effective governance that are described throughout the literature.

The action research project transformed the Board's failed governance system. OB provided a technology solution for effective governance. There is no doubt that an application such as OB provides a template for all aspects of governance success (through the implementation of the PG model). It also exposes the complexity of the job while, at the same time, provides the tools to master it. The "learning curve" is as much about discovering the skills required to govern as it is about using a particular technology.

The Board recognized that OB strengthened its governance and, as a result of this action research, has made a commitment to continued use of the technology. The Board's success with OB has given them confidence to state that they have, indeed, committed to the PG model.

Footnotes

1. Copyright John and Miriam Carver, 2004. Policy Governance is a registered service mark of John Carver.
2. Copyright OurBoardroom Technologies Inc. OurBoardroom is a trade mark of OurBoardroom Technologies Inc.



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## Appendix A

### General Description of OurBoardroom:

OurBoardroom is an integrated board management system designed to fully support John Carver's Policy Governance model for board operation. It is accessible via the Internet for secure access to board documentation, both current and historical. Workflow features help board members and staff complete their assigned tasks easily and efficiently. Simply using the system reinforces the principles of Policy Governance, greatly reducing the complexity of implementing and maintaining the model.

### Features of OurBoardroom:

1. "Real time" management of the board policy manual, agendas, minutes, monitoring reports, and other documentation required for a fully Policy Governance compliant board.
2. Easy access to historical board documents, either through a general search feature or by specific navigation (for example, clicking through the revision history of any specific policy)
3. Traditional board documents can be downloaded for printing and off-line use.
4. Individual board member and CEO/staff task scheduling with private reminders for users responsible for task completion.
5. "Board metrics" that includes status information on timeliness of task completion (reports, reviews, etc.), % of policies that are reported in or out of compliance, attendance, and other factors.
6. Fast and simple proposed agenda item submission by board or staff members with an agenda management system for board administrators.

7. Easy single click access to review past minute entries on specific issues allows new board members to hit the ground running and experienced members to recall historical details.
8. Support for board members attending meetings via conference call.
9. Support for managing board work between meetings (such as reviewing monitoring reports and contributing responses that are viewable by other board members, thereby greatly facilitating meeting time)
10. Highly secure environment that protects information and allows only those with “rights” to view it.
11. Event communication (such as policy modification, monitoring report submission, etc.) to all appropriate users when they log on. Optional email reminder system may be used for reminders.
12. Policy Governance knowledge/help system with examples for effective use of the model.

#### Future Features of OurBoardroom

1. Sharing of policy sets between boards that are part of a collection (such as school boards in a state, medical boards, pension boards, etc.)
2. Integration of multi tiered board organization such as those with national, state, regional and local boards, with multi tiered operational organizations operating under those various boards.
3. Integration of SOX and other operational data summaries into CEO monitoring reports (as specified by the CEO)
4. On-line voting and board meetings.
5. Audio and video conferencing via Internet (when practical)



## Appendix B

## Yavapai College Governing Board Survey

This questionnaire has been designed to determine the training needs of District Governing Board members in the use of *OurBoardroom*. The information gathered will be used by Yavapai College and *OurBoardroom* to ensure that Board members are offered the necessary training and facilitate the implementation of *OurBoardroom*.

Thank you for your time.

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## Technology Needs Assessment: Using *OurBoardroom*

### Core Computer Skills

1. Please indicate your level of knowledge of each skill listed.

Item	No			Self	
	Knowledge			Sufficient	
Connecting to the Internet	1	2	3	4	5
Opening multiple programs on your computer	1	2	3	4	5
Using a web browser (like Internet Explorer)	1	2	3	4	5
Using an email program (like Outlook)	1	2	3	4	5
Switching between windows on you computer	1	2	3	4	5
Using a word processor (like Microsoft Word)	1	2	3	4	5
Entering text into forms on the computer screen	1	2	3	4	5
Using windows (resizing, closing, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Using Menus and Toolbar icons in programs	1	2	3	4	5

Finding where your files are stored	1	2	3	4	5
Using a programs help system	1	2	3	4	5
Viewing “PDF” (portable document file) documents	1	2	3	4	5
Search for a file on your computer	1	2	3	4	5
Print a file or document	1	2	3	4	5

## Learning Needs

2. *OurBoardroom* has been designed to be very easy to use with familiar descriptions of standard board activities. Which of the following items might be an obstacle to your learning about using a new computer program, for example 1 for the item that poses the greatest obstacle, 2 as the second greatest obstacle, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_Lack of time

\_\_\_\_\_Lack of suitable computer equipment

\_\_\_\_\_Lack of support

\_\_\_\_\_Basic skills

\_\_\_\_\_Incentive

\_\_\_\_\_Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

- 3. Which methods of learning would best suit your needs? Please rank each method in terms of its priority, for example 1 for the method that will best meet your needs, 2 as the second priority and so on....**

\_\_\_\_\_ Classroom training sessions delivered by staff

\_\_\_\_\_ One-to-one training from staff

\_\_\_\_\_ On-line training via telephone with a shared computer screen

\_\_\_\_\_ Support and advice via telephone and/or email

\_\_\_\_\_ Time at a board meeting to get help on specific topics

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

- 4. What are the best days and times for staff to provide one-on-one, face-to-face training?**

Circle those that apply:      Mon.    Tues.    Wed.    Thurs.    Fri.    Sat.    Sun.

Circle those that apply:      Morning              Afternoon              Evening

- 5. Delivery: Please choose your training site by placing a checkmark next to your preference.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you want staff to come to your office or home?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you want to come to a college site for training? \_\_\_\_\_ Which campus or center?

## Core Governance Skills

6. To help us customize board training please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

*Check one for each statement.*

Statement	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree
I understand how Policy Governance® can significantly enhance the governance of the college			
I understand the following concepts and principles of the Policy Governance® Model:			
The board's role on behalf of the ownership and ownership linkage			
Delegation of authority to the President			
The board's role is to govern and not act as an advisory board to college management			
The structure of Policies			
Ends and Executive Limitations Policies are the boards' directions to the President			



It's about time technology based tools are available to help board members after operations have had them for many years.			
The board will benefit by having an integrated tool to help it govern.			
It is good to have a board support tool that reduces the use of email to do board work.			
Using a governance support program such as <i>OurBoardroom</i> will reduce administrative costs.			
Availability of technical support will be very important when using a computer based board support tool.			

- 8. Please list any concerns or comments you have regarding governance and the use of technology to help you govern.**

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- 9. What are the benefits in using a computer application program for helping the board do its job? Rank these in order of the most significant benefit, for example, 1 for the most beneficial, 2 for the next highest benefit, etc.**

\_\_\_\_\_ To provide higher levels of service to citizens of Yavapai County

\_\_\_\_\_ To reduce administrative costs

\_\_\_\_\_ Support for Board members

\_\_\_\_\_ Facilitation of Board work

\_\_\_\_\_ Transparency

\_\_\_\_\_ Compliance with Open Meeting Law

\_\_\_\_\_ Decrease in staff support hours

\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Post-test survey replaced:

### ***Learning Needs***

1. After the training do you feel you have the skills to log on to and use *OurBoardroom*?

\_\_\_\_\_Yes      \_\_\_\_\_No

If No, where do you feel you need help?

Post-test survey added:

10. Overall what are your impressions of *OurBoardroom*?

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## Appendix C

## Interview Questions with Yavapai College President and Staff

The interview questions have been designed to gather your impressions about the College's use of Policy Governance<sup>®</sup>. The information gathered will be used by the researcher to ensure that Board members are offered the training required to provide a basis for the development of confidence and competence in the use of OurBoardroom and to help staff benefit from the implementation of the application. Thank you for your time.

1. What is your biggest obstacle to working with the College's Governing Board?
2. What impact does this have on your job?
3. How do you see the board's continued use of Policy Governance<sup>®</sup> as helping to overcome these obstacles?
4. How has the board's use of Policy Governance<sup>®</sup> changed your job for better or worse?
5. What areas of the board's use of the Policy Governance<sup>®</sup> Model do you believe need the most attention?
6. What do you base your impressions on?
7. In what area do you feel the Board has made the most progress in the use of the Model?
8. How do you know this?
9. What do you see as the best way you can provide support for the Board as they mature as a Policy Governance board?
10. How many hours do you spend a week on Board matters?
11. How much other staff time is spent on supporting the Board?
12. How does that compare with the time you spend a week on organizational matters?
13. Is there any additional information or thoughts you would like to share?

**Post-*OurBoardroom* implementation questions:**

14. What difference has the Board's progress in the use of PG model made in your work?
15. What difference has the use of OurBoardroom made in your work?
16. What difference has Policy Governance and OurBoardroom made to how the board does its work?
17. Where is there room for improvement in your work; the Board's work?
18. What other feature(s) would you like to see in OurBoardroom?

## Appendix D

## Yavapai College Governing Board Observation

This sheet has been designed to gather data on certain behaviors and discussions of Board members through direct observation by the researcher during Board meetings. Data is used to determine if Board discussions relate to principles of Policy Governance® (PG). Seven of the nine areas in the matrix are deemed by Carver (1997) to be indicators that a Board is not practicing PG. Two categories of observation indicate the Board is using tenets of the Model Individual Board members identity will remain confidential.

	14-Jun	12-Jul	9-Aug	13-Sep
Length of Board Meetings				
# Agenda items not related to Policy Governance				
# Discussions of trivia, self interest				
# Instances failed to monitor president's performance				
# Instances failed to evaluate board's performance				
#Instances Board Chair failed to direct board				
#Board requests to staff				
# Instances board violated own policy				
# Board references to policy				
#Activities Related to Ends				