



The Council of
Independent Colleges

Building Places
of Promise:
**Unlocking
Student
Success**

2025 Institute for Chief Academics Officers with
Chief Student Affairs Officers and Chief Student Success Officers
November 1–4, 2025 🗝️ JW Marriott, Indianapolis, IN

Workshop for New Chief Academic Officers

Presented by



The Council of
Independent Colleges

2025 Institute for Chief Academics Officers with
Chief Student Affairs Officers and Chief Student Success Officers

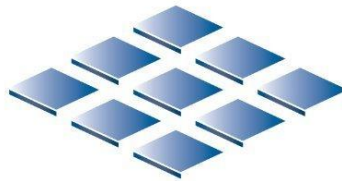


Building Places of Promise:
Unlocking Student Success

- Gerald Griffin
Provost
Hope College (MI)
- Catharine O'Connell
Provost and Dean of the College
Illinois College



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*Thank you for
taking on this
critical
leadership role
to benefit
students and
communities!*



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Building Places of Promise:
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The Role(s) of the Chief Academic Officer:

Chief Officer for...

Shared
Governance

Faculty
Recruitment

Faculty
Evaluation

Accreditation

Instructional
Technology

Student
Academic Support

Academic
Budgets

Academic
Planning

Program
Development

Retention

Pedagogy

Research

Academic
Grants

Faculty
Development

Experiential
Learning

In some cases

Student Life

Athletics

AND 2nd in command to the President



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Framing Question:

Are you new to the institution as CAO?

No – served on faculty here

- Challenge for you and for your faculty colleagues to see you in new role (going to the ‘dark side’)
- Seeing the institution you thought you knew in a new light
- Benefit of knowing the players

Yes – hired from another institution

- Challenge of moving fast while building relationships; need to establish trust
- Little knowledge of institutional history or culture
- Benefit of ‘clean slate’ and (relatively) few preconceptions



Framing Question:

Is the president new or well established?

New (began in 2023 or later)

- Opportunity for transformational partnership
- Challenge that neither President or CAO knows the pitfalls
- Community may be leery of double dose of new leadership; especially if there is turnover elsewhere

Established (began 2022 or prior)

- Challenge of following in the footsteps of a previous CAO
- Benefit that the community is not adjusting to two new leaders
- President likely has well articulated vision and strategy (can be good or bad)



Framing Question:

What has been the pace of change?

Extreme

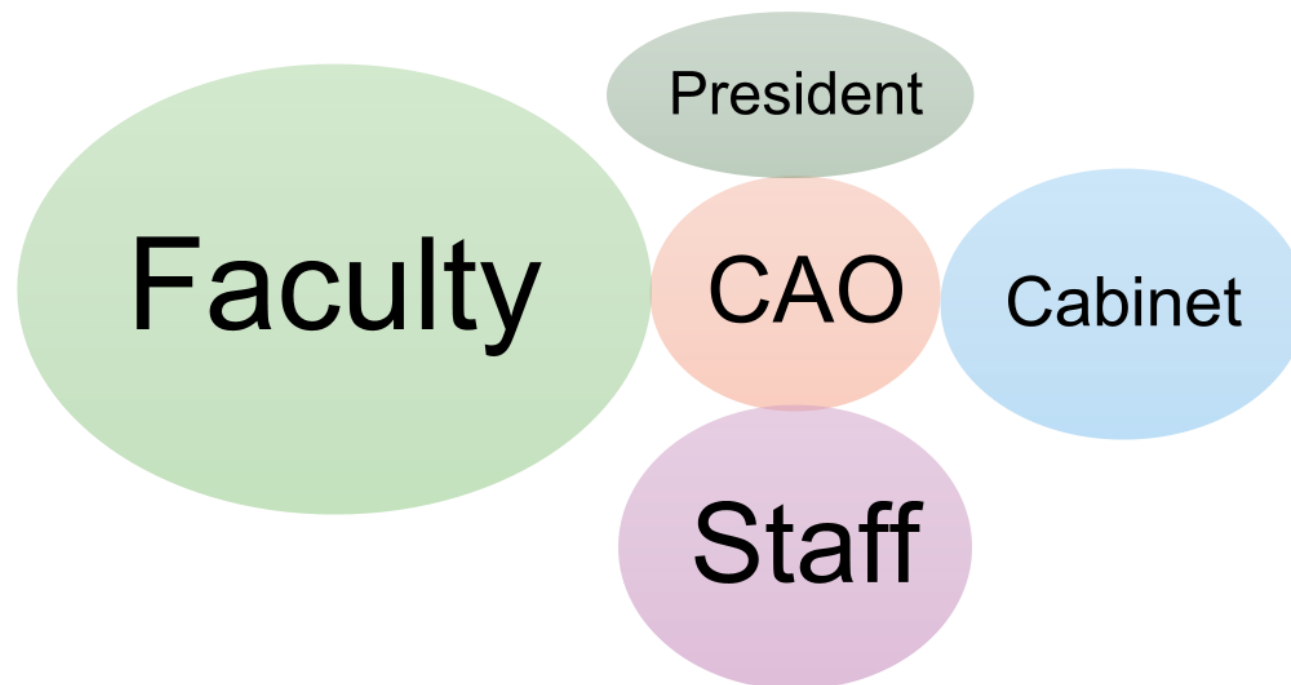
- Community may feel 'change fatigue'
- Faculty may experience existential fear
- Likely some degree of cynicism
- Community may recognize the reality of challenging higher-education environment

Moderate

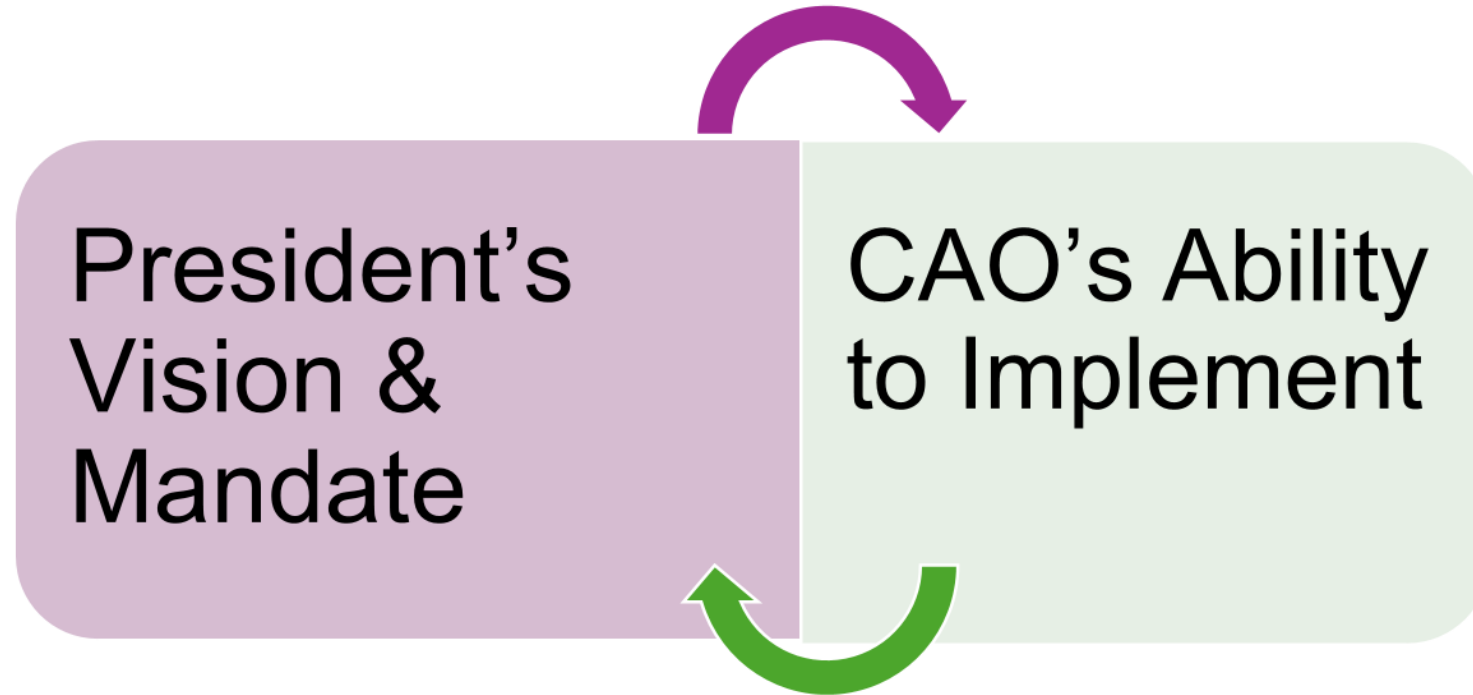
- If change is now necessary, possibly a long education process will be necessary
- Even incremental change may feel monumental, especially to faculty
- Possibly opportunity to engage without triggering immediate defensiveness



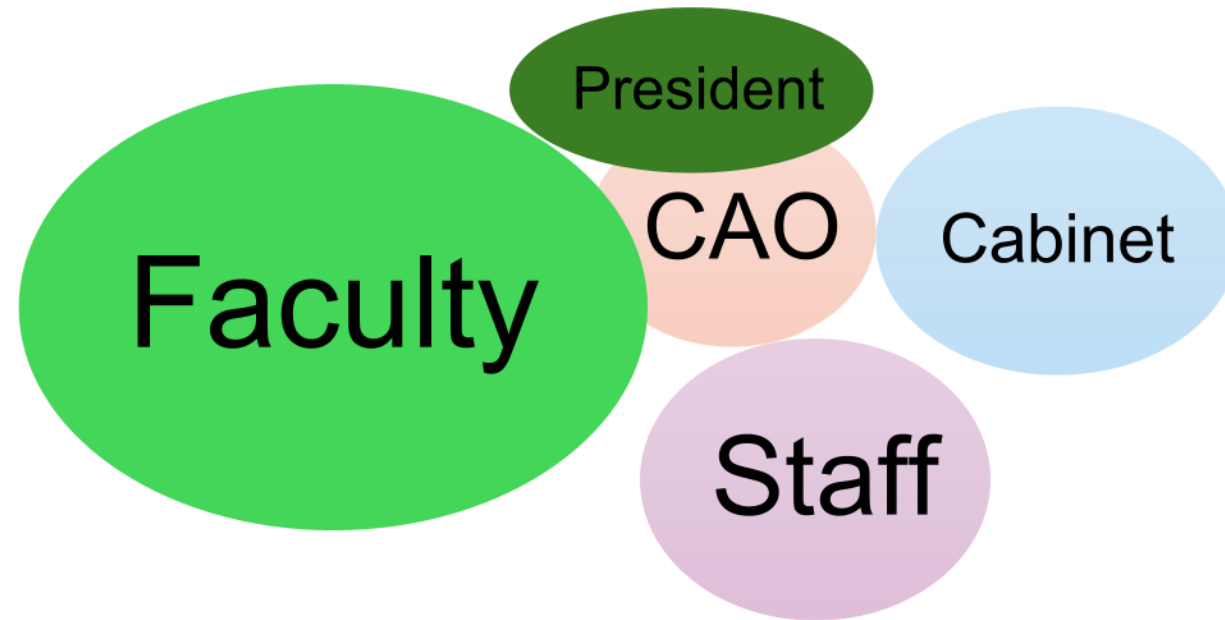
Critical Relationships for the CAO



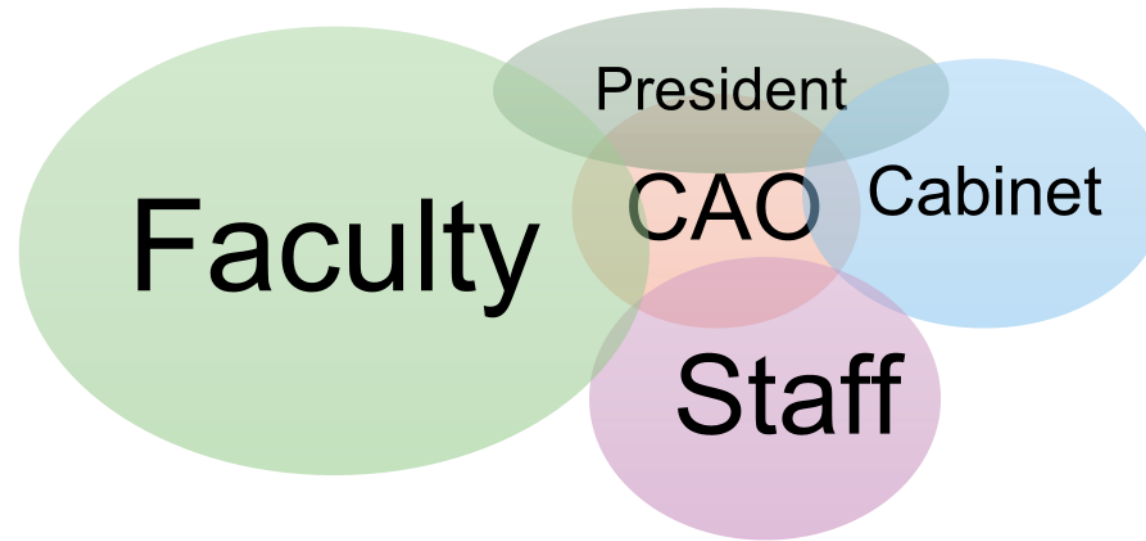
The Essential Partnership: President and CAO



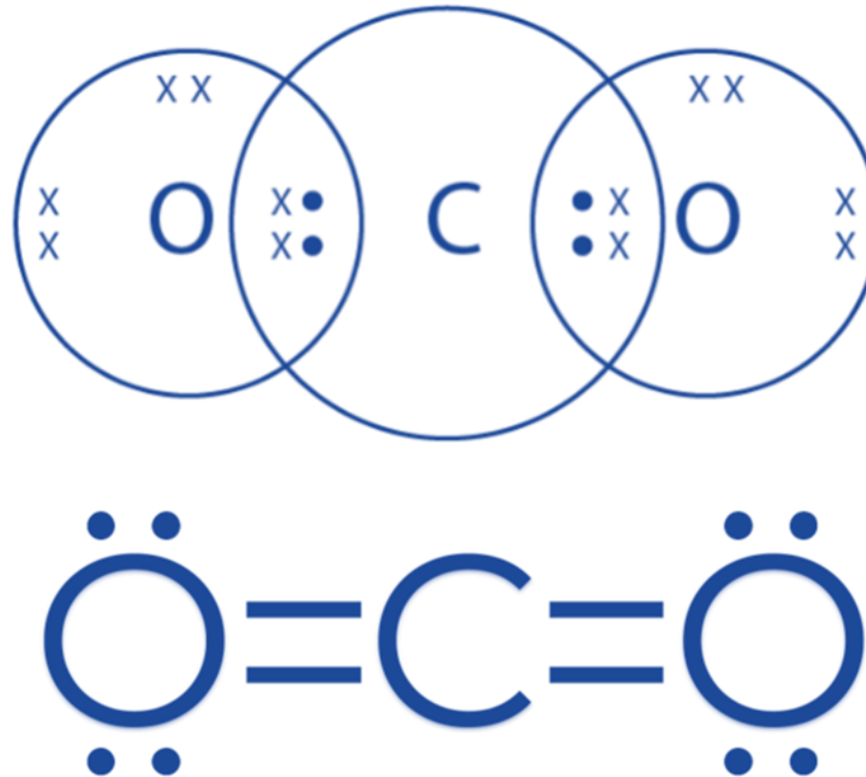
The CAO's Temptation – Focus Too Narrowly



Relationships Overlap and Interact



Human Resources: Critical Bond for the CAO



<https://byjus.com/question-answer/draw-the-electron-dot-structures-of-the-following-compounds-and-state-the-type-of-bonding/>



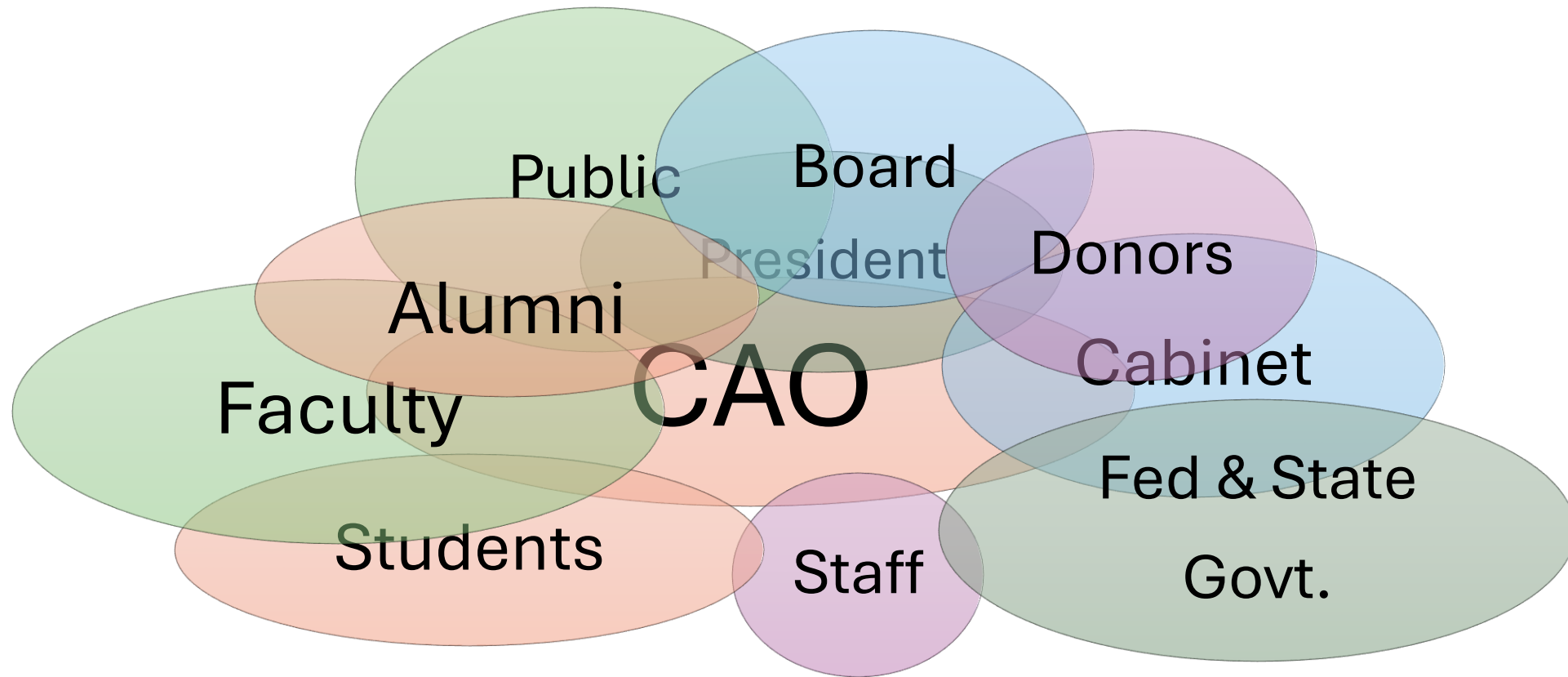
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The CAO's Relationships Extend Widely



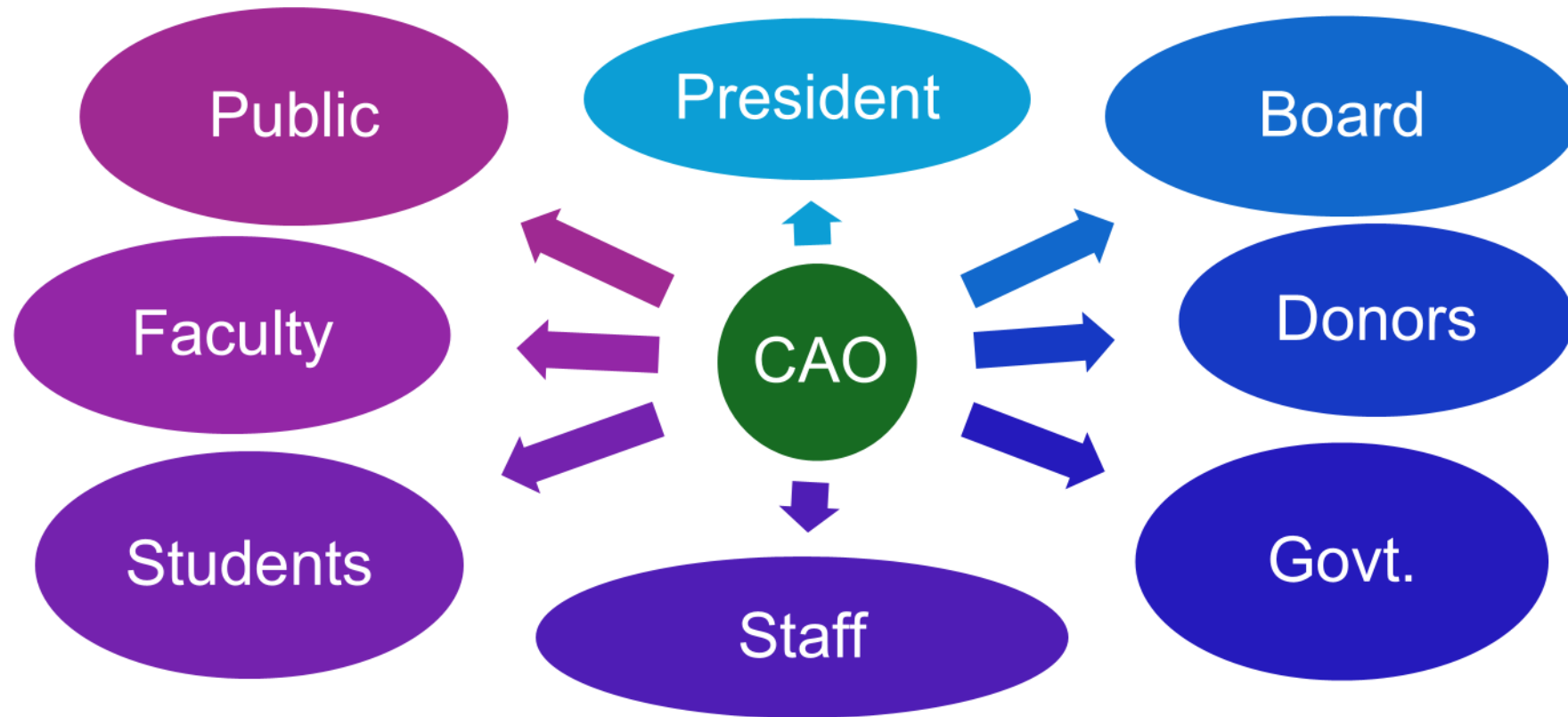
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Relationships Are Dynamic and Demanding



Relationships Are Sources of Healing & Help



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Q&A



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