The Council of Independent Colleges

# Creating **Tomorrow's Institutions,** Together

## 2026 Institute for Chief Academic Officers with Chief Advancement, Enrollment, Financial, and Marketing Communication Officers

November 7–10, 2026 ■ Baltimore, Maryland

# Workshop for New Chief Academic Officers

Presented by

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  Provost
  Hope College (MI)
- Catharine O’Connell
  Provost and Dean of the College
  Illinois College

# Thank you to our sponsor



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



# 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

# 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 2024 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 2023 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?

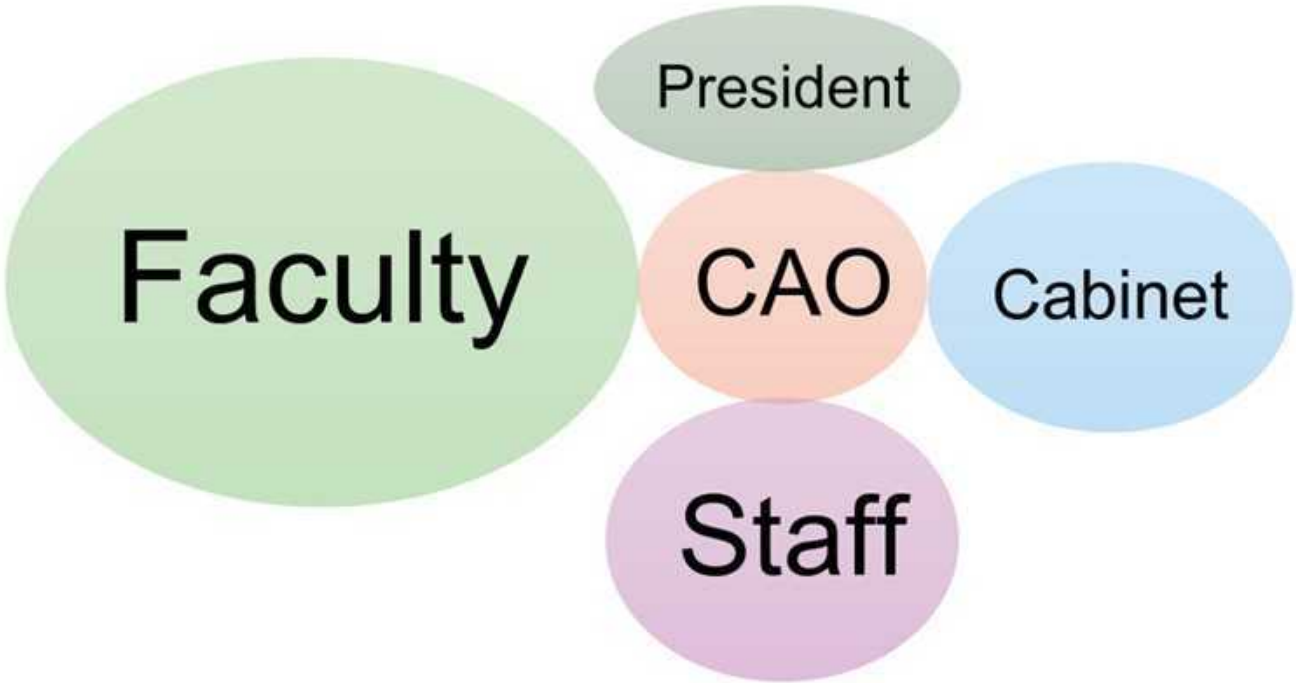
**Extreme**

- 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

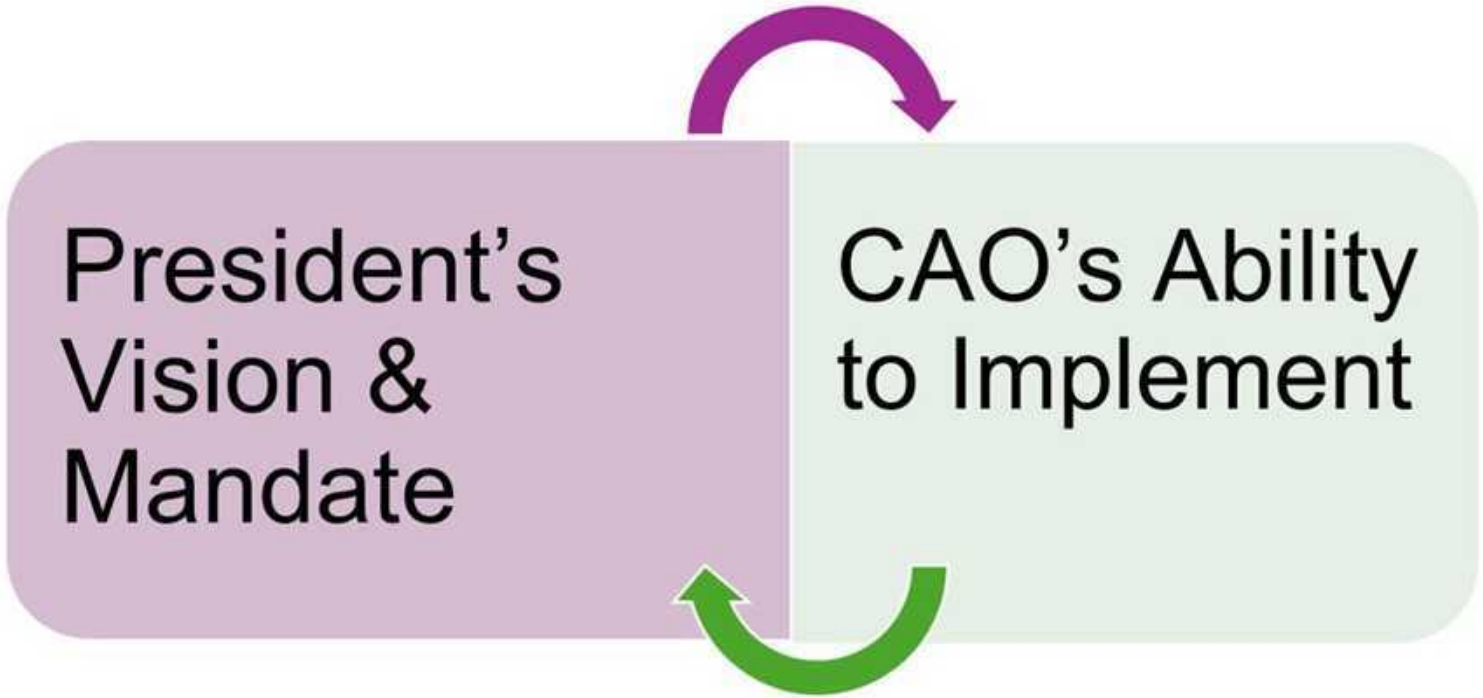
**Moderate**

- 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

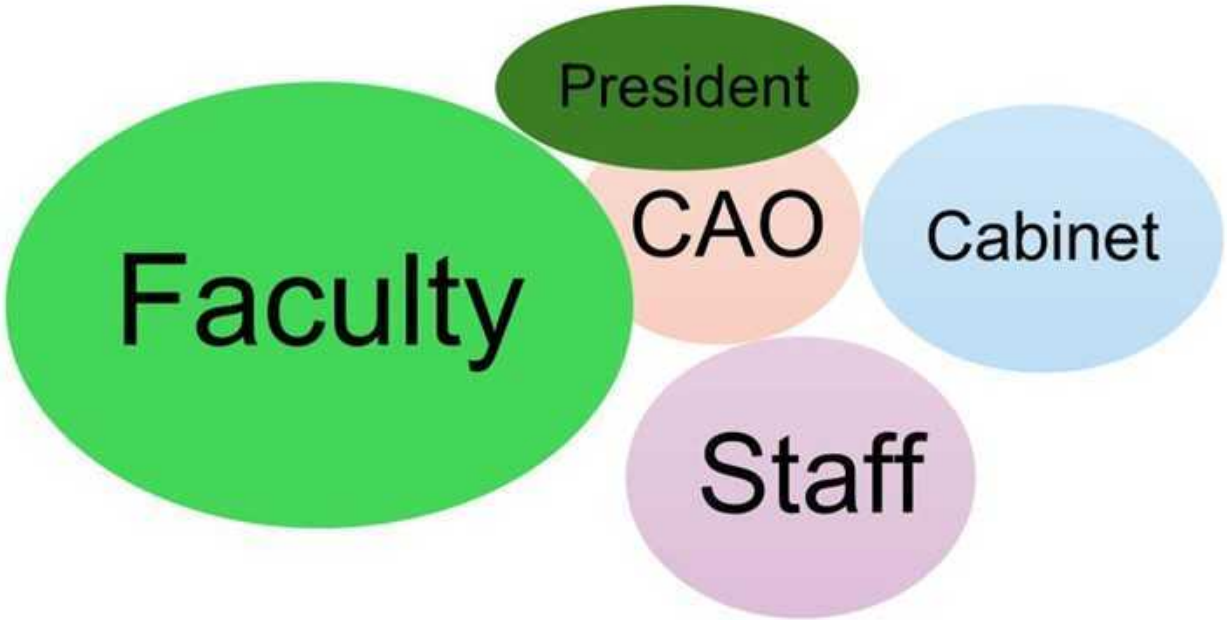
# Critical Relationships for the CAO



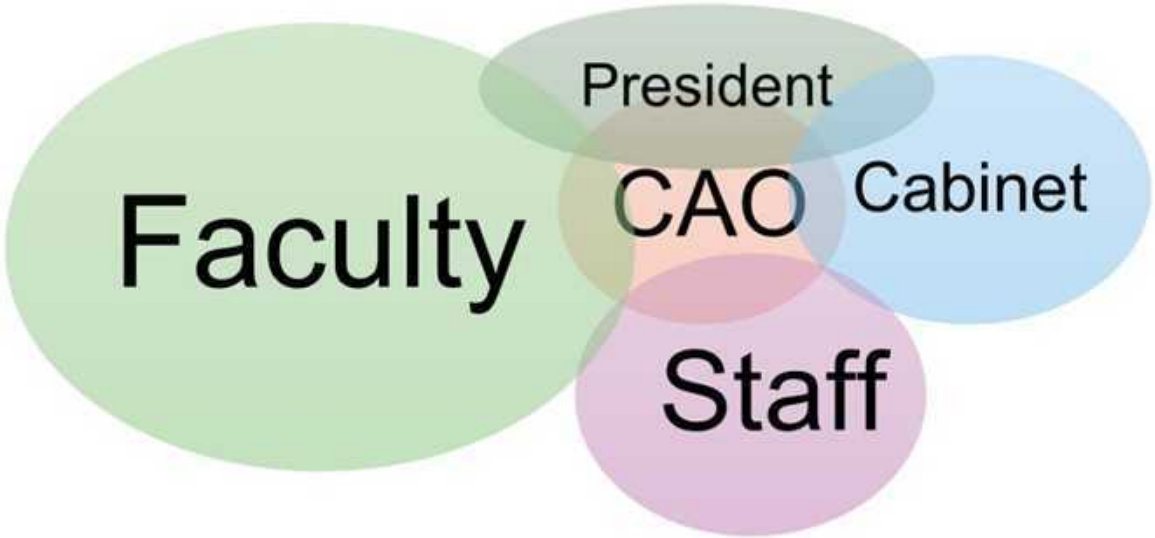
# The Essential Partnership: President and CAO



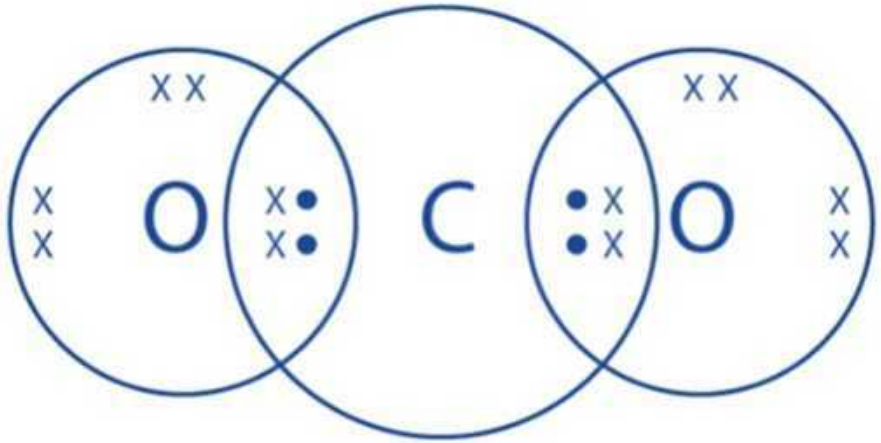
# The CAO's Temptation – Focus Too Narrowly

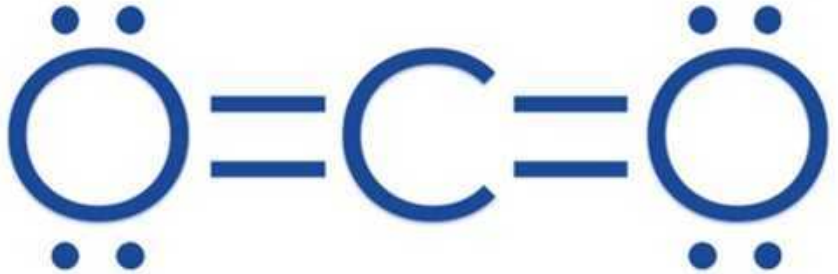


# Relationships Overlap and Interact



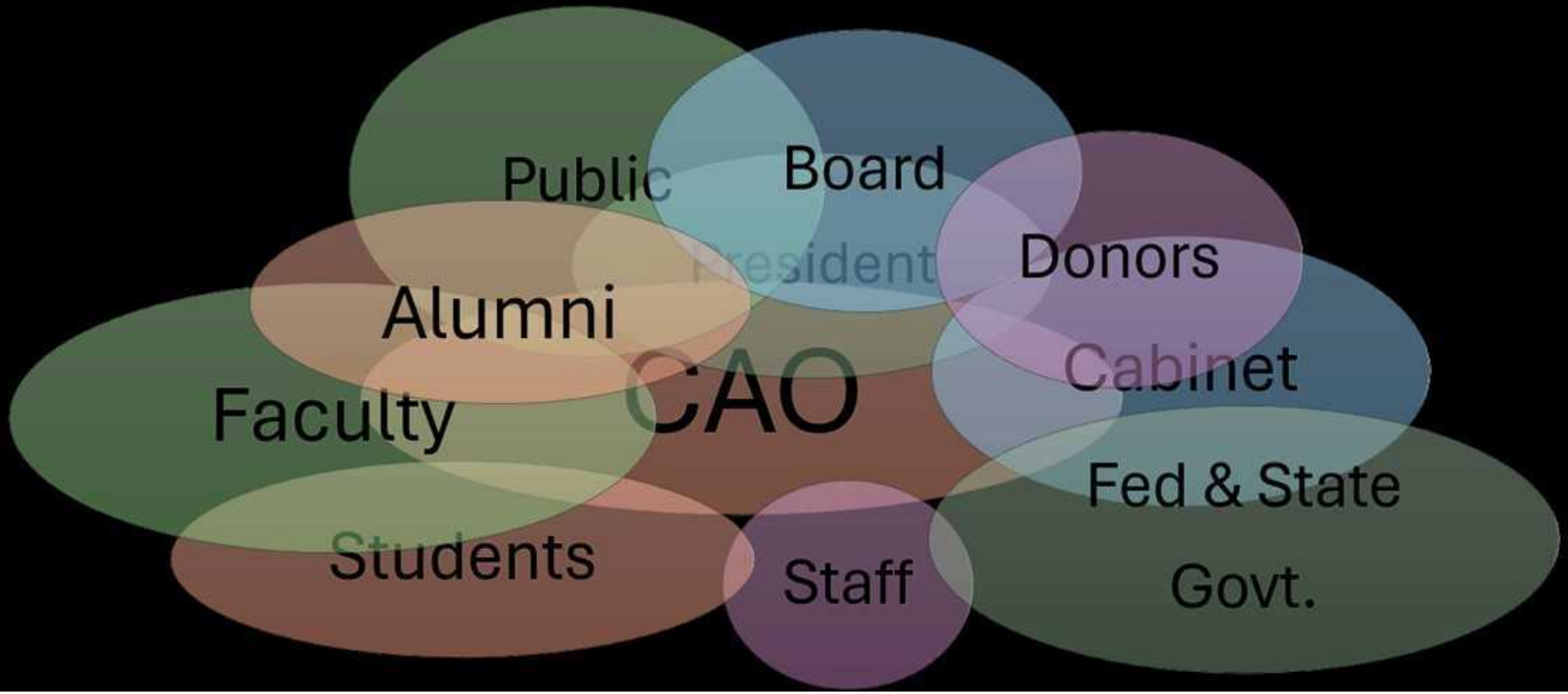
# Human Resources: Critical Bond for the CAO



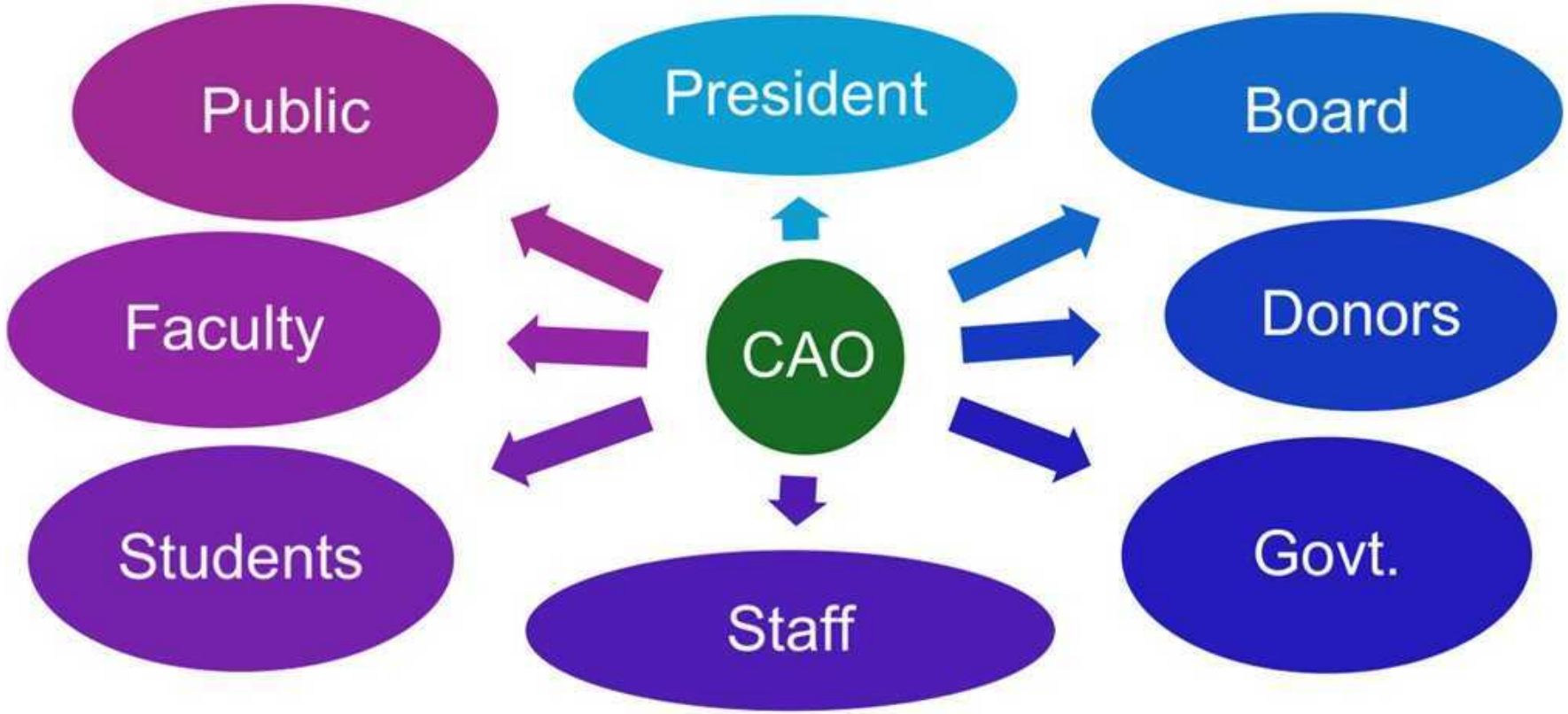



https://byjus.com/question-answer/draw-the-electron-dot-structures-of-the-following-compounds-and-state-the-type-of-bonding/

# The CAO's Relationships Extend Widely



# Relationships Are Dynamic and Demanding



# Relationships Are Sources of Healing & Help



# Thank you for attending this session!

