

## **Introduction**

The Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College (CFBC), is a 35 year old tertiary institution on the island of St. Kitts. After recently reviewing two posts on “WVU facts” a number of parallels between the WVU dilemma and serious problems in organizational leadership at the CFBC were witnessed. It appears that WVU has faced challenges stemming from a lack of robust governance policies, extending from the Board of Directors to auxiliary services. This lax approach to institutional management led to budgetary shortfalls at WVU, likely accompanied by a host of other issues. Our institution encountered a comparable scenario following a change in government in August 2022. The new Minister of Education, Dr. Geoffrey Hanley, as one of his first edicts, directed the Board of Governors to prioritize governance and overhaul operational structures. He also stated that his focus would be to repeal the ills of the government of the previous seven years where our institution faced increasing scrutiny due to issues surrounding weak governance.

These issues have had far-reaching consequences, impacting the quality of education for our students, creating financial instability, and damaging the CFBC’s overall reputation. Understanding the root causes of these challenges is crucial in order to implement effective solutions to address them. My hypothesis aims to explore the underlying factors contributing to weak governance at our institution.

## **Identification of the Problem in Terms of Leadership**

In the area of weak governance, the audit report (Jeffers, 2017) revealed three main issues pertaining to governance in the audit. Firstly the audit revealed that there is a lack of clear delineation of roles and responsibilities among the college's governing bodies, administrators, faculty, and staff.

Secondly, it was reported that there are ineffective decision-making processes. Weak governance can often be associated with ineffective decision-making processes according to (Helms, 2014). Therefore the audit uncovered instances of decisions being made without sufficient input from relevant stakeholders, inadequate data-driven analysis, or decisions being influenced by personal biases rather than strategic objectives.

Thirdly and most importantly was the reveal of the lack of risk management and compliance issues. It was reported that there are significant gaps in oversight related to financial management, academic standards, student, and legal compliance, and highlighted areas where the college is exposed to risks and non-compliance issues.

### **Who Benefits from the Situation**

When a college suffers from weak governance, several parties may potentially benefit from this situation. Firstly, unscrupulous administrators who are not held accountable due to weak governance structures may benefit by exploiting loopholes for personal gain, such as misusing funds, favoring certain vendors or contractors without proper scrutiny, or engaging in nepotism (Kumar, 2022). Secondly, ineffective faculty or staff of the CFBC may benefit as individuals who are not performing up to standard may benefit from weak governance if there are lax enforcement mechanisms regarding performance evaluations, tenure reviews, or professional development requirements. Thirdly, the CFBC audit addressed how external contractors, suppliers or service providers may benefit from weak governance if there is limited oversight or transparency in procurement processes. This can lead to inflated contracts, subpar services being accepted without proper scrutiny, or kickback arrangements (Jeffers, 2017). Additionally in cases where governance weaknesses extend to academic affairs, students may benefit unfairly. This could include instances of academic dishonesty not being appropriately

addressed, preferential treatment in grading or course enrollment, or inadequate academic standards.

Externally, competing colleges or educational institutions may indirectly benefit from a college's weak governance if it leads to a decline in reputation, loss of accreditation, or reduced attractiveness to prospective students and faculty. This can result in a shift of resources, talent, or opportunities away from the CFBC to more well-managed institutions.

Finally, regulatory bodies or accreditation agencies may benefit from weak governance. While not direct beneficiaries, regulatory bodies or accreditation agencies may gain leverage or justification for intervention or sanctions against the college due to identified governance deficiencies. This can reinforce regulatory oversight but may also disrupt the college's operations in the short term.

It is important to note that these potential beneficiaries do not contribute positively to the college's overall mission, educational quality, or long-term sustainability. Addressing weak governance is crucial to ensure fairness, accountability, and the effective functioning of the college as an educational institution.

### **Who is Harmed by the Situation**

If the CFBC continues to suffer from weak governance, several parties may potentially be harmed by this situation. First and foremost, the students will be among the most directly impacted by weak governance at the CFBC. They may experience harm in various ways, such as diminished educational quality due to inadequate resources or faculty support, unfair grading practices, limited access to essential services (like counseling or academic advising), or even risks to their safety and well-being if campus policies and procedures are not properly enforced.

Secondly, the faculty and staff can also suffer from weak governance. This can manifest as unclear job expectations, inconsistent evaluation processes, lack of professional development opportunities, limited academic freedom, or challenges in obtaining necessary resources for teaching and research (Lusk, 2022).

Thirdly, the CFBC's financial and community stakeholders can be seriously harmed by weak governance. These stakeholders such as donors, investors, or lenders abhor the mismanagement of funds, lack of transparency in financial reporting, and failure to adhere to budgetary constraints. These can erode trust and lead to financial losses or instability for the college and its stakeholders. (Kumar, 2022)

Most importantly, as we are focusing on accreditation and regulatory standing, our weak governance may face challenges in attaining accreditation or even meeting basic regulatory requirements. This can have serious consequences, including not attaining and maintaining accreditation status, reduced eligibility for financial aid programs, or increased scrutiny from regulatory bodies, all of which can negatively impact the CFBC's reputation and operations.

Ultimately, weak governance poses a threat to the long-term sustainability and success of the college as an educational institution. It has deterred top talent from joining or remaining at the institution, diminish alumni support and engagement, hinder efforts to attract funding or grants, and contribute to a negative cycle of declining performance and reputation. (Jeffers, 2017)

### **Incentives Sustaining the Issue**

Weak governance in colleges is a multifaceted issue rooted in various underlying incentives that incentivize or enable subpar management practices and decision-making structures (Helms, 2014). Understanding these incentives is crucial for developing effective

strategies to address governance shortcomings and promote accountability, transparency, and excellence within educational institutions.

One of the primary incentives contributing to weak governance at the CFBC is the pursuit of short-term gains over long-term sustainability. Our college administrators, under pressure to meet immediate financial targets or performance metrics, have prioritized strategies that yield quick wins or temporary fixes. This focus on short-term results can lead to neglecting investments in long-term institutional development, such as faculty development programs, infrastructure upgrades, or strategic planning processes. As a result, the college has experienced chronic underinvestment in critical areas, hindering our ability to adapt and thrive in the long run.

Another incentive linked to the institution's weak governance is the influence of vested interests or stakeholders with conflicting agendas. Our college often interacts with diverse stakeholders, including faculty, students, alumni, donors, government agencies, and corporate partners. Each of these stakeholders has distinct priorities, preferences, or agendas that can sometimes conflict with the college's overarching mission or ethical standards. In such scenarios, decision-makers face pressure to appease powerful stakeholders or prioritize short-term gains, compromising the institution's integrity, autonomy, or long-term strategic direction.

Furthermore, institutional inertia and resistance to change has reinforced weak governance structures within the CFBC. Established norms, traditions, and bureaucratic processes create barriers to innovation, transparency, and accountability. Decision-makers resist reforms and hesitate to challenge status quo practices due to fear of backlash, loss of control, or uncertainty about alternative approaches. This inertia stifles creativity, hinders adaptation to

changing educational landscapes or technological advancements, and perpetuates inefficiencies and outdated practices.

Financial considerations also play a significant role in incentivizing weak governance. Our educational institution faces funding challenges, relying on a mix of tuition revenue, government funding, grants, and donations to sustain operations and pursue strategic initiatives. Budget constraints, competing financial priorities, and reliance on unstable revenue streams create pressures to cut corners, reduce investments in critical areas like faculty hiring and student support services, or engage in financial practices that prioritize short-term financial stability over long-term sustainability.

Additionally, the lack of robust accountability mechanisms and transparency practices at the college can inadvertently incentivize weak governance. Inadequate oversight, ambiguous decision-making processes, and limited disclosure of key information has created environments where misconduct, conflicts of interest, and mismanagement has occurred without proper scrutiny or consequences. This lack of transparency can erode trust among stakeholders, deter whistleblowers from reporting issues, and contribute to a culture of impunity or complacency regarding governance standards (Helms, 2022).

### **What Could Reasonably Be Done by Leadership to Solve the Issue**

Addressing weak governance at the CFBC requires proactive and strategic interventions by college leadership. Several key actions can be taken to mitigate governance issues and promote transparency, accountability, and effectiveness within educational institutions.

Firstly, college leadership must prioritize the establishment of clear governance structures and processes. This includes defining roles, responsibilities, and decision-making protocols across different levels of the institution. By creating transparent governance frameworks

(Appendix 1), leaders can ensure that responsibilities are delegated appropriately, conflicts of interest are identified and managed, and decision-making is guided by ethical standards and institutional values (Lusk, 2014).

Secondly, fostering a culture of accountability is paramount in addressing weak governance. Our college leaders should implement mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating performance at all levels of the institution, including administrators, faculty, and staff. Regular performance reviews, goal-setting processes, and metrics tracking can help identify areas for improvement, reward excellence, and address underperformance or misconduct promptly.

Thirdly, promoting transparency and communication is essential for enhancing governance practices. Our leadership should prioritize open dialogue, information sharing, and stakeholder engagement. This can involve regular town hall meetings, transparent reporting on key institutional metrics and financial matters, and involving stakeholders in decision-making processes through advisory committees or forums (Helms, 2014).

Additionally, investing in leadership development and training programs can strengthen governance capabilities across the institution. Providing our leaders with opportunities for ongoing education, mentorship, and exposure to best practices in governance, ethics, and organizational management can equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate complex governance challenges effectively.

Furthermore, our college leaders should actively foster a culture of ethical leadership and integrity. This involves promoting values such as honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility throughout the institution. Leaders must lead by example, uphold ethical standards in their own conduct, and hold others accountable for ethical lapses or violations (Helms, 2014).

Overall, solving the issue of weak governance requires a multifaceted approach that integrates structural reforms, accountability mechanisms, transparency initiatives, leadership development, and a strong ethical culture. College leadership plays a pivotal role in driving these changes and creating an environment conducive to good governance, institutional effectiveness, and long-term sustainability.

### **How an Organization Might Be Steered to Correct Its Course**

Correcting the course of the CFBC which is currently recovering from weak governance involves deliberate efforts and strategic initiatives aimed at fostering positive change and improving governance practices across the institution.

One key strategy is to conduct a comprehensive governance assessment or audit to identify specific areas of weakness, gaps in accountability, and opportunities for improvement (Jeffers, 2017). This assessment should involve input from diverse stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, and external experts, to gain a comprehensive understanding of governance challenges and potential solutions.

Following the assessment, our management must prioritize the implementation of targeted reforms and initiatives. This includes revising governance structures, policies, and procedures to enhance transparency, clarify roles and responsibilities, and strengthen accountability mechanisms. Establishing clear codes of conduct, conflict-of-interest policies, and whistleblower protections can also help promote ethical behavior and prevent governance lapses.

Leadership development programs should be prioritized to equip administrators, faculty, and staff with the skills, knowledge, and ethical principles necessary for effective governance. Training sessions, workshops, and ongoing education on topics such as ethical decision-making,



conflict resolution, and strategic planning can empower our leaders to navigate governance challenges confidently and ethically.

Furthermore, fostering a culture of transparency, open communication, and stakeholder engagement is crucial. The CFBC leadership should regularly communicate governance reforms, institutional priorities, and progress updates to the college community. Involving stakeholders in decision-making processes through advisory committees, town hall meetings, and feedback mechanisms can promote buy-in, trust, and accountability throughout the institution.

### **Conclusion**

Addressing governance weaknesses is crucial not only for the immediate well-being of those directly affected but also for safeguarding the college's mission, reputation, and ability to fulfill its educational responsibilities effectively. Addressing these underlying incentives requires a holistic approach that involves promoting a culture of ethical leadership, fostering stakeholder engagement and accountability, enhancing transparency and data-driven decision-making, and incentivizing long-term strategic thinking and innovation. We must prioritize governance reforms that align with our mission, values, and long-term sustainability goals while actively mitigating the pressures and incentives that contribute to weak governance practices. By fostering a culture of excellence, integrity, and forward-thinking governance, we can create environments conducive to academic excellence, innovation, and positive societal impact.

By combining structural reforms, leadership development, transparency initiatives, and stakeholder engagement, we can steer ourselves towards improved governance practices, ethical leadership, and sustainable institutional success.

## References

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## APPENDIX

### Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College Board Pillars for 2024.

