

Colorado Higher Education Summit

**Leadership in Challenging
Times**

October 8, 2015

INTRODUCTION

- **The importance and uniqueness of academic governance**
- **Universities/Colleges: Esteemed institutions**
- **Weighty responsibility, yet no formal training**
- **A challenging job in a challenging era**
- **Boards are “the guardians”**

INTRODUCTION

- **Ambiguities surrounding university boards**
- **Governing Boards have great authority, yet**
 - **They are consultative with other constituencies in the institutions we govern**
 - **It is collective authority. Boards are corporate bodies**
 - **They delegate authority to higher education professionals**

The National Climate and Governing Board Challenges...

- **Cost**
- **Student Debt**
- **Quality**
- **Degree Value**
- **Low student success rates**
- **The Attainment Gap**
- **Economic pressures**
- **Disconnect with state work force needs**
- **Safety issues – sexual misconduct, alcohol abuse, campus violence**

The Role and Responsibilities of Higher Education Governing Boards

BROADLY SPEAKING, GOVERNING BOARDS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- **Making policy**
- **Monitoring performance**
- **Supporting and advancing the mission**
- **Ensuring financial soundness**
- **Guarding and advancing the integrity and reputation of the institution.**
- **It distills down to Advocacy and Oversight**

1) SUPPORT AND ADVOCATE THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION & PURPOSE

- The charter statement of the institution
- The ultimate reference point for board decision making
- Broad brush yet unique
- Boards should feel ownership

2) ADVISE THE PRESIDENT/CHANCELLOR ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE INSTITUTION

- The President/Chancellor is the professional expert in higher education, yet Board members bring diverse expertise
- Advice goes both ways
- Board members are well connected to the larger communities and constituencies of the institution.

3) REVIEW, APPROVE AND MONITOR PROGRESS ON THE STRATEGIC PLAN

- **The strategic plan is the map to the future**
- **Establishes major priorities with specific goals**
- **Includes performance measures**
- **Is a work in progress**
- **Guides Board members, the President/Chancellor, and institutional leaders towards common goals**

THE BOARD'S ROLE IN PLANNING:

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- Participate at some level
- Formally adopt strategic plan
- Assume ownership over the priorities and goals
- Be informed of progress toward goals.
(Dashboard indicators – good tool for boards).
- Ensure that the budget reflects strategic planning priorities

4) BE KNOWLEDGEABLE AND CONFIDENT ABOUT INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE

- Board members should be able to demonstrate that the institution is successfully carrying out its missions and meeting performance goals
- “Student success, Accountability” and “assessment” - key concepts in higher education today
- “How good a job are we doing?” is a primary leadership question for any organization

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: HOW BOARDS KNOW ABOUT INSTITUTIONAL SUCCESS

- **Performance in institutions is a complex issue. A range of indicators is needed**
 - **Retention and attainment rates**
 - **Time to completion**
 - **Accreditation**
 - **Ratings vis' a vis' competitors**
 - **Licensure and certification**
 - **Student surveys**
 - **Alumni surveys**
 - **Employer surveys**
 - **Program review**

5) BE INFORMED ABOUT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, STUDENT SUCCESS RATES AND QUALITY

- **Familiar with educational policies and major program offerings**
- **Educational programs are the purview of the administration and faculty**
- **Are program priorities aligned with the mission and strategic plan?**

5) BE INFORMED ABOUT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND CONFIDENT ABOUT QUALITY (cont)

- **Four primary questions boards should ask about programs:**
 - Quality
 - **Need**
 - **Cost**
 - **Centrality to mission and the strategic plan**

6) SUPPORT AND ENSURE GOOD MANAGEMENT

- **Budget review and reports**
 - Are resources aligned with priorities and goals?
 - Actual spending against the budget plan
- **Audits**
- **Physical plant conditions reports**
- **President/Chancellor assessment**

7) ENSURE FINANCIAL SOUNDNESS

- **Budgetary Oversight**
 - Committee engagement important
 - Alignment with strategic plan
 - Board audit review
- **Political advocacy**
 - Work with the President/Chancellor
 - Board members - often known and respected by state leaders
- **Enhancing institutional image and visibility**
 - Know the contribution the institution makes to the communities and region it serve
 - Know institutional strengths

8) PRESERVE INSTITUTIONAL INDEPENDENCE

- Protect this essential academic feature of American higher education
- Resist undue influence by any group and balance the interest of all stake holders

9) HIRE, SUPPORT AND EVALUATE THE PRESIDENT/CHANCELLOR

- Building consensus around leadership strengths needed is important ground work for a successful search.
- An inclusive search process enhances institutional confidence and morale
- Make your expectations clear of the leader you hire, and evaluate him/her on that basis.

9) HIRE, SUPPORT AND EVALUATE THE PRESIDENT/CHANCELLOR

- Board-President/Chancellor relationship – vital to system success
- Tough job; politically challenging
- Leaders need board support to be effective
 - Active leadership results in critics
 - Effective Presidents/Chancellors - agents of vision and change
- Partnership – key concept

9) HIRE, SUPPORT AND EVALUATE THE PRESIDENT/CHANCELLOR

- **President/Chancellor evaluation - a major board responsibility**
- **Feedback opportunity – assessment exists to enhance leadership**
- **Must be performance-based and focused on institutional advancement (distinguish substance from style)**
- **Should be done according to prescribed cycle**
- **Best done against mutually agreed upon goals/criteria**

10) ASSESS BOARD PERFORMANCE

- **Effective boards = Effective institutions**
- **Review effectiveness; improve performance**
- **Annual/bi-annual board workshop – a good practice**
- **Improves board cohesion & gets members on the same page**

BOARD EFFECTIVENESS: KEY ELEMENTS

- Board-President/Chancellor relationship
- Board-Board relationship
- The Information Challenge
- Communication

Characteristics of an Effective Governing Board

EFFECTIVE GOVERNING BOARDS HAVE MEMBERS

WHO:

- **Recognize their responsibility to students for the quality and value of their education**
- **Respect the difference between governing and managing.**
- **Are devoid of special interests or personal agendas**

EFFECTIVE GOVERNING BOARDS HAVE MEMBERS WHO :

- Are effective advocates for their institutions
- Are vigilant in their fiduciary responsibility
- Encourage periodic board assessment

EFFECTIVE GOVERNING BOARDS HAVE MEMBERS WHO

- Are insistent that the board adhere to the highest ethical standards
- Are capable of having fun together

Responsibilities of Individual Trustees

RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARD MEMBERS

- **Be fully informed about the system & responsive to the changing environments which affect it.**
- **To speak one's mind at board meetings but support policies and programs once approved.**
- **Understand that one's role is policy and oversight, not running the system.**

RESPONSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS (cont)

- **To support the President/Chancellor while exercising critical judgment on policy matters**

- **To communicate to the President/Chancellor any significant concern or complaint and then let him deal with it**

RESPONSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS (cont)

- **To help enhance the public image and reputation of the institution and the board**
- **To recognize that authority resides with the board as a whole and not in its individual members**

RESPONSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS (cont)

- **To recognize the President/Chancellor as spokesperson for the system; the Board Chair as spokesperson for the board.**
- **To maintain respect for the opinions of one's colleagues and avoid public criticism of colleagues and officers.**
- **To maintain the highest ethical standards, absolute confidentiality where prescribed, and avoid any personal conflict of interest.**

The Distinctive Realities of Public Trustees

- **Their institutions are owned by the state.**
- **Political involvement is the norm**
- **Access is always a mission priority**
- **Leadership is best consensus oriented, media savvy, and politically adroit.**

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH...

- DEMAND SOLID ANALYSIS
- DISCUSS THE CONSEQUENCES
 - PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS
 - IMPACT ON STUDENTS
 - PUSHBACKS
- MEDIA ATTENTION
- UPHOLD “TREATY OF NO SURPRISES”
- LISTEN WITH PATIENCE AND CONCERN
- ADVOCATE FOR A BETTER FUTURE