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The Report of the AGB Task Force on the
State of the Presidency in American Higher Education

The Leadership Imperative



About the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

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AGB works to strengthen higher education's governance and the conduct of citizen trusteeship by articulating and promoting effective practices. It is a continuing education resource for nearly 35,000 trustees, chief executives, senior administrators, and board professional staff from more than 1,800 institutions of all types—independent and public, two-year and four-year, as well as statewide coordinating boards and foundation boards affiliated with public institutions. AGB encourages healthy working relationships between boards and their chief executives and between higher education and state government.

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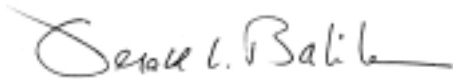


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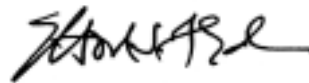
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THE STATE OF THE PRESIDENCY
IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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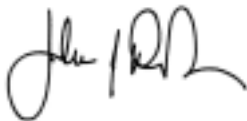
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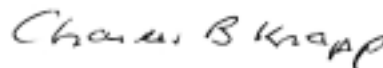
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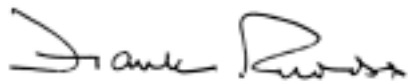
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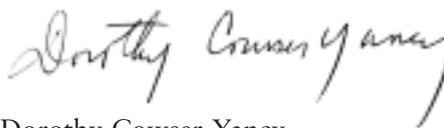
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on the critical relationship between the presidents and governing boards of our nation’s higher education institutions.

At the outset of the 21st century, colleges and universities face an array of daunting challenges. To name a few: intense global competition, rapid technological advancements, changing demographics, increasing demand for education and training, new ways of delivering instruction, greater pressures for accountability, and inadequate public funding to achieve societal purposes. Facing these challenges is critical to creating the human and intellectual capital to ensure the nation’s continued social, civic, and economic well-being. America’s higher education institutions must be the engines of society’s transformation.

Ten years ago, AGB issued a report, “Renewing the Academic Presidency: Stronger Leadership for Tougher Times.” Several of its most pointed recommendations called on higher education institutions to free themselves from processes of excessive internal consultation—in effect, to empower presidents to be purposeful decision makers.

A decade later, the AGB Task Force on the State of the Presidency in American Higher Education finds that colleges and universities continue to face impediments in their efforts to achieve effective governance and sustain capable leadership. Indeed, some argue

No leader comes to personify an institution in the way a president does. A president must provide leadership in maintaining the institution’s academic integrity and reputation.

that we are in a governance crisis. Regardless, the obstacles are traceable to the intensity and range of conflicting pressures a president must confront—and from the fact that presidents receive uneven guidance, support, and oversight from

their governing boards. Failure to address these issues will diminish the strength of our colleges and universities and undermine the public’s trust in higher education.

No leader comes to personify an institution in the way a president does. A president must provide leadership in maintaining the institution’s academic integrity and reputation. He or she must assimilate and tell the institution’s story to build pride internally and support externally. The president has primary responsibility for increasing public understanding and support for the institution as a contributor to the nation’s continued vitality and well-being, and must lead the institution as it confronts new external challenges.

The looming questions are whether colleges and universities will continue to attract high-caliber leaders to the presidency—and whether higher education as a whole will continue to earn the public trust. The Task Force asserts that the partnership of the president

and governing board is an essential factor not just in the success of a college or university presidency but also in higher education's success in meeting the challenges of the global century. This report calls for leadership that links the president and governing board closely together in an environment of support, candor, and accountability.

The Task Force contends that a new style of collaborative but decisive leadership—*integral leadership*—is the key to addressing these issues. A president must exert a presence that is purposeful and consultative, deliberative yet decisive, and capable of course corrections as new challenges emerge. Integral leadership succeeds in fulfilling the multiple, disparate strands of presidential responsibility and conceives of these responsibilities as parts of a coherent whole. Leadership of this sort links the president, the faculty, and the board together in a well-functioning partnership purposefully devoted to a well-defined, broadly affirmed institutional vision.

In that spirit, the report addresses several aspects of the leadership imperative from the standpoint of a board's responsibility: (1) the support a board provides for effective leadership, (2) the search for a president, (3) the presidential evaluation and compensation process, (4) board accountability, (5) presidential renewal and succession, and (6) advocacy for higher education. The report's recommendations call on presidents to seek the active support of their boards while demonstrating effective academic leadership that engages the faculty in a shared vision of the institution's future.

This report primarily addresses college and university governing boards and their presidents, but it also will be relevant to public officials and others concerned with higher education's continued ability to achieve success and secure the public's support. Although the report's language generally refers to the chief executives and governing boards of individual public and private institutions, its principles apply to the leaders of public university systems as well.

A summary of recommendations follows:

TO GOVERNING BOARDS

Support Presidential Leadership

1. Charge the president with developing, clarifying, and fulfilling the institution's mission and vision, and hold the president accountable.
2. Charge the president with responsibility for developing a strategic plan in conjunction with faculty, the executive leadership team, and other constituents, including public stakeholders.
3. Encourage the president to build a capable and effective leadership team.
4. Help the president chart a course of action that respects faculty, students, and the prevailing institutional culture while carrying it forward to meet new challenges.
5. Support the president in the task of confronting difficult and controversial issues.

6. Support the president as an advocate for all of higher education and not just his or her own institution.

7. Focus on policy rather than administration.

Presidential Search

1. Before beginning a presidential search, be certain the board is proceeding from a thorough understanding of the institution's needs, now and in the course of the next decade.

2. Constitute a search committee that is united around the institution's vision.

3. Do not allow search consultants to supplant the board's thinking about the qualities needed in the next president.

4. Eliminate the conditions that often work against internal candidates for the presidency.

5. Ensure that the process used to select a president is widely regarded as fair and legitimate.

Evaluation and Compensation

1. Evaluate a president's performance based on clearly defined, mutually agreed-upon performance goals.

2. Carefully define board policy on presidential compensation from all sources.

3. Ensure that the process of establishing the president's compensation package is appropriately transparent.

4. Base a president's compensation package on explicit and justifiable internal and external benchmarks as well as on the marketplace for accomplished chief executives.

Board Accountability

1. Recognize the link between a board's accountability and a president's ability to lead.

2. Respect and adhere to the legal principles of fiduciary responsibility.

3. Establish clear ethical guidelines and enforce conflict-of-interest policies for all board members.

4. Recognize the board's responsibilities to diverse constituencies.

5. Evaluate the board's performance and enhance its competence in areas where evaluation has shown it to be deficient.

Presidential Renewal and Succession

1. Support and nurture the president and provide opportunities for constructive feedback and positive reinforcement.

2. Encourage new presidents to seek a network of mentors to ease the leadership transition.
3. Assess the impact of the duties of the presidency on the well-being of the president and his or her family.
4. Assist in bringing a successful presidency to a graceful end.
5. Charge the president with developing opportunities and pathways for leaders to advance within the institution.

TO PRESIDENTS

1. Actively engage the board in meeting its responsibilities to the institution and to the public trust.
2. Unite the board, faculty, and other constituents in developing a vision for the institution and enlist the support required to lead the institution in meeting future challenges.
3. Cultivate a deep understanding of the institution and build on its unique character, history, and values.
4. Resist allowing daily managerial tasks to detract from meeting the institution's long-range strategic challenges.
5. Create an environment that encourages leadership development within the institution.
6. Exemplify in actions and words the contributions higher education makes to the nation's capacity for productive engagement in a global age.
7. Use the planning process and the performance review as occasions to clarify goals for the institution and the presidency.

TO STATE POLICYMAKERS

1. Explicitly state the expectations of public and private higher education for the economic, intellectual, and cultural development of the state, and establish clear goals in evaluating whether institutions and systems are meeting those expectations.
2. Provide a sustained level of financial support that allows colleges and universities to serve students and meet community, regional, statewide, and national goals.
3. Make merit, skill, and experience the chief criteria for trustee selection.
4. Insist that board members understand and accept their responsibilities as stewards of the institution's mission and financial resources.
5. Promote board development.
6. Engage trustees and regents as partners in advocating the value of public and private higher education.

TO AGB

1. Develop a Statement on Board Accountability and Fiduciary Oversight that boards may use as a model.
2. Continue to advance the association's leadership in strengthening governing boards and develop new programs for presidents focusing on governance, finance, and president-board relationships.
3. Develop guidelines for setting presidential compensation in public and private higher education.
4. Seek new opportunities to serve as advocates for stronger trustee voices in support of strategic investments in the value of higher education.

THE LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVE

A decade has passed since AGB published “Renewing the Academic Presidency: Stronger Leadership for Tougher Times,” the report of the Commission on the Academic Presidency. That commission’s recommendations to presidents, governing boards, faculty, and public officials continue to provide valuable guideposts for the vitality and success of a college or university presidency in the United States. The report called on institutions to reach decisions in more straightforward ways in order to meet the nation’s growing educational needs.

Ten years later, new and important developments both within society and in the higher education community call for a renewed

sounding of the state of the academic presidency—particularly the means by which governing boards empower presidents to lead their institutions in today’s competitive environment.

Since publication of the commission’s report, significant changes have occurred in the demo-

graphics of the student population, the learning needs and skill requirements of the American workforce, the competition for students from other nations and from for-profit providers, and in the basic conception of higher education itself as a means of preparing students for a lifetime of learning. Contributing to the changing paradigms of knowledge are advancements in technology that provide almost instantaneous access to information throughout the world—a transformation that some academic leaders predict may change higher education so profoundly within 20 years as to render it unrecognizable.

To renew public trust and confidence in higher education, college and university presidents, along with their boards and faculties, must shape and lead institutional resolve and marshal the support of external stakeholders.

While affirming the recommendations of the commission's report (which appear as an appendix), we focus here on the critical elements of support, accountability, and transparency that must inform the relationship between a president and the board. This relationship not only provides a basis for a president's productive interaction with faculty, students, elected and business leaders, and the public, but it also can determine the ultimate fate of a presidency and the effectiveness of an institution's governance.

Today, we know that educated people, the knowledge they produce, and the innovation and entrepreneurial skills they possess have become the keys to economic prosperity, public health, national security, and social well-being. Now more than ever, our nation's success depends on a highly educated workforce and citizenry, new knowledge and innovation, and effective public services. Creating this human and intellectual capital requires a world-class system of postsecondary education—a system that works in conjunction with K-12 schools, business, community, and government to meet the nation's needs in education, research, and service.

Even as higher education becomes more important to the nation's continued vitality, it has become the target of growing scrutiny and skepticism. How can higher education meet the challenge of adapting to the changes demanded by the emerging knowledge economy, globalization, rapidly evolving technologies, and a marketplace defined by new educational needs, new providers, and new paradigms of education? Critics argue that the nation's colleges and universities too often fail to meet their fundamental responsibility of enabling students to gain new knowledge and skills. Questions regarding equity and access to higher education, measurable progress on learning outcomes, and institutional cost containment and productivity are becoming more insistent.

To renew public trust and confidence in higher education, college and university presidents, along with their boards and faculties, must shape and lead institutional resolve and marshal the support of external stakeholders. The pace and intensity of change call for leaders who are able to function effectively in many domains.

The Task Force contends that a new style of collaborative but decisive leadership—*integral leadership*—is the key to addressing these issues. A president must exert a presence that is purposeful and consultative, deliberative yet decisive, and capable of course corrections as new challenges emerge.

ANATOMY OF THE PRESIDENCY

Presidential leadership has many dimensions. In the course of a week or a single day, a president may be called on to act in several different capacities. Above all, a president should have the capacity to lead an academic institution. “Presidents need to speak the language of the academy,” observed one former president interviewed for this report, “even if they did not rise through its ranks.” Working in collaboration with the faculty, the senior leadership team, the board, and other institutional stakeholders, the president leads a process of formulating an institutional vision. This process calls for substantial engagement with the institution’s academic and cultural values and an ability to elicit the broad support and commitment necessary to lead an institution in fulfilling its core purposes.

A president is the chief executive officer of a complex, multimillion-dollar organization. Accordingly, as one public university system chancellor argued, “Boards *must* value administrative talent.” The president bears first-line responsibility to the board and, more generally, to the public trust for ensuring the financial well-being of the institution. Whether an institution is public or private, the president oversees a ship in which there is little space for navigational error; the president has a fundamental responsibility to deploy resources efficiently and to demonstrate results.

Closely related to this role, the president is primarily responsible for attracting the private financial support that allows an institution to thrive. The president must represent the capacities, strengths, and achievements of an institution to current and prospective donors

Presidents whose achievements in other respects may be remarkable will be judged harshly if they cannot also attract substantial private funds to their institutions.

AMERICAN EDUCATION AND THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE

alike. At a time when public financial support for higher education has waned relative to other priorities, success in fund-raising has taken on elevated significance, and no president or governing board can fail to perceive the importance of this leadership requirement. Presidents whose achievements in other respects may be remarkable will be judged harshly if they cannot also attract substantial private funds to their institutions. A recent survey of presidents by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* found that 53 percent of presidents reported that they work at fund-raising at least once a day, and 91 percent reported doing so at least once a week.

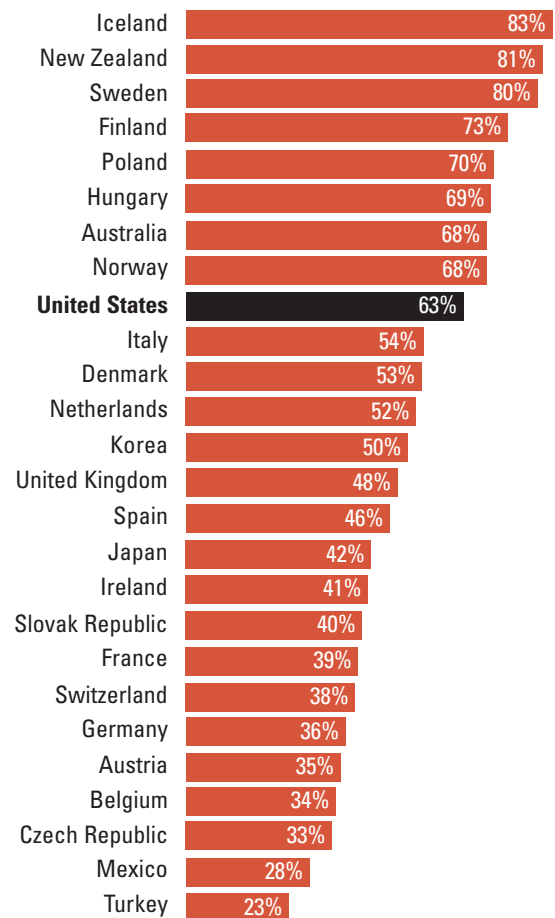
Additionally, presidents of public universities experience a variation of this responsibility in the pressure to sustain legislative funding in an environment that pits higher education against other urgent state needs. Presidents live the paradox of a society that depends increasingly on higher education for its continued vitality but accords a diminishing share of public resources to sustain those institutions and their missions.

Presidents also represent the institution and embody its values. In public venues, a president's words and actions almost always are taken as expressions of the institution's identity. Even if a

While good jobs in the new economy demand higher skill levels as global educational competition rises...

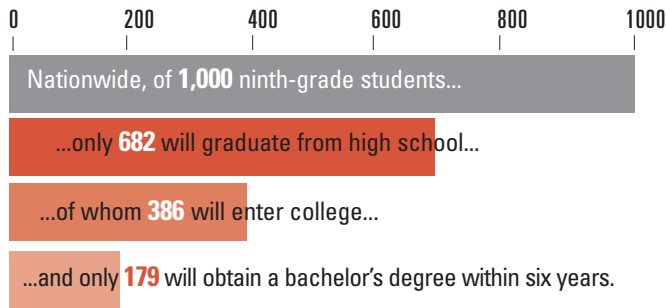
College-level participation rates of OECD countries

Measured as a percentage of the age cohort who will enter tertiary education at some point during their lives.



Adapted from *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2005*, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005.

...American college participation and completion rates are still too low...

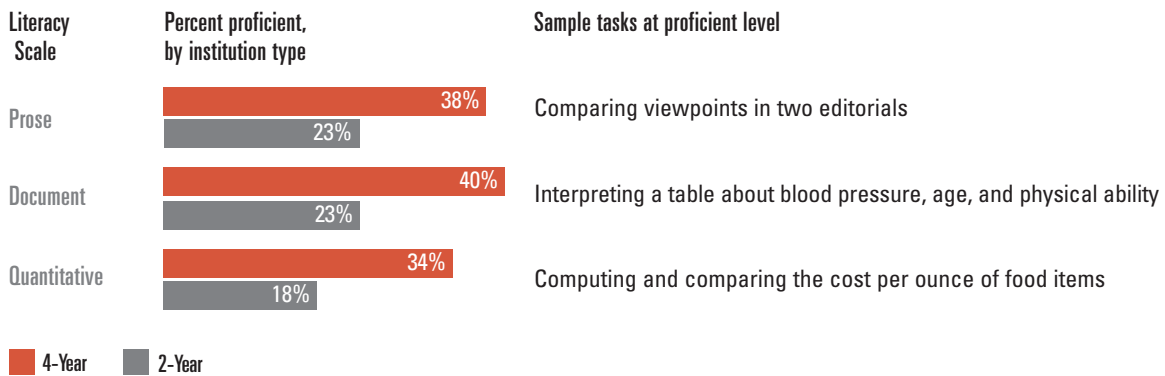


- High school students are taking more rigorous course loads and performing better, on average, on some academic subject tests.
- But American students perform poorly on international assessments. And high school graduation rates remain far too low.
- Too many students are still not academically proficient, and achievement gaps for minority and low-income students are stark and persistent.
- Only 38 percent of high school freshmen will earn a high school diploma and make the transition to college directly after graduation.

Adapted from National Center for Higher Education Management Systems student pipeline data and *Cracks in the Education Pipeline*, Committee for Economic Development, 2005.

...and the skill levels of many college students need improvement.

Less than one-half of adult American college students are proficient in prose, document, and quantitative literacy skills



Adapted from *The Literacy of American College Students*, American Institutes for Research, 2006.

“It’s very important that the personal values of the president are a close match with the institution’s values and mission. This makes the work of the presidency more of a ‘calling.’”

Religious, masters-level college president

president qualifies his or her statements on a subject as being personal, those statements will be perceived as inherently rooted in the institution or system the president leads. Moreover, in a broader sense a college or university president represents all of higher education. No other member of the academic community so completely personifies the value of higher education as a means of enriching individual opportunity, strengthening the productive capacity, and enhancing the civic vitality of a democratic society.

A president’s public persona resonates within and beyond the institutional community. In the best circumstances, a president may be seen as a source of moral authority who can evoke public trust and confidence in an institution—and by extension, in all of higher education. A president who values integrity, openness, truth, and compassion will likely elicit those same characteristics from others.

By the same token, if a president is arrogant or insensitive, deals harshly with subordinates, or takes liberties with truth and candor, these traits too will propagate rapidly throughout the institution. As chief executive officer, the president leads by *execution*, reaching decisions after appropriate consultation and assigning to subordinates the tasks of implementing those decisions.

PRESIDENTS’ DIVERSE RESPONSIBILITIES

Presidents most frequently address financial, educational leadership, and student-focused issues...

Percent of presidents who meet at least weekly with the:

Chief Financial Officer	96%
Director of Development or Advancement	94%
Provost	90%
Director of Student Affairs	80%
Director of Enrollment/Admissions	70%

...but also spend significant time focusing on governance.

Percent of presidents who at least weekly:

Address relations with the governing board	60%
Talk/meet with the governing board chair	42%

Adapted from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* Survey of College and University Presidents, 2005.

Finally, one of the most important elements of leadership for a college or university president is the quality of *engagement*. There is no greater factor in a president’s success than the ability to elicit and inspire the thinking of others in a shared vision of the institution. The president must create the framework for participation that allows the faculty, the senior leadership team, the board, students, and other stakeholders to trust a president and accord the support required to advance the institution. Such integral leadership evokes not just support for a vision but also a passionate commitment to achieve it.

The actions and directives of the board must support the leadership of the president in each of these dimensions. While changing times and institutional circumstances may influence the relative emphasis a president chooses to

devote to each of these dimensions, the board must ensure that one or two aspects of presidential responsibility do not overshadow all others. By the expectations it shapes with a president and the support it provides, the board empowers the president to fulfill the demands of the office as academic leader, chief executive officer, fund-raiser, advocate, and public spokesperson for the institution and higher education in general. Boards that emphasize one of these aspects over all others may create an imbalance in the presidency and compromise the effectiveness of leadership in the institution.

It should be noted that the chief executives of public university or college systems face many of the same challenges that presidents of individual institutions encounter—but with a twist. The system head and the governing board to which he or she reports face an additional boundary-spanning task of grasping and managing the educational, political, and cultural dynamics of the state as a whole and of the individual institutions within it. In this context, the duties of system heads—from helping to refine the role and mission of diverse institutions to providing a public voice for the system as a whole—can prove especially challenging. In the same vein, the presidents of institutions that are part of state systems must exercise their authority within a system context, which some find constraining and others liberating. Further, the presidents of the nation’s community colleges work in a volatile and challenging political, financial, and academic milieu. Even though the respective public-sector settings of these chief executives varies, the Task Force believes the general principles of good presidential and board practice are directly relevant to the leaders of public college and university systems, system campuses, and community colleges.

PRESIDENTIAL PREPARATION FOR GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Institutional governance matters rank among the top five issues for which presidents report being previously unprepared.

Percent of presidents who chose one of the following as the single area for which they felt most unprepared:

Fund-raising	18%
Budgeting issues	11%
Dealing with legislators/ other political officials	11%
Dealing with the board/ other governing body	10%
The pace of the job	8%

Adapted from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* Survey of College and University Presidents, 2005.



INTEGRAL LEADERSHIP

Whether an institution is public or private, large or small, four-year or two-year—or if it is not one institution but several, spread across a diverse statewide system—the compelling need is for chief executives who can demonstrate integral leadership. Such leadership succeeds in fulfilling multiple, disparate strands of executive responsibility and conceives of these responsibilities as parts of a coherent whole.

Leadership of this sort links the president, the faculty, and the board together in a well-functioning partnership purposefully devoted to a well-defined, broadly affirmed institutional vision. Such leadership successfully engages the faculty, student leaders, and key external stakeholders in achieving collectively what no single individual or unit can accomplish individually. Finally, integral leadership is characterized by integrity—by a capacity for reasoned judgment, fairness, and a commitment to the core values and mission of the institution.

In this era of heightened uncertainty, competition, and accountability, a president must be many things to many people: leader of an academic community, chief executive of a complex enterprise, spokesperson and fund-raiser for a particular institution, and an advocate for all of higher education. Many presidents can lead successfully in some of these capacities. The years ahead will demand that college and university presidents demonstrate leadership capabilities in all of these domains.

A president's ability to foster integral leadership—to engage the faculty in pursuing a shared academic vision and to secure and sustain public trust and confidence in higher education—inescapably depends upon the board's support and effective oversight. The Task

“The president has the opportunity to make the most significant difference possible for the college, but always and only with and through faculty, staff, and students.”

Private college president

Force is concerned that too few presidents receive from their governing boards the degree of support necessary for courageous or visionary leadership. Once in office, new presidents often come to feel orphaned by their boards. Even if there is clear initial understanding of the challenges a president must address, presidents often are required to confront unexpected issues. At the outset and throughout the course of a presidency, boards must remain attentive to a president's needs and performance. To meet its responsibilities, a board must know what actions it must take both to provide necessary support and to hold the president accountable for the fulfillment of the institution's mission. At the same time, the board must strive to maintain balance in its actions, focusing on its responsibilities for strategic direction and policy oversight.

The need has never been more acute for boards to provide the framework of support and accountability that allows a president to succeed. It is critically important that trustees and presidents understand the role of a board in creating the context of a successful presidency. Achieving this understanding will allow higher education institutions to meet our nation's compelling needs for education, research, and social progress. The Task Force remains optimistic that presidents and their boards can rise to these challenges.

Collaborative but decisive **INTEGRAL LEADERSHIP** is key to strengthening colleges and universities as well as renewing public trust in higher education, requiring leaders to function effectively in many domains.

INTERNAL LEADERSHIP:

Effective leadership within the institution or system requires that presidents:

- Build and sustain an experienced and institutionally savvy **LEADERSHIP TEAM**
- Engage the **FACULTY** in pursuing a shared academic vision
- Achieve an authentic connection to **STUDENTS'** needs and aspirations
- Recognize the essential contributions of high-quality institutional **STAFF**

THE PRESIDENT AND THE GOVERNING BOARD:

Effective governance relies on a strong relationship between the governing board and the president, who:

- Build a clear, shared **MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING** of expectations, responsibilities, and **INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE**
- Develop a **STRATEGIC PLAN**
- Present a **UNITED FRONT** on contentious issues

EXTERNAL LEADERSHIP:

And the best higher education leaders forge strong connections to key external stakeholders:

- Engage **ALUMNI, DONORS,** and **PARENTS** in a shared sense of the institution's history, recent accomplishments, and future opportunities
- Establish partnerships on shared civic, economic, and workforce goals with **POLICYMAKERS** and the **BUSINESS COMMUNITY**
- Build relationships and open lines of communication with all levels of local and regional **NEWS MEDIA**

HOW A BOARD CONTRIBUTES TO INTEGRAL LEADERSHIP

No single factor contributes more to a president's achievement of integral leadership than the productive engagement of the board and faculty. The nature of the board's initial charge to the president, as well as the quality and consistency of support it provides, contributes to a president's success or failure in meeting the range of responsibilities effective governance requires.

A board contributes to a successful and effective presidency in several ways: by establishing a clear understanding of expectations; by linking a new president to a network of experienced community, business, and policy leaders who can help the president assimilate the institution's distinctive culture; by charging the president to build an effective leadership team and to develop a strategic plan; by standing behind a president on controversial matters; and by not undermining a president through the imposition of personal agendas.

The need has never been more acute for boards to provide the framework of support and accountability that allows a president to succeed.

Establishing clear expectations. One of the first steps a board must take to enhance a president's leadership is to establish a clear, mutual understanding with the president of expectations and responsibilities. The mechanisms available to boards and presidents to forge such understandings range from informal discussions to formal documents to revisions of appropriate institutional policy documents. Although the specific elements of such under-

A board can firmly establish the foundation for integral leadership by charging the president to lead the development of a strategic plan.

“My transition into the presidency worked well because of my board’s level of self-awareness. They gave me enough room to make personnel decisions and empowered me to plan strategically—to push the university into looking out a few years and deciding what we’re going to do.”

Public university president

A president who functions as a distant manager rather than as an engaged leader never will gain the faculty’s trust as a champion of academic progress.

standings will likely evolve over time, setting relative priorities focuses the president’s leadership and provides the basis for the board to hold the president accountable through an annual performance evaluation. Once agreement has been reached, the board must provide the continuing support and oversight a president needs to perform those duties.

Helping assimilate an institutional culture. Colleges and universities are social institutions based on ideas, values, and traditions. While they function in the present, they draw strength from the past as they prepare to invent the future. Only by embracing and building upon what Burton Clark calls the institutional “saga” of a college or university can a president span successfully the full range of leadership responsibilities. Successful presidents usually have the capacity to comprehend and the willingness to respect the institutional saga. They also exhibit the confidence and wisdom to build on the contributions of their predecessors, even if it is natural that they will tend to chart their own course to the future.

If a college or university is to make progress in achieving an institutional vision, the president must be able to connect with the institution’s distinctive culture and values. The board chair can be especially helpful in linking a new president to a network of mentors who can help a president make the transition into leadership. “I want to make sure he’s comfortable with me as a sounding board,” the board chair of a small private liberal arts

college recently said of his institution’s new president, “and to help him find others.”

Particularly in the first years of leadership, a board must be attentive to a president’s ability to engage the institutional community and elicit the faculty support required—in effect, to write the next chapter of an institutional saga. A president who functions as a distant manager rather than as an engaged leader never will gain the faculty’s trust as a champion of academic progress.

Building a leadership team. A board contributes to integral leadership by charging the president to build an effective leadership team—one that consists to a significant degree of existing faculty and administrative leaders who bring experience and understanding of the institution. Knowing that the ability to recruit administrative talent is partly a function of resources, presidents should have the ability to identify top-flight talent—from within the

institution as well as from without—and to recruit that talent into key leadership positions. Having assembled the leadership team, the president must provide it with opportunities to meet and work through possible responses to challenges and important issues.

Defining and crafting a strategic plan. A board can firmly establish the foundation for integral leadership by charging the president to lead the development of a strategic plan. Within the framework of values, culture, and history of an institution or system, launching a strategic planning process requires a careful negotiation between the president and the board—and within the board itself—regarding what a plan can be expected to achieve. “The term ‘strategic plan’ is like a Rorschach test,” said the president of a major private research university. “It means different things to different individuals based on their professional background, personal experiences and aspirations for the institution.”

The process of creating such a plan will bring the president into close and repeated engagement with the faculty, staff, students, and other constituencies, including the broader community of which an institution is a part. While the board itself does not lead the development of a strategic plan, it must regard itself as a key participant in this process, and it must be prepared to be supportive of the final document. In some cases, a president may inherit and update an existing plan that continues to provide reliable bearings for the institution’s future. Whether created anew or adapted from earlier work, a strategic plan will define substantive milestones of institutional progress that a president will be expected to lead and facilitate. In process as well as substance, a strategic plan provides the board with criteria for gauging a president’s performance, and for supporting the president in the fulfillment of various tasks.

Though individual board members may privately disagree with one another, public unity among board members and speaking with one voice, through the chair, is essential.

Presenting a unified front on contentious issues. The board contributes to the strength and integrity of presidential leadership by standing firmly behind a president on contentious issues. Inevitably, a president will encounter controversy in the course of leading an institution, and he or she is responsible for informing the board about actions that may engender controversy. Occasionally, a board must provide explicit support to the president in carrying out a given charge, signaling directly to the faculty, students, and others that it supports the action and performance of the president. Though individual board members may privately disagree with one another, public unity among board members and speaking with one voice, through the chair, is essential.

“It’s one of the board’s jobs to thoughtfully and systematically connect the president to political leadership.”

Public university
system chancellor

“System chancellors as well as campus presidents need to ensure that their presence on campus is strategic, systematic, and structured. The keys to success: An effective, egoless provost and systematic review of the president’s calendar.”

Public university
system chancellor

Avoiding personal agendas. Finally, a board contributes to the integrity of a presidency by not intervening directly in operations. The intrusion of individual board members into the workings of the institution can seriously undermine a president’s authority and credibility. When an individual or group of trustees advances a personal agenda, or when trustees have ideological or political objectives, the board can be distracted and its performance weakened. In public and private institutions alike, athletics and admissions are prominent areas in which trustees have manipulated institutional decisions to advance their own interests, thus subordinating their stewardship of the institution. Such interventions create cynicism and disaffection not just among the faculty but also among a range of institutional stakeholders. Ultimately, trustee micromanagement undermines the integrity of academic governance and weakens the sense of colleges and universities as institutions of public purpose, driven by the pursuit of academic values and a commitment to serve societal needs.

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH

The selection of a president is a governing board's most important responsibility. In selecting a president, the board defines an institution's immediate prospects and places a very large bet on its long-term success. For all that, the process of presidential selection often derives as much from the subjective intuition of trustees as from the thorough due diligence common in searches for corporate chief executives or in faculty hiring, tenure, or promotion decisions. It is essential that a board devote sustained and careful attention to choosing a president. Installing a president who is not well suited to the institution exacts a price of many unhappy dimensions and guarantees lost momentum in the pursuit of critical objectives.

The selection of a president is a process for which there are best practices, beginning with the appointment of a search committee. It is the board's responsibility to articulate the charge to the search committee and the qualities needed in its next president. The board must have a clear understanding of the institution, the challenges it faces, and the leadership qualities required of the next president at this point in the institution's history. The board has a central role in shaping the composition of the search committee, which should consist of trustees, faculty members, and other stakeholders. This committee serves as a filter to select the candidates who will enter the final stage of consideration and ensures that the best candidates for the presidency come into active consideration as a list of finalists. At the same time, the search committee represents

The board must have a clear understanding of the institution, the challenges it faces, and the leadership qualities required of the next president at this point in the institution's history.

the institution to the various candidates, and this fact underscores the importance of choosing its members with care. A high-quality search committee can help foster a strong candidate pool—and thus a better president.

Those appointed to a search committee must be reflective—though not necessarily “representative”—of the different parts of the institution. Each member of a search committee must adopt a perspective that seeks to advance the institution as a whole, rather than harboring a constituency agenda concerned only with advancing a specific school or unit. A search committee should not be too large, and it must be given sufficient time to develop clear guidelines, undertake a search, and exercise responsible judgment in recommending candidates to the full board for appointment.

Sometimes, members of the board and search committee give inadequate consideration to the search process itself. This inattentiveness can take the form of excessive reliance on a presidential search consultant to carry out the board’s own responsibilities. External consultants can perform a helpful and important role in a presidential search.

Too often, however, the board and its search committee cede the very choice of a president

It is the responsibility of the board and the search committee to ensure that the best candidates to lead the institution—from inside and outside the institution—receive full consideration.

to a consultant. Excessive deference to a consultant’s presumed expertise can undermine the integrity of the search process. The final decision must reflect the judgment of the board and its search committee—as opposed

to a consultant, who may be as concerned with advancing a specific set of candidates as with identifying a president well suited to the institution’s needs.

The selection of a consultant must itself be a carefully considered part of the presidential search process. Instead of relying on an influential board member who may know an executive search consultant from the business world, the board and search committee should be confident that potential consultants understand the history, culture, and future environment for the institution and its leaders.

One consequence of over-reliance on a search consultant may be to weaken the prospects of potentially strong internal candidates for the presidency. Eighty percent of presidents came to that position from outside the institution, according to a 2005 *Chronicle of Higher Education* survey. It is the responsibility of the board and the search committee to ensure that the best candidates to lead the institution—from inside and outside the institution—receive full consideration. To do so, the search committee should instruct the consultant to give due consideration to an internal candidate if the board itself believes the candidate may be a viable contender for the presidency. The search committee

also should instruct the consultant to include among the candidate roster those who would help advance the institution's goal of achieving diversity in its leadership—and be vigilant that this directive is undertaken seriously and with the highest ethical standards. (Appendix A provides a set of Guidelines for Board Oversight of Search Consultants.)

Occasionally, a board may choose to forgo a search after determining that an internal leader of proven ability is the best choice for the institution's next president. Whether the president chosen is from inside or outside the institution, the validity of the process used to select the president is enormously important. A decision to forgo a national search and appoint an internal president must be reached in a way that gains broad affirmation within the academic community.



PRESIDENTIAL EVALUATION AND COMPENSATION

Effectively assessing the president's performance is one of the board's most complex and sensitive tasks. The job is made even more challenging by the need to provide meaningful feedback and developmental opportunities to the president—and by linking compensation decisions to performance.

A board helps ensure the continued vitality of the college or university by undertaking an annual assessment of the president's performance, coupled with a more in-depth community-wide evaluation every three to four years.

Performance metrics are inherently more difficult to identify in institutions that seek to maximize the achievement of mission rather than financial or other quantifiable goals. The multiple dimensions of integral leadership make clear that a president cannot become wholly immersed in daily operational matters; evaluation must center on the president's ability to see the big picture and motivate an institution's progress in achieving its major goals.

To obtain the best possible return on a board's investment in presidential talent and compensation, the board should establish a process for providing meaningful feedback on its assessment of the president's performance. For both the institution and the president, regular feedback offers a gauge of performance as well as an opportunity to celebrate success. It also may be used to outline steps for improvement and to identify paths to stronger institutional

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and presidential performance. A board strengthens a presidency by offering constructive feedback at regular intervals.

Not least among the purposes evaluation serves is to provide a standard of reference for setting a president's salary and benefits. The compensation of most college and university presidents is far less than that of the chief executives of comparable for-profit enterprises. As nonprofit, mission-centered institutions, colleges and universities are more likely to regard the presidency as a calling, and many of the values that motivate presidents of these institutions cannot be quantified in terms of compensation. While extraordinary presidential compensation packages attract negative public attention, there are cases in which compensation is too low, given the extent and importance of a president's responsibilities.

Nonetheless, compensation is an important factor in recruiting leaders to higher education institutions. Some colleges and universities worry about their ability to compete in the market for capable and experienced leadership at the compensation levels they can afford to offer. What has come to attract growing public scrutiny, however, are instances in which a president's salary and benefits exceed both the standard of institutional reference and the threshold of good judgment.

For public colleges and universities, which are ultimately accountable to taxpayers, any adjustment to a president's compensation that appears to avert full disclosure will evoke scrutiny, criticism, and possible consequence. While independent colleges and uni-

In an era of heightened public scrutiny, the message of the Task Force is simple: In setting presidential compensation, as in other areas of fiduciary responsibility, transparency and accountability are essential.

versities do not follow the same level of statutory accountability, they too must adhere to reasonable standards of reference in setting presidential salary and benefits. Every institution, whether public or private, ultimately is accountable to the public trust. Recent high-profile instances of inat-

tention and misconduct in matters concerning presidential compensation have prompted some lawmakers to consider changes to the legal and regulatory framework regarding colleges and universities and other nonprofit organizations.

In an era of heightened public scrutiny, the message of the Task Force is simple: In setting presidential compensation, as in other areas of fiduciary responsibility, transparency and accountability are essential.

Public colleges and universities: full disclosure. Although most public institution or system governing boards may set compensation in executive session, they should publicly disclose the total compensation package from all sources when the chief executive is initially

hired and for any subsequent changes. A significant number of public university boards request funds from the institution's or system's affiliated foundation or other private source to supplement a president's salary or other compensation. Such supplements may increase an institution's competitive advantage in attracting the most capable presidents. Indeed, many public institutions find that without foundation supplements they would be all but incapable of attracting qualified candidates to the presidency.

Although the Task Force recognizes that market pressures and constrained general fund resources may necessitate such supplements, governing board policy should facilitate an efficient and transparent transfer of funds from the foundation to the institution—and leave the allocation of those funds to the institution once the transfer takes place. One model for such a transfer process would require a formal request from a university governing board to its related foundation board that specifies the amount and terms of the salary or compensation supplement.

Whatever sources of revenue contribute to a president's salary, a board must proceed in the knowledge that its actions sooner or later will become publicly known. Board members must be aware of what actions have been taken with regard to compensation, and they should be able to address those decisions in the face of public questioning.

Independent colleges and universities: evolving standards for fiduciary oversight.

Both the context and the culture of setting presidential compensation in independent institutions differ from the open disclosure that characterizes public colleges and universities. Although information about a president's salary and benefits ultimately becomes public on an IRS Form 990, private institutions tend not to publicize a president's compensation immediately after establishing it in a given year. While respecting the traditions that may surround the setting of a president's compensation, boards of private institutions must understand the potential disposition to equate the withholding of such information with having something to hide.

Determining the executive's compensation and benefits ordinarily is the primary task of a board compensation or executive committee, fully adhering to the board's bylaws. This committee should provide the full board with a general overview of the compensation package in executive session, and any trustee who wishes to know its details should be made aware of them.

A president's compensation should be linked to achievement of agreed-upon performance goals as measured through a regular process of evaluation, and compensation should be indexed to appropriate standards of reference within and outside of the institution—including comparisons with peer institutions.

Internal Revenue Service regulations for setting compensation are clear, and in recent years many boards have exercised better oversight because of the agency's framework. At minimum, the board's compensation committee should as a matter of good practice periodically refresh its familiarity with these guidelines, to ensure that its practices are in accordance with the IRS framework.

AGB should take seriously its own responsibility to educate governing boards about the factors affecting presidential compensation, including publishing up-to-date guidelines for setting presidential compensation. Two general principles should guide a board in this matter: (1) A president's compensation should be linked to achievement of agreed-upon performance goals as measured through a regular process of evaluation, and (2) compensation should be indexed to appropriate standards of reference within and outside of the institution—including comparisons with peer institutions. Such comparisons should accurately reflect the institutions' missions, scope of operations, and quality of programs. Some peer groups should include public as well as private institutions—especially in the case of complex research institutions.

BOARD ACCOUNTABILITY

Stewardship of a college or university by a lay governing board traditionally has been regarded as a pillar of higher education's strength. Board members are volunteers who contribute time and expertise as well as financial resources to help ensure the continued vitality of the institution. Increasingly, however, the sense of trust conferred on these boards has been tempered by questions about the competence or dedication of individual board members.

There are many dimensions of board accountability. While accountable to multiple stakeholders, boards must retain their independent judgment on issues that come before them. Board members of public institutions should not consider themselves directly accountable to the governor or legislators who appointed or confirmed them. Regardless of the source or means of their appointment, board members of public and private institutions alike are accountable to the public trust and to the institution, its mission, core values, and the academic community. The American public entrusts control of academic institutions to citizen boards, rather than to elected governors, legislators, or bureaucracies.

As the body specifically entrusted with fiduciary responsibility for the institution, the board is accountable for ensuring that institutional funds are directed to the fulfillment of mission. Unfortunately, some of the more notorious lapses in board accountability occur in the financial realm. While instances of presidential misuse of funds are rare, the nega-

Regardless of the source or means of their appointment, board members of public and private institutions alike are accountable to the public trust and to the institution, its mission, core values, and the academic community.

"Board members have got to learn how universities work. Presidents have got to take board orientation and development seriously."

Public comprehensive
university president

The Task Force strongly urges that governors should select trustees on the basis of merit rather than partisan loyalty.

tive attention they attract harms both the specific institution and all of higher education. Such financial misbehavior often may be attributable

to a board or audit committee that fails to hold a president—and itself—sufficiently accountable. As part of this responsibility, the board should make its audit committee clearly accountable for oversight of the president’s expenditures.

In identifying and selecting new board members, all higher education institutions must establish methods that maximize the likelihood that the most qualified individuals are chosen to serve. For public colleges and universities, governors play an especially crucial role in states that allow them to appoint the citizen volunteers who help steer the policy course for these complex organizations. The Task Force strongly urges that governors should select trustees on the basis of merit rather than partisan loyalty. No one should be nominated or appointed to a public trusteeship without first being fully informed of the responsibilities and commitment it entails. The recommendations made to public officials in the 1996 report of the Commission on the Academic Presidency bear repeating here: State policymakers should explicitly incorporate merit criteria into trustee selection, diversify sources of appointees, advocate for eliminating popular elections to boards, and provide longer terms as needed for some public boards.

Just as public institutions suffer when board appointments are based primarily on political patronage, the governance of private institutions can be severely compromised by conflicts of interest of individual board members.

Independent colleges and universities also must ensure that those appointed to their boards have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and a primary motivation to serve the institution in fulfillment of its public purposes. The board should have a well-functioning committee on trustees that develops a board composition plan

relevant to the institution’s strategic direction. The president should be engaged in the process of identifying prospective trustees for committee and board consideration.

Just as public institutions suffer when board appointments are based primarily on political patronage, the governance of private institutions can be severely compromised by conflicts of interest of individual board members. A board needs to be concerned, for example, if the chair of the investment committee also heads the firm that manages the institution’s endowment portfolio. Similar conflicts of interest may arise in real estate ventures, insurance, and other services. The board should periodically review its conflict-of-interest policies to ensure adherence to a strong set of standards that is consistent with state law and understood by all board members. The board also should have the proper

“Presidents need help learning how to develop their boards, using best practices and group psychology. It’s very different from managing your executive staff.”

Public metropolitan university president

review and enforcement mechanisms in place to ensure that it is conducting its business in accordance with the public trust.

In today's environment, boards must understand that earning and retaining the trust and confidence of faculty, students, parents, alumni, and the general public means exhibiting a higher level of transparency and accountability. It is not enough simply to note potential or actual conflicts of interest in the board minutes. The board must ask itself: Is this ethical? How would this conflict affect our institutional credibility if it were reported on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper?

In today's environment, boards must understand that earning and retaining the trust and confidence of faculty, students, parents, alumni, and the general public means exhibiting a higher level of transparency and accountability.

More than at any previous time, colleges and universities require board members who are characterized by solid qualification and preparation for the responsibilities they will assume. Boards must commit to activities such as periodic retreats or continuing education opportunities that contribute to the board's own development. In the public and private sectors alike, the importance of ongoing board development is critical. Policymakers should establish incentives for public and independent boards to provide strong trustee orientation, ongoing education, and periodic trustee evaluation. All trustees must understand their proper roles and responsibilities—including ethical standards, fiduciary responsibilities, and their crucial relationship with the institution's president or chancellor. Periodic board-development activities at both the institution and state levels help trustees understand their basic responsibilities and enhance their knowledge of institutional challenges and funding priorities. Presidents should participate actively in board development.

Boards also should employ a regular practice of self-assessment to take account of their effectiveness on a range of measures and make recommendations for improvement. This knowledge in turn can provide a map for future board development to supplement its understanding of critical issues.

The strongest assurance of fiduciary responsibility is the demonstrated commitment and practice of boards to appropriate transparency and effective governance, rather than additional federal or state regulation. The Task Force recognizes and commends AGB for developing a formal "Statement on Board Accountability and Fiduciary Oversight."

"Our governor's appointees come typically with the governor's agenda. It's a hard barrier to break down. One of the major issues facing chief executives is how to work with a board that is politically appointed."

Public university
system chancellor



PRESIDENTIAL RENEWAL AND SUCCESSION

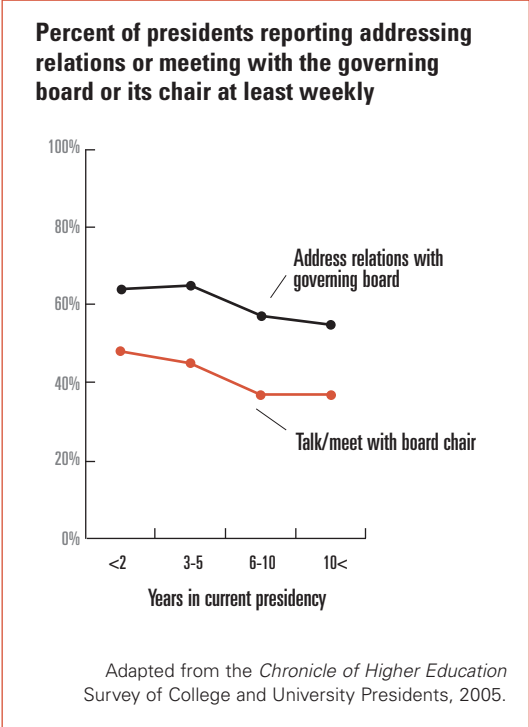
The responsibilities of college and university presidents are intense and multifaceted, and their collective impact over time can be exhilarating—and exhausting. “We all have a well from which we draw to meet our responsibilities,” one president explained, “and there are times when that well runs dry and needs refreshment.” The pressures of leadership can exact an intellectual and emotional toll on a president and his or her family.

At the same time that it monitors the effectiveness of presidential leadership, the board must read the vital signs in the person of the president. In this as in other matters, the board chair must step to the plate. A board helps ensure the long-term effectiveness of a president by providing periodic opportunities for intellectual and personal renewal. Without such renewal, the demands of the office can rapidly deplete even the most robust chief executive.

Beyond the steps it takes to ensure presidential renewal—for example, opportunities to pursue scholarly or public-service interests—a board can help strengthen institutional leadership over time by fostering an environment that encourages leadership to develop. Boards and presidents must pay greater attention to developing human talent. By explicitly charging the chief executive with the task of selecting high-performing, high-potential individuals as members of the leadership team—and preparing them to assume even more-senior leadership roles—boards can support peak presiden-

Boards should require presidents to develop leadership development plans—and allocate the resources to implement them—for all key positions in the institution, including the presidency.

PRESIDENTIAL TIME DEVOTED TO GOVERNANCE ISSUES DECLINES OVER TIME



tial and institutional performance over the long term.

Boards should require presidents to develop leadership development plans—and allocate the resources to implement them—for all key positions in the institution, including the presidency. They should review these plans annually during the president’s assessment and get to know and track the development of those within the institution who have demonstrated leadership potential. Such reviews provide an excellent opportunity for the board to assess the president’s ability to recruit and develop talent. “Boards need to let the president know that he or she will groom future administrators who may serve this institution or another one,” said one former president.

One public university board leader suggested to the Task Force that a broader view could include an assessment of a state’s public higher education leadership talent pool on a statewide or regional basis. She also suggested a possible role for the state coordinating board in helping to identify

potential candidates who possess the administrative talent, personal networks, and political savvy to function effectively within the culture of a particular state or region.

Another key board responsibility is to help a successful presidency reach a meaningful conclusion. Some presidents delay the decision to step down, staying on far beyond their effectiveness and interest, simply because they have nowhere else to go or are too young to retire. Effective board leaders who bring a deep understanding of the institution have a unique ability to sense when a presidency has run its natural course. It is the board’s responsibility to convey when a president has achieved his or her core goals and brought the institution to the next stage of its continuing saga.

By providing opportunities for presidential renewal, helping a president create paths for future leaders, and acknowledging the president’s achievements while laying the foundation for the next era of leadership, the board helps an institution attain greater effectiveness and leadership continuity. Not coincidentally, boards that engage in a sustained effort on these tasks foster a culture in which the candidate pool for the president’s successor may include a well-qualified member of the university’s leadership team.

“Our board has placed the topic of presidential succession on the table and discussed it as part of the president’s evaluation.”

Public university board chair

LEADERSHIP: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

In this report, the Task Force has emphasized the important responsibilities governing boards must accept to help ensure the effectiveness of presidential leadership. Beyond their stewardship of individual institutions or public university systems, however, governing boards and presidents have a shared responsibility to ensure that higher education as a whole continues to serve the nation's complex and evolving needs for education, research, and service.

A common observation is that presidents and boards tend to understand higher education “one institution at a time.” They mine opportunities to advance their own institution and overlook broader collaborative efforts to serve the collective needs of public and private colleges and universities and society. Moreover, some presidents are reluctant to speak out on matters of public importance, fearful of offending donors, politicians, or other constituents. Paradoxically, such reticence contributes to an erosion of public trust in higher education, particularly when paired with actions that seem designed to advance a specific institution to the exclusion of other concerns. Among the telltale signs: a preoccupation with constructing buildings and stadiums, a fixation on securing congressional or state legislative earmarks, or boosting athletics at the expense of the institution's academic mission.

College and university presidents have a responsibility to make the public case for the

Some presidents are reluctant to speak out on matters of public importance, fearful of offending donors, politicians, or other constituents. Paradoxically, such reticence contributes to an erosion of public trust in higher education.

“It is the responsibility of a president to address issues of significance to the academy, ranging from student access to academic freedom to public support for higher education.”

Former public research university president

The board must create the political bulwark that encourages a president to speak out on issues of importance to higher education and society.

vitality in a knowledge-based society. The board must create the political bulwark that encourages a president to speak out on issues of importance to higher education and society. Seasoned presidents adhere to the “treaty of no surprises” with their boards, informing them in advance of potentially volatile issues. Some presidents use such opportunities to elicit board members’ thinking to help sharpen their messages. Indeed, board members should add their voices to the president’s in advocating the value of higher education and its important contributions to society.

In so doing, presidents and boards embrace a vision of a single institution or system that is part of a larger higher education community. They understand that this community—spanning the public and private sectors and ranging from community colleges to research

importance of higher education as a creator of human and intellectual capital, an engine that drives the nation’s continued civic and economic

universities—bears shared responsibility for sustaining the public trust and serving the nation’s needs. Together they can provide students from every neighborhood in America with the skills to lead more productive and fulfilling lives—and open our doors to a crucial 21st-century dia-

logue with students and societies around the globe. Accordingly, this diverse and rich collective of American colleges and universities can contribute to a society whose members value civic engagement, lead healthier lifestyles, develop an appetite for continued learning and discovery, and exhibit a reflective capacity for responsible decision making as well as participation in the processes of a democratic polity.

When a governing board identifies such boundary-spanning integral leadership as essential to the president’s job, it takes an important step beyond the stewardship of a single institution or system—and redefines its own responsibilities. Working together as partners in leadership, the board and president can strengthen the capacity of the higher education community to affect the societal transformation required to meet the challenges of the coming decades.

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“Our whole job as an institution is to help shape the thinking of the leaders of the next generation. We need to open up the conversation: past, present, and future.”

Former community college president

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force recommendations predominantly address boards of trustees and presidents. Working in conjunction with the faculty and other stakeholders, presidents and boards exert a major impact on governance and hence the ability of institutions to reach their goals and secure and retain the public trust. Other recommendations address state policymakers and AGB itself.

TO GOVERNING BOARDS

The Task Force recommendations to boards of trustees address the following themes: supporting effective presidential leadership, undertaking a presidential search, evaluating and compensating the president, ensuring board accountability, guiding presidential renewal and succession, and advocating the value of higher education as an investment in the nation's future.

Support Presidential Leadership

A president works with the board, faculty, and institutional community not only to articulate the institution's mission but also to clarify its role and objectives, develop a strategic plan for achieving its goals, and attract the resources to support these activities. A president also rallies support with internal and external stakeholders to advance the work of the institution in fulfilling its public role. The board makes it possible for a president to achieve coherence in these responsibilities and to lead the institution with effectiveness and integrity. Governing boards should do the following:

1. *Charge the president with developing, clarifying, and fulfilling the institution's mission and vision, and hold the president accountable.* A board must clearly convey the responsibilities it expects the president to fulfill, but it also must establish the conditions that generate success. At the outset of a presidency, boards and chief executives should agree on the institution's priorities and then sustain their mutual understanding of the relative importance of such presidential duties as academic leadership, fund-raising, and executive management.
2. *Charge the president with responsibility for developing a strategic plan, in conjunction with faculty, the executive leadership team, and other constituents includ-*

ing public stakeholders. Although the board itself will have a key role in the development and final approval of a strategic plan, the president must lead the process of identifying goals and gaining broad support for its implementation. A plan's explicit statement of goals and means provides the board with a basis for assessing performance and holding a president accountable.

3. *Encourage the president to build a capable and effective leadership team.* The range and complexity of issues confronting an institution require presidents to have the support of strong and talented first-line officers. Provosts, vice presidents, and other senior staff should be encouraged to share their valuable insights with the president and the board. In conveying the expectation that the president develop an effective leadership team, the board enhances the ability of the president to engage and motivate others throughout the institution.
4. *Help the president chart a course of action that respects faculty, students, and the prevailing institutional culture while carrying it forward to meet new challenges.* The board should help the president establish and maintain continuity with the institution's traditions and achievements—to connect with and build upon its “saga.” It should encourage the president to acquire a deep understanding of the institution's unique values and to pursue a future that engages that tradition.
5. *Support the president in the task of confronting difficult and controversial issues.* A board needs to stand by its charges to the president. If the board has called on the president to take bold steps that may encounter resistance within the institution, it must be prepared to provide the president with visible support—and not beat a hasty retreat if the president has led a controversial charge the board itself has conceived and supported.
6. *Support the president as an advocate for all of higher education and not just his or her own institution.* The public is more likely to continue to support higher education if boards encourage chief executives to reinforce the public's awareness of the opportunities colleges and universities create for individuals and the contribution these institutions make to the achievement of public purposes. Through words and actions, the president must advocate this point of view. The effectiveness of presidential leadership increases to the degree board members support and are advocates for this message.

“A leadership development plan is part of the president's job. The board needs to ask: What are you doing to help develop your talent pool?”

Public university board chair

7. *Focus on policy rather than administration. A president needs a board that is engaged but not intrusive.* The encroachment of board members into operations and management—including such areas as admissions and athletics—severely undermines a president’s ability to lead.

Presidential Search

The board is responsible for ensuring that a presidential search yields the best candidate to lead the institution in meeting its future challenges. The board creates the context and oversees the process of selecting a president—taking stock of institutional challenges and leadership requirements, appointing the search committee, engaging appropriate external expertise, approving the final selection—and ensuring the legitimacy of the search and selection process throughout.

1. *Before beginning a presidential search, be certain the board is proceeding from a thorough understanding of the institution’s needs, now and in the course of the next decade.* Although many trustees may be unfamiliar with executive search processes or the specific duties of the presidency, incomplete knowledge cannot become an excuse for carelessness in seeking a president. Boards should exercise the same rigor and integrity that one would apply in hiring a corporate chief executive.
2. *Constitute a search committee that is united around the institution’s vision.* Members of the faculty, board, and others who constitute the search committee must understand and value the institution’s needs and not subordinate those needs to constituency politics. The search committee represents the institution to candidates; strong candidates will be repelled by a weak search committee. Overly assertive or divided search committees are clear signs of an institution in crisis.
3. *Do not allow search consultants to supplant the board’s thinking about the qualities needed in the next president.* Consultants can help guide the process, but they must not be allowed to take ownership of the search itself. The board must take seriously its responsibility to maintain appropriate oversight of search consultants.
4. *Eliminate the conditions that often work against internal candidates for the presidency.* In seeking the best candidate for the presidency, the search committee should consider that the best qualified individual may be an internal candidate.

That 80 percent of presidents are hired as outside candidates suggests colleges and universities too often overlook promising leaders from within. Although the desire for fresh perspectives in the next president's thinking often is well-founded, boards must not categorically overlook the leadership potential that may exist within the institution itself. An institution that forgoes a national search and appoints an internal leader must ensure that the process of reaching that decision gains the affirmation of the institutional community.

5. *Ensure that the process used to select a president is widely regarded as fair and legitimate.* The institutional community must perceive that the presidential search and selection process has rigorously defined the challenges of the institution and resolutely sought the expressed qualities of leadership.

Evaluation and Compensation

In conducting regular evaluations and giving feedback, the board provides the president with a meaningful gauge of leadership performance; at the same time, the board itself gains valuable perspectives on the institution's progress in achieving strategic goals. Regular evaluations help ensure that a board fulfills its fiduciary responsibility in setting presidential compensation.

1. *Evaluate a president's performance based on clearly defined, mutually agreed-upon performance goals.* A board helps ensure the institution's continued vitality by conducting annual assessments and providing feedback on the president's performance. In addition, boards should conduct more-comprehensive presidential evaluations every three to four years. These evaluations should be based in part on the quality of the executive leadership team as well as on the president's ability to engage the support of faculty and other stakeholders in defining and pursuing a strategic vision.
2. *Carefully define board policy on presidential compensation from all sources.* The boards of public institutions and systems should disclose the chief executive's total compensation package as well as all sources of the compensation upon his or her appointment and each time the compensation is adjusted. If attracting high-quality leadership necessitates supplemental support from a foundation affiliated with the institution or system, the board should develop a policy that facilitates an efficient and transparent transfer of funds from the foundation to the institution—and

leaves the allocation of those funds to the institution once the transfer takes place. The policy should specify that the governing board must make a formal, written request to its related foundation board and stipulate the amount and terms in a formal agreement.

3. *Ensure that the process of establishing the president's compensation package is appropriately transparent.* Presidential compensation ordinarily is a matter of public record in state institutions. In private colleges and universities, determining executive compensation and benefits and any subsequent adjustments ordinarily is the primary task of a board compensation or executive committee, fully adhering to the board's bylaws. But the full board should be presented with the general outlines of the president's compensation package, and any trustee who wishes to know its details should be made aware of them. Legal authority for setting presidential compensation is vested in the full board, not in a subset of its members.
4. *Base a president's compensation package on explicit and justifiable internal and external benchmarks as well as on the marketplace for accomplished chief executives.* Charged with fiduciary responsibility for institutions dependent on the public trust, governing boards must exemplify the practice of transparency and accountability in setting presidential compensation. While remaining mindful of the marketplace and an institution's culture, boards should be sensitive to the perceptions of its stakeholders and the public.

Board Accountability

The board contributes to the success of a presidency and the effectiveness of governance by holding itself and its members accountable to the highest standards of professional and ethical integrity. By eliminating conflicts of interest, undertaking evaluations of board effectiveness, and investing in the periodic education of board members themselves, boards improve their understanding of governance and fiduciary responsibilities.

1. *Recognize the link between a board's accountability and a president's ability to lead.* A board that subjects an institution to personal or political agendas or allows conflicts of interests in board members to stand unchallenged undermines the effectiveness of a presidency and erodes public trust in the institution and, by extension, all of higher education. It is the duty of the board's leaders—especially

the board chair but also, where appropriate, the chair of the committee on trustees or the audit committee—to confront maverick trustees or those who may misapprehend the board’s bylaws to help them understand their responsibilities.

2. *Respect and adhere to the legal principles of fiduciary responsibility.* As the body that is specifically entrusted with fiduciary responsibility for the institution, the board must ensure that funds are in fact directed to the fulfillment of the institution’s mission and are not diverted to personal agendas.
3. *Establish clear ethical guidelines and enforce conflict-of-interest policies for all board members.* Boards must be alert to conflicts of interest and find ways through their own governance processes to reach ethical solutions to such conflicts. It is not enough simply to note potential or actual conflicts of interest in the board minutes. No board can expect to retain the public trust if it allows such conflicts to go unchecked. Best practices would include the annual submission of conflict-of-interest and disclosure statements from all board members and timely review and appropriate follow-up on any concerns. A board perceived to have conflicts of interest may compromise the institution’s integrity and the president’s leadership.
4. *Recognize the board’s responsibilities to diverse constituencies.* Governing boards must recognize that they are accountable to the institution’s diverse stakeholders. They need to develop a formal and informal ways of facilitating interaction with these constituencies, which include faculty, students, alumni, and the local community, among others.
5. *Evaluate the board’s performance and enhance its competence in areas where evaluation has shown it to be deficient.* In addition to evaluating the president, the board periodically must assess its own effectiveness and that of individual trustees. Drawing on the expertise of its own members or that of external facilitators, the board must enhance its own knowledge in critical areas affecting the institution’s well-being. These include board engagement in strategic planning, policy oversight and fiduciary responsibilities, eliciting public or political support, fund-raising, and avoiding micromanagement while strengthening the core elements of teaching, learning, research, and service.

“A board chair or committee should be charged with the care of the presidency. Presidential turnover is too high, and terms are too short. Paying attention to time, compensation, expectations, and general support of the president could improve these rates.”

Private college president

Presidential Renewal and Succession

In monitoring the vital signs of institutional health and presidential leadership, the board gains important insights into the president's personal well-being. Accordingly, it must provide opportunities for a president's professional renewal or help engineer a graceful exit from the presidency when that is appropriate. Just as important, the board ensures the continuing vitality of leadership in the institution by encouraging transition planning.

1. *Support and nurture the president and provide opportunities for constructive feedback and positive reinforcement.* A board must not launch a president into a sea of leadership responsibility without bearings to gauge progress or make course corrections. The support, assessment, and constructive feedback a board provides help to chart and motivate the course of effective leadership at every stage of a presidency.
2. *Encourage new presidents to seek a network of mentors to ease the leadership transition.* Members of the board, particularly the board chair, should lead the process of linking a new president to a network of those who understand the institutional context and the challenges of presidential leadership—including former presidents and other leaders. The board should not interpret a new president's pursuit of external advice in addressing important issues as a sign of weakness.
3. *Assess the impact of the duties of the presidency on the well-being of the president and his or her family.* The presidency can exact a heavy toll on the emotional and physical health of chief executives. Consequently, boards consciously should monitor and be appropriately sensitive to and supportive of the president's personal needs.
4. *Assist in bringing a successful presidency to a graceful end.* Provide the support a president may require at the conclusion of his or her service in a way that both affirms the president's achievements and establishes a framework for the next era of leadership.
5. *Charge the president with developing opportunities and pathways for leaders to advance within the institution.* Boards can ensure active engagement in succession planning by asking the president for regular analyses of the capabilities of rising

leaders within the institution. Cultivating effective leaders requires that such individuals perceive that roads to advancement exist within the institution. The board should regularly assess leadership development practices and the quality and potential of future institutional leaders.

TO PRESIDENTS

The Task Force recommendations to presidents complement those made to boards of trustees. These recommendations stem from the conviction that to exercise integral leadership, a president must engage both the faculty and the board in a partnership that yields effective governance and motivates the institution to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

1. *Actively engage the board in meeting its responsibilities to the institution and to the public trust.* Expect the board to take seriously its fiduciary and governance responsibilities and to offer the guidance, support, and accountability that allows a president to lead effectively.
2. *Unite the board, faculty, and other constituents in developing a vision for the institution and enlist the support required to lead the institution in meeting future challenges.* To fulfill the responsibilities of the leader of the institution, and not simply those of its representative, presidents will need to regard the academic presidency as a higher calling and not merely an executive position.
3. *Cultivate a deep understanding of the institution and build on its unique character, history, and values.* Deliberately work to understand the institution's "narrative" and build support for its next chapters in ways that engage those traditions and the people who have helped create them. Avoid wholesale housecleaning of the executive leadership team in favor of personal choices who may exhibit loyalty but have little understanding or appreciation of the institution.
4. *Resist allowing daily managerial tasks to detract from meeting the institution's long-range strategic challenges.* Workday demands such as meetings, reports, correspondence, and so forth tend to undermine integral leadership and compromise the president's ability to remain focused on the big picture.

5. *Create an environment that encourages leadership development within the institution.* Recognize the development of internal leadership as a strategic investment in the institution’s long-term vitality and agility—one that contributes to a president’s own effectiveness and helps ensure higher education’s ability to respond to new challenges in timely and effective ways.
6. *Exemplify in actions and words the contributions higher education makes to the nation’s capacity for productive engagement in a global age.* Presidents must be forceful advocates on behalf of higher education, striving to earn and strengthen public understanding, trust, and confidence.
7. *Use the planning process and the performance review as occasions to clarify goals for the institution and the presidency.* If an assessment process does not exist, encourage the board to put one in place.

“It’s important for the president and board to create systematic opportunities for other senior officers to take the lead on important issues.”

Public university
system chancellor

TO STATE POLICYMAKERS

State legislators and governors have critically important roles in fulfilling the leadership imperative of public colleges and universities. Through the appropriation of public funds to higher education institutions and the appointment of trustees and regents to their boards, state policymakers profoundly affect the ability of presidents to lead effectively—and by extension, the ability of these institutions to serve public purposes. The Task Force calls on state policymakers to do the following:

1. *Explicitly state the expectations of higher education for the economic, intellectual, and cultural development of the state, and establish clear goals in evaluating whether institutions and systems are meeting those expectations.* Setting clear expectations for the postsecondary education system as a whole requires that governors collaborate with legislators and others to establish clear lines of sustained communication with presidents and board leaders regarding state priorities and a shared public agenda. Such communication can help higher education leaders and the state policy community gauge how institutions are responding to state priorities and how they are contributing to the resolution of major policy issues and problems. Business leaders, citizens, and other stakeholders also need to be a part of this conversation, which can be conducted formally and informally.

2. *Provide a sustained level of financial support that allows colleges and universities to serve students and meet community, regional, statewide, and national goals.* State legislators and governors must recognize that higher education institutions cannot prepare students for the challenges of the century ahead without strong public financial support. Increased accountability measures combined with self-motivated steps toward improvement are producing institutions that are more effective and more deserving of the public trust. If colleges and universities are to reach their full potential as agents of societal renewal and revitalization, they cannot be consigned to steadily diminished status in state budget processes. Public colleges and universities require vigorous and stable support from their state governments in order to succeed. In many states, moreover, public support of private higher education also is essential.
3. *Make merit, skill, and experience the chief criteria for trustee selection.* Ensure that merit is the primary criterion for selecting public higher education trustees. Further, governing boards should be composed of individuals who collectively possess the requisite skills, experience, and institutional memory essential in overseeing today's complex higher education institutions and systems.
4. *Insist that board members understand and accept their responsibilities as stewards of the institution's mission and financial resources.* Policymakers must ensure that publicly appointed trustees and regents understand the terms of their accountability to the institution and the public trust. This includes comprehending their ethical and fiduciary responsibilities as well as their responsibility for encouraging successful presidential leadership.
5. *Promote board development.* Establish incentives for public higher education boards to provide effective trustee orientation, ongoing education, and periodic trustee evaluation.
6. *Engage trustees and regents as partners in advocating the value of public and private higher education.* Impress on those appointed to the boards of public colleges and universities that they are responsible not just for the continued strength of their particular institutions but also for the continued vitality of higher education as source of renewal and transformation in meeting society's challenges.

TO AGB

The Task Force urges AGB to continue to strengthen its programming for board members and presidents on these important matters. In particular, the Task Force commends and encourages the association's continued progress in the following activities:

1. *Develop a Statement on Board Accountability and Fiduciary Oversight that boards may use as a model.*
2. *Continue to advance the association's leadership in strengthening governing boards and develop new programs for presidents focusing on governance, finance, and president-board relationships.*
3. *Develop guidelines for setting presidential compensation in public and private higher education.*
4. *Seek new opportunities to serve as advocates for stronger trustee voices in support of strategic investments in the value of higher education.*

APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR BOARD OVERSIGHT OF SEARCH CONSULTANTS

A governing board must take and retain active control of a presidential search. It must not suppose that in engaging a search consultant it relinquishes its core responsibility for the choice of who will lead the institution. One means of strengthening the board's institutional voice throughout the search process is to ensure that the presidential search committee is composed of individuals who are broadly representative of the institution and its community but at the same time understand their responsibility to the institution as a whole.

- A consultant's role is to assist the board in the search process. It is the board itself that holds sole responsibility for the selection of a president.

- For a board that actively engages in a presidential search, the selection of a consultant must itself be an integral part of the process. Too often the consultant chosen is one that an influential board member knows personally or professionally.

- A central consideration in the choice of a search consultant is how well the consultant understands the board's vision of the institution's future. A board should first engage in a thoughtful examination of the institution's evolution, current needs, and future path. Only then should the board proceed to select a consultant who understands the history, culture, and possible futures for that institution and its leadership.

- In some instances, search consultants undermine the prospects of potentially strong internal candidates for the presidency. When a consultant's primary incentive is to present the board with candidates beyond the institution's immediate frame of reference, an internal candidate can receive less than full consideration in the search process.

It is the search committee's responsibility to ensure that a search consultant gives due consideration to an internal candidate if the board itself considers that candidate to be a viable contender for the presidency. The board also must instruct a search consultant to include among the candidate roster those who would help advance the institution's goal of achieving diversity in its leadership—and be vigilant that this directive is undertaken seriously and with the highest ethical standards.

APPENDIX B

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE ACADEMIC PRESIDENCY, 1996

Key Recommendations to Presidents

- Formulate a vision of the institution's future, build consensus around it, and take the risks required to achieve that vision, on campus and beyond.
- Lead the board and faculty through a process of clarifying the precise nature of shared governance on each campus and reducing ambiguities in authority and decision-making processes.
- Exercise the authority already inherent in the position. Presidents must resist academia's insatiable appetite for the kind of excessive consultation that can bring the institution to a standstill.

Key Recommendations to Boards

- Select presidents who are truly capable of leading their particular institutions as change agents and risk takers. While many candidates will be found on campuses, the new challenges facing higher education may lead institutions to consider candidates from non-traditional backgrounds.
- Require the president to develop a vision and clarify how shared governance should operate on that campus. The board must work with the president to accomplish these goals.
- Support and stand by presidents, publicly and effectively, as long as they hold the confidence of the board. While mindful of their dual roles as supporters of the institution and guardians of the public trust, boards must back effective presidents when they are under siege by internal or external constituencies.

Key Recommendations to Faculty

- Exercise the responsibility that accompanies shared governance, even when a changing environment calls for departures from tradition or painful decisions about individual faculty members or academic programs.
- Work with the president and the board to redefine the faculty role in shared governance by clarifying and simplifying decision-making processes.

- Be prepared to accept new campus incentives that promote a sense of responsibility for institutional goals. This might include defining departments and groups of departments (and not simply individual faculty) as units of accountability.
- Be open to the application of technological innovation in instruction and help ensure that courses using new technology are taught effectively.
- Match commitment to the discipline with commitment to the institution. A faculty member's intense disciplinary focus must not overshadow his or her responsibilities for teaching and meeting other institutional needs.

Key Recommendations to State Political Leaders

- Reform trustee selection practices and board performance by: (a) explicitly incorporating merit criteria into trustee selection and developing a process to ensure that this occurs, (b) enlarging public boards to accommodate a broader range of citizen views and experience, (c) diversifying sources of appointees, (d) eliminating popular election to boards, and (e) providing for longer and overlapping terms for public trustees.
- Articulate clear, reasonable, and consistent expectations for institutional performance tied to state priorities. Benchmarks for institutional performance and accomplishment should be developed thoughtfully in order to focus institutions on the public good while setting demanding but realistic goals.
- Reduce red tape in return for accountability. Governors and legislators should establish accountability mechanisms designed around assessments of performance and quality rather than compliance with regulations, administrative processes, and red tape.
- Consider with academic leaders how the strategic objectives of the state can be advanced by the work of academic institutions. States should actively explore how colleges and universities can serve as their partners in achieving their goals for the future.
- Redefine “sunshine” requirements as they relate to presidential searches. The public disclosure of potential presidential candidates undermines the search for leadership by jeopardizing their relationship with their present institutions. Searches should be treated as “personnel matters,” which are normally not subject to public scrutiny.

APPENDIX C

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SURVEY OF PRESIDENTS OF FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES

The results of the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* Survey of College and University Presidents were based on responses from presidents and chancellors who lead institutions that offer a four-year degree, have a comprehensive academic program, and fall into one of six classifications by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The classifications are: Doctoral/Research Universities-Extensive and -Intensive, Master's Colleges and Universities I and II; Baccalaureate Colleges-Liberal Arts and General.

Maguire Associates, of Bedford, Mass., which conducted the survey for the *Chronicle*, and consultant Alvin Sanoff identified 1,338 institutions that met the survey criteria. In addition to numerous specific questions, the survey provided presidents and chancellors the opportunity to offer comments on the challenges they face. The data collection took place between June 23 and July 29, 2005. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their replies.

A total of 764 presidents and chancellors responded, a rate of 57 percent. The respondents generally reflected the leaders of the institutions that were surveyed, so weighting of responses was unnecessary. After the surveys were completed, the responses were analyzed by Maguire Associates.

DETAILED RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS REGARDING HOW PRESIDENTS SPEND THEIR TIME

How often do you attend to these various activities?

Area or Activity	Daily	Once or Twice a Week	Once or Twice a Month	Less Than Once a Month	Not Applicable	Not Reported
Fund raising (all aspects)	52.7%	38.4%	6.0%	0.5%	0.1%	2.2%
Budget/finance	44.4%	43.5%	9.2%	0.7%	0.0%	2.4%
Educational leadership	40.6%	32.1%	19.0%	4.3%	0.7%	3.4%
Personnel	37.8%	39.0%	16.9%	3.7%	0.3%	2.4%
Student life	28.1%	46.1%	19.8%	3.4%	0.1%	2.5%
Writing (speeches, reports, etc.)	22.8%	49.5%	20.5%	4.5%	0.1%	2.6%
Strategic/institutional planning	22.8%	40.4%	27.1%	7.3%	0.0%	2.4%
Relations with governing board	16.4%	43.6%	28.1%	9.2%	0.3%	2.5%
Town-gown relations	13.9%	35.5%	30.8%	15.4%	1.7%	2.7%
Enrollment management	12.6%	46.6%	25.5%	12.8%	0.3%	2.2%
Alumni relations	8.8%	35.7%	39.7%	13.7%	0.0%	2.1%
Athletics	4.7%	40.3%	36.9%	11.3%	4.6%	2.2%
Relations with political leaders	4.3%	22.6%	39.0%	29.1%	2.5%	2.5%
Relations with chancellor or equivalent (if multicampus system)	2.5%	11.0%	11.1%	4.2%	58.6%	12.6%
Technology/security	2.1%	23.3%	47.0%	24.1%	1.2%	2.4%

In general, how often do you talk to or meet with each of the following?

Area or Activity	Daily	Once or Twice a Week	Once or Twice a Month	Less Than Once a Month	Not Applicable	Not Reported
Provost	52.7%	37.6%	1.3%	0.1%	5.8%	2.5%
Chief financial officer (or equivalent)	49.1%	47.1%	2.1%	0.1%	0.0%	1.6%
Director of development/advancement	42.7%	51.3%	3.1%	0.3%	0.7%	2.0%
Head of student affairs	18.2%	62.2%	14.1%	3.0%	0.4%	2.1%
Head of enrollment/admissions	17.8%	52.6%	21.5%	6.3%	0.1%	1.7%
Chief information officer (or equivalent)	8.1%	41.2%	33.9%	11.5%	3.5%	1.7%
General counsel	5.8%	23.7%	29.7%	29.2%	9.7%	2.0%
Athletic director	2.6%	30.5%	39.3%	20.3%	5.6%	1.7%
Chair of the board (or equivalent)	1.4%	40.2%	41.1%	13.6%	2.0%	1.7%
Chancellor or equivalent (if multicampus system)	1.0%	8.4%	13.6%	4.6%	60.9%	11.5%
Chair of faculty senate (or equivalent)	0.9%	20.0%	49.5%	21.6%	6.5%	1.4%
Head of alumni association	0.5%	5.9%	38.6%	51.8%	1.8%	1.3%
Head of student government	0.4%	13.2%	57.5%	26.8%	1.0%	1.0%
Lawmakers	0.1%	11.3%	35.3%	44.8%	6.4%	2.1%

Adapted from the *Chronicle of Higher Education Survey of College and University Presidents*, 2005.

APPENDIX D

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APPENDIX E

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Task Force expresses its gratitude to the many people whose participation and assistance made this report possible.

We wish to acknowledge the contributions of dozens of current and former presidents, trustees, and policymakers who were interviewed as part of this effort, including the members of the AGB Council of Presidents and Council of Board Chairs. Their valuable insights into how the global and local contexts of higher education affect the academic presidency and college and university governance informed the Task Force's deliberations and this report. Most of these leaders spoke with the understanding that their remarks would not be attributed by name, and we have respected that trust.

Several scholars, analysts, and journalists provided special insights into the work of the Task Force, which we have shared in these pages and elsewhere. Judith Block McLaughlin, educational chair of the Harvard Seminar for New Presidents and director of the Higher Education Program at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, led a lively discussion sparked by her paper, "Pressures on the Presidency: Implications for Leadership." Patrick M. Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and broadcast journalist John Merrow challenged our assumptions about today's students and the institutions in which they learn. Jeffrey Selingo, business and politics editor at the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, generously facilitated our access to the detailed data from that publication's 2005 Survey of College and University Presidents. And Jack Maguire and Leslie Horst of Maguire Associates, Inc., which conducted the survey, fruitfully probed further into these data at our request.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the contributions of our capable and hard-working staff. Gregory Wegner, director of program development at the Great Lakes Colleges Association, listened carefully to all of the Task Force's discussions, conscientiously documented the work of the group, and produced several drafts of the report. Neal Johnson of AGB managed the Task Force's efforts during its year-long tenure. Staff members Susan Whealler Johnston, Richard Novak, and Merrill Schwartz provided substantive support, and Valeria Moore lent administrative assistance. Daniel J. Levin supervised the editorial and publishing processes.

SUSTAINING THE NATION'S PREMINENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Leadership Imperative” describes the skills required of college and university leaders to meet the global challenges of the 21st century and examines the crucial relationship between presidents and governing boards of public and independent colleges and universities.

Today, there is a critical need to create the human and intellectual capital that will ensure the nation’s continued social, civic, and economic well-being. The challenge: In order to support the societal transformation that surely will occur in the coming decades, higher education institutions must demonstrate a renewed commitment to strengthened governance and leadership.

The AGB Task Force on the State of the Presidency in American Higher Education asserts that sustaining the nation’s preeminence in higher education will require strengthened partnerships between governing boards and presidents. Effective board engagement is an essential factor not just in the success of a college or university presidency but also in the ability of institutions to attract and retain capable and qualified leaders.

The Task Force recommendations are directed primarily to governing boards and presidents but also to public officials and to AGB itself. The critical leadership imperative is for all stakeholders to recognize the new nature of “*integral leadership*”: Presidents, boards, and faculties must work together in support of a shared mission and vision, recognizing their responsibility to the highest standards of accountability to all communities of interest that are committed to those shared goals. Colleges and universities flourish when presidents, boards, and faculty work together for the well-being of the institution.